



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V24 N28

July 10, 2022

TEN WORDS

“3/Handle with Care”

Exodus 20:7

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Self-Control

I have the power, through Christ to control myself.

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Titus 2:11-13



What exactly is prohibited by the third commandment?

We’re all familiar with expletives, namely, words that contribute nothing to the meaning of a sentence, often suggesting the strength of the speaker’s feelings and very often involving the use of profanity. For example, a carpenter strikes his thumb with a hammer, and lets out a string of rude, crude obscenities. Not all expletives are obscenities, however. “Like” is a perfect example of an overused, useless, throwaway word that isn’t obscene, just annoying. On the other hand, all swear words are, and all swearing uses obscene language exclusively. Commonly defined, *swear words* are words or phrases generally considered blasphemous, obscene, vulgar, or otherwise offensive. Familiar synonyms include *bad words, obscenities, expletives, dirty words, profanities, four-letter words, etc.* Although profanities in today’s society are about as ubiquitous as air, here is a dated media example from *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*:

Spock: Your use of language has altered since our arrival. It is currently laced with, shall we say, more colorful metaphors, (*Spock* gives a mild example of swearing).

Captain Kirk: Oh, you mean the profanity?

Spock: Yes.

Captain Kirk: Well, that’s simply the way they talk here. Nobody pays any attention to you unless you **swear** every other word. You’ll find it in all the literature of the period.”

Swearing is like the horn on your car, which can be used to express a number of emotions (e.g., anger, frustration, joy, surprise) or simply to get people’s attention.

Blowing one’s horn was verboten in my house growing up. I vividly remember one night when the family was watching television—a B/W Magnavox console. I was the one who had to get up to change the channel—there were only three; dad was the one who had to get up to adjust the horizontal and vertical controls to stop the picture from rolling and twisting. I don’t remember what we were watching that night, but one of the characters said the word, “damn.” Dad jumped up from his La-Z-Boy, took a couple of giant steps toward the TV, and turned it off.

“If people are going to talk that way on television, we’ll not watch it!” he barked. Mom and I were both a little startled. “Dad has used that word on occasion,” I thought to myself, and Mom said, “I don’t think ‘damn’ is *such* a bad word,” which, by the way, surprised me a lot. A few minutes later dad told me to turn the TV on again but to change the channel. How things have changed!

Swearing is clearly out of place for a Christian—anyone for that matter—but not because it’s a violation of the third commandment, “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God” (Ex 20:7; cf. Dt 5:11). Swearing in *general* and misusing the name of the LORD in *particular* are two different things. All misuse of the LORD’s name is swearing, but not all swearing entails misusing the LORD’s name. Swearing is out of place for a Christian because it flies in the face of what the New Testament says about the believer’s speech. Paul tells the Ephesians, “Dirty stories, foul talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, remind each other of God’s goodness, and be thankful” (5:4 TLB), and tells the Colossians, “But now is the time to cast off and throw away all these rotten garments of anger, hatred, cursing, and dirty language” (3:8 TLB). It’s out of place for people in general because it’s crass and betrays a lack of self-control.

Misusing the name of the LORD involves using “the name of the Lord for *any valueless purpose*, not just for a false oath, as it is usually interpreted (this is only a particular instance, whereas this is not the place for particulars), but in general for *any worthless practice*” (U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 243). To use the LORD’s name lightly in this careless, crude way, namely, swearing, is to disrespect the Holy God behind the name. While *Yahweh*, translated “the LORD,” is technically God’s name, no one uses his proper name as an expletive. Nevertheless, using *Elohim*, translated “God,” as an expletive is equally unacceptable. Any empty reference to deity used in swearing is a violation of the third commandment. The same goes for the use of the Lord’s (lower case) name in swearing.



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read Exodus 20:7

7 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."

Read in another translation

7 "Never use the name of **Yahweh** your **Elohim** carelessly. **Yahweh** will make sure that anyone who carelessly uses his name will be punished." (NOG)

7 "You shall not use the name of Jehovah your God irreverently, nor use it to swear to a falsehood. You will not escape punishment if you do." (TLB)

Read a complementary passage James 3:3-8

3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "misuse."
- Circle "LORD."
- Circle "God."
- Box "for" indicating *reason*.
- Underline "not hold anyone guiltless." What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Identify the *name* of God (i.e., “LORD” small caps) to which the third commandment refers.
 2. Identify the translation you think is *more general*—“take in vain” (ESV) or “misuse” (NIV)—and explain why.
 3. What is *specifically* prohibited by the third commandment?
 4. What is *generally* prohibited by the third commandment?
 5. The *reason* for obeying this commandment is expressed using *litotes*. Describe this figure of speech (see note).
 6. Explain its meaning here.
 7. Does the third commandment also prohibit *misusing* the Lord’s (i.e., “Lord” lower case) name? Explain why or why not.
 8. Do you distinguish taking the LORD’s name in vain from swearing? How so?
 9. Relate what James says about “the tongue” to the third commandment.
 10. **Discussion:** Swearing and misusing the Lord’s name—do Christians take it as seriously as we should? Share your thoughts.
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Commentary On The Text

Exodus 20:7 contains the third commandment of the Decalogue, “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God,” followed by the *reason* to obey it, “for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” The commandment raises a number of questions: 1) What does the commandment prohibit, that is, to what *specifically* does misusing the name of the LORD refer? 2) What does that prohibition entail, that is, to what *generally* does misusing the name of the LORD also refer? 3) What might be the penalty for breaking the commandment?

What the commandment prohibits depends on the meaning of the Hebrew word [šāw] most frequently translated “misuse” (NIV, HCSB, et al.) or “take in vain” (ESV, NET, et al.). According to one commentator, “šāw” is used in biblical Hebrew in several ways: to denote *to be false or deceitful* with respect to speaking (Deut. 5:20 in reference to being a false witness against a neighbor; Exod. 23:1 in reference to a false report or rumor)” (Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 419, italics added). It also refers to being false in worship and being false in prophecy. To tie God’s name to a falsehood amounts, generally speaking, to proclaiming something false in the name of God. So misusing or taking the LORD’s name in vain pertains *specifically* to perjury, first and foremost.

But more *generally*, it entails showing disrespect for the LORD by mentioning his name “for no good purpose” (John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 286). Another author concurs: “The primary meaning of ‘misuse the name of the Lord’ (*nāšāh šēm Yahweh*, lit., ‘raise up Yahweh’s name for no good’) would appear to be invoking his name as guarantor of one’s words. Examples include promising someone something ‘by Yahweh,’ meaning: ‘I guarantee you that my promise is true, or Yahweh may kill me or otherwise punish me if I don’t keep my promise,’ or giving legal testimony with the meaning of ‘I swear that my testimony in this legal matter/before this court is true with the guarantee that Yahweh may kill me or otherwise punish me if it isn’t.’ In other words, the most basic, core idea behind this commandment is the prohibition of *perjury*” (Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, NAC, 455).

However, this core meaning *entails* a broader significance. The same author goes on to say: “We must remember, however, that the commandment is worded generally enough to encompass *any misuse* of Yahweh’s name—from making light of it or overtly

mocking it, to speaking about Yahweh in any way disrespectfully, to using it as the theophoric element in a personal name under social pressure to have one’s family ‘look orthodox’ when in fact their beliefs were pagan/idolatrous” (Stuart, 456, italics added).

This would account in part for the Jewish practice of not pronouncing the tetragrammaton, YHWH, saying “Adonai” (i.e., “Lord”) instead, as a safeguard against any possibility of breaking the third commandment. And while the name of God referred to here is *Yahweh*, the commandment extends to any frivolous or disrespectful reference to deity—especially any reference to “God” used as an expletive in swearing. As another commentator says, “Yahweh’s names and titles, must be honored, blessed, praised, celebrated, invoked, pronounced, and so shared. To treat Yahweh’s name with disrespect is to treat his gift lightly, to underestimate his power, to scorn his Presence, and to misrepresent to the family of humankind his very nature as ‘The One Who Always Is’” (John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 3, *Exodus*, 288). And of course, the same is true by extension with respect to any frivolous or disrespectful reference to the Lord (lower case), since Jesus Christ is God incarnate.

What follows is the *reason* why the commandment is to be obeyed expressed using a figure of speech called *litotes*, defined as an affirmation expressed in terms of a negative to the contrary, as in “your generous gift will not go unappreciated,” meaning, of course, “your generous gift will be much appreciated.” Here “will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name” means “will certainly hold anyone guilty who misuses his name,” or simply, “will find guilty anyone who misuses his name” (NIRV). The punishment for breaking the commandment is, however, left unspecified. In theory it could take any form of God’s choosing, from something relatively minor to physical death, depending on the circumstances and reflecting the severity of the situation.

In a nutshell, the third commandment prohibits various *kinds* of things. Here are some examples: 1) false swearing in God’s name, e.g., giving false testimony under oath; 2) false teaching in God’s name, e.g., teaching specious theology; 3) disingenuous vowing in God’s name, e.g., making insincere promises to God; 4) rash swearing, e.g., using God’s name flippantly in expletive-laden speech. No doubt there are more.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 7 *misuse* I.e., “by swearing falsely” (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ex 20:7); see other translations: “take in vain” (ESV); “use irreverently” (TLB); “use carelessly” (NOG); “use lightly” (CJB); “use thoughtlessly” (ICB). “Taking Yahweh’s ‘name . . . in vain’ means using the name of God emptily, carelessly, profanely, for no purpose, in a common way. The name of God represents the Person of God. The Israelites were to show respect for the Person of God by their use of His name. They were not to use it simply for emphasis, or for any unworthy objective in their speech (cf. Matt. 5:33-37; James 5:12)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Exodus,” 2022 ed., 191-92, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/exodus.pdf). Swearing that includes references to God and Jesus Christ amounts to misuse, too, but the times they are changing. Richard Nordquist writes, “Swearing, like any other feature of language, is subject to change over time. ‘[I]t would appear that in Western society the major shifts in the focus of **swearing** have been from religious matters (more especially the breaching of the commandment against taking the Lord’s name in vain) to sexual and bodily functions, and from opprobrious insults, such as *coolie* and *kike*. *Both of these trends reflect the increasing secularization of Western society*,’ (Hughes 1991)” (“What Are Swear Words and What Are they Used For,” thoughtco.com/swear-word-term-1691888, italics added).

v. 7 *the LORD* Cf. “Never use the name of *Yahweh* your *Elohim* carelessly. *Yahweh* will make sure that anyone who carelessly uses his name will be punished” (NOG). The name of *Elohim*, God, is expressed by the *tetragrammaton* YHWH, translated *Yahweh*. The significance of the name is explained to Moses in Ex 3:14-15 and 6:2-3. In the NIV the tetragrammaton is rendered “LORD” in small caps (rather than *Yahweh*) to distinguish it from “Adonai” rendered “Lord” in lower case.

v. 7 *God* Heb. *’elōhîm* rendered “Elohim” or “God” in English. The noun is plural, but it is used with singular verbs when it refers to the one true God and is called by some a plural of majesty, honor, or fullness. It suggests unity and diversity within the Godhead that is accommodated by the doctrine of the Trinity. It is also used to refer to false gods (plural), angels, and human leaders (judges, kings, Messiah).

v. 7 *not hold guiltless* Or “leave unpunished” (*The NET Bible*, 22^{tn} on Ex 20:7). An example of a figure of speech called *litotes*, that is, an understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary. For example, saying “It’s not the best weather today” during a hurricane would be an example of *litotes*, implying through ironic understatement that the weather is, in fact, horrible. Here “not hold guiltless” means “will most certainly hold guilty.” “To ‘hold guiltless’ (*yěnaqqeh*) connotes ‘letting someone get away without punishment.’ That is expressly what Yahweh will not do if his name is misused” (Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, NAC, 457).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Don't violate the third commandment by using the Lord's name deceitfully
or as an expletive in swearing.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

A name is usually the first thing you learn about someone. It's a group of letters representing sounds that ends up representing us our entire life. For this reason, parents lovingly put so much thought and effort into naming their children. Does your family have any fun or interesting stories involving names? Are there any names you immediately knew you could never use? While we all end up with various nicknames and titles throughout our lives, our name continues to stay with us and is part of our identity; it even becomes associated with our character. A. W. Tozer proposed that, "What comes to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." What comes to mind when you think of God? What names and titles do you use to address him? Our words matter and they are reflections of these thoughts. Do the names and titles you use for God accurately reflect his character? Does the way you use his name honor him? Tozer goes on to write, "Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God." When we think of God's character, his name, and the ways we address him we are reminded of who he is and who we are in relation to him. Ultimately, this leads to our worship of him. Our Core Competency states that, "I worship God for who he is and what he has done for me." Our words are an avenue of worship. Let's use our words to praise his good and holy name! Let us use his name wisely and worshipfully in our homes!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Exodus 20:7.

1. What does God say we should NOT do?
2. What does it mean to take his name in vain?
3. What does God say about those who take his name in vain?

What Do You Think?

Names are super important. It's fun to see that God gave Adam the responsibility of naming all the animals back in Genesis. What do you think that was like? Draw a picture of an imaginary animal and name it.

What Do You Do?

Think of as many names or titles for God as you can. Write out a list as a family and discuss what each name means to you.

CORE COMPETENCY: Self-Control

I take charge of myself with Jesus' help.

MEMORY VERSE: Galatians 5:1

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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