

Command 3 - Do Not Use The Lord's Name In Vain.

June 10, 2018

It was January 8, 1697, at 2 p.m.. Thomas Aikenhead was led to the gallows. The rope was put around his neck. The hangman kicked away the ladder. He hung in the air until his feet stopped moving. What was the crime that led to the death of this 20-year-old man?

Breaking the third commandment.

The case against Thomas was that for more than a year he had publicly, consistently and unrepentantly cursed God and Jesus. According to the Scottish parliament, the unrepentant cursing the name of God was a crime that could eventually be punishable by death, and in Thomas Aikenhead's case, it was.¹

I don't share this piece of history to suggested we should return blasphemy laws from the 1600s but simply to show you how far we have drifted in our day from what once was sacred, the way we spoke of God. If you are on the Internet, you will see the name of Jesus frequently used as a cuss word. God is used as an explicative without reverence. At one time, not too long ago, the names of God and Jesus were spoken with reverence, as the third commandment says they should be.

This summer at CrossWinds, we are studying the Ten Commandments. In previous weeks, we learned the purpose of the commandments. They are given by God for our freedom and our joy. They weren't given to take away our lives but to give us life. *It was after God set his people free from Egypt that he gave them the Ten Commandments to keep them free.* The reason we are studying these

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Aikenhead

commandments is because God gave them for our good, our freedom and our joy.

In previous weeks, we looked at the first commandment, in which God told us to not worship any other god beside him. To offer our love and affections to another god is either to worship something as pointless as a scarecrow in a melon patch, or if there is spiritual power behind another so-called deity, it is a demonic power that desires to take away our lives, not to give us life.

Last week, we looked at the second commandment. While the first commandment is about worshipping the right God, the second commandment is about worshipping the right God the right way. God tells us to never attempt to create something to help us picture God or worship God. Why did God give this commandment?

Everything we create to help us worship God or picture God will reduce and distort him. Since God created the universe, there is nothing in the universe that can properly or adequately represent him.

The only way to picture God is not through a manmade image of God but through Jesus Christ. While we can't make an image of God, in love for us God took on flesh to make himself visible to us. In Jesus, God made the incomprehensible God more comprehensible.

This morning, we begin the third commandment. This moves from our worshiping of God to our speaking about God.

God is very concerned with how we treat his name. Let's read the commandment.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Exodus 20:7 (ESV)

To study this command, we will look at it under these headings: What does this command mean? Why did God give it? How do we break it? How does a New Testament Christian keep it?

What does this command mean?

We are not to use the Lord's name in vain. Vain means empty, meaningless, trivial, disrespectful or dishonorable. God is concerned that we don't speak his name casually or disrespectfully. Whenever God's name is spoken, the weight and authority of God should be carried with the way we speak it. We should never speak God's name as a swear word or even a casual word.

Why did God give this command?

God's name reflects his identity and character.

Some of you saw the news this past week about Kristian Saucier. He was a former sailor on a U.S. naval submarine that was pardoned by President Trump. Kristian took a few photos on his cell phone while on duty in a nuclear submarine. What he did was wrong. He admits it. It wasn't done maliciously. It was not to sell secrets to the Russians. It was the foolish choice of a young man. The highest levels of government set out to make an example of Kristian. He was given a long jail sentence for what was a foolish and immature choice. Many people thought his sentence was overdone, but his conviction was over and he had no hope other than to serve his time.



In our government, there is one Hail-Mary hope for a man in Kristian's position. That is called a presidential pardon. The president of the United States has the power to write a pardon and release anyone from jail. That is what President Trump did for Kristian Saucier this past week.

Possibly some of you saw the interview with Kristian after he learned the President of the United States pardoned him . You saw how choked up he was in his voice because of overwhelming gratitude to the president of our nation for saving his life and returning him to his family. He spoke President Trump's name with great gratitude, respect and dignity for two reasons. First, there was respect for the power of the office the president holds. Only the president of the United States has that kind of authority. Beyond immense respect for the president, there was incredible gratitude for the good the president did in his life.

There is a lot of negative talk about our president in the media. It is inconceivable that Kristian Saucier will ever speak of President Trump casually, thoughtlessly, or disrespectfully. Kristian Saucier owes President Trump his life.

In a similar fashion, the way we speak the name of God must reflect the greatness of our God and the greatness of what our God has done for us. Our God is much greater than the president of our country. He doesn't lead a nation. He created and sustains the entire universe. He gave us life. Our God did something much greater than a United States president could ever do. He gave us back our lives, not by merely signing a piece of paper but at great cost, the cost of his own son. Jesus took on flesh. He was made sin for us. He died one of the most hideous deaths known to man in our places. He took all the the

punishment of God's wrath that we deserve. He rose from the dead to conquer Satan, sin and death. He not only saved our lives eternally but he transformed us into the most blessed beings in the universe.

It is inconceivable to speak the name of God or Jesus casually, thoughtlessly or disrespectfully after all God has done for us.

God is committed to protecting and expanding his reputation.

...for you have exalted above all things your name and your word. Psalm 138:2 (ESV)

We often think of revering the Word of God, but the Psalmist tells us God is not just committed to revering his word, but he is also committed to revering his name, that is his reputation. This is not because God is egocentric but because his name deserves respect for who he is and what he has done. Remember God created everything. God sustains the universe. Every good thing we have comes from God. God has all power. He has all knowledge. He has all wisdom. Best of all, he completely forgave us, saved us and transforms us into new creations through Jesus. The only proper response is to revere and worship God when we speak his name.

When God works on this earth, he even works in such a way that the reverence and awe will grow. As an example of this, look what the Bible says about the Exodus and why Pharaoh continually hardened his heart against letting the people of Israel go free.

But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. Exodus 9:16 (ESV)

God ordained the hardness of Pharaoh's heart so God could do increasingly greater plagues against Egypt to build the fame of his name over the gods of Egypt.

The fame of God's name through the plagues and the Exodus was not just limited to Egypt. As we study the Old Testament, we see that when the ancient Israelites began conquering the Land of Canaan, a great distance away from Egypt and an entire generation after the Exodus, the Canaanites were afraid of the Israelites because they heard what their God did in the land of Egypt, and nobody forgot. Look what it says in the book of Joshua about this.

For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. Joshua 2:10–11 (ESV)

God is not just committed to protecting his reputation but he is committed to expanding it so everyone on the earth knows the greatness of our God.

God tells us to pray that his name would be hallowed.

In the Lord's prayer, the first thing Jesus tells us to pray for in his model prayer for us to follow is that God's name would be revered.

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." Matthew 6:9 (ESV)

Hallowed simply means treated as holy, respected. As I studied this week, I realized this is not something I pray for in my prayer time. Maybe you just had the same realization. I should be praying for the fame and reverence of God's name in this world because God is so committed to it.

God doesn't hold guiltless those who speak disrespectfully about him.

Today, if you check social media, the name of Jesus and God are used as cuss words. They are used constantly and disrespectfully. It is easy to fall into the trap of our culture and use Jesus' name as a swear word and not think it is a big deal. We forget this command comes with a promise. It is a promise that reminds us that the speaking the name of God dishonorably carries consequences.

...for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Exodus 20:7 (ESV)

To show you an idea of how seriously God wants his name revered, look with me at Leviticus 24.

Now an Israelite woman's son, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the people of Israel. And the Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel fought in the camp, and the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name, and cursed. Then they brought him to Moses. His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan. And they put him in custody, till the will of the Lord should be clear to them. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Bring out of the camp the one who cursed, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him. And speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death. Leviticus 24:10–16 (ESV)

Using God's name as a swear word carried a death sentence. Realizing this, it should cause us to reflect on the feelings God has when people use his name flippantly or disrespectfully today. It is not a casual thing that God ignores. It is a serious thing that God promises to punish.

God's name deserves respect because there is power in his name.

One of the things most of us do not realize is there is literal power in God's name. For example, we are saved by calling on the name of Jesus.

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12 (ESV)

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13 (ESV)

If calling on the name of Jesus is powerful enough to save us from eternal damnation, it is unthinkable that we would ever speak the name of Jesus disrespectfully.

The healings and exorcisms in the book of Acts were also all accomplished in the name of Jesus.

...Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour. Acts 16:18 (ESV)

My simple point is that if there is so much power in the name of Jesus that his name is enough to send demons running, it is unthinkable that the name of Jesus would be spoken casually from our lips.

How do we take the name of God in vain?

While most of us understand why we must speak God’s name respectfully, there are many ways to violate this command beside outright cuss words.

False prophets use God’s name to advance their agenda.

And the Lord said to me: “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.” Jeremiah 14:14 (ESV)

God said in the Old Testament there were false prophets running around saying that God said things he didn’t say. They were just liars. They were using God’s name to advance their personal agendas. God didn’t like it one bit. How would you like it if somebody was running around claiming you said things you

didn't say? If we are upset when people put words in our mouths, imagine how upset God is when false prophets put words in his mouth.

By the way, this didn't stop in the Old Testament times. We have plenty of false prophets running around today with their books, and speaking tours claiming God said things he never told them. This is why the Bible tells us to test the people who claim to be speaking the Word of God to see if they line up with Scripture. God doesn't say new things that don't line up with the old things.

My favorite example of modern-day false prophets are the people who claim they can predict the end of the world.

How many of you remember this sign on the road from Arnolds Park to Milford just before Perkins? This was a sign put up by Harold Camping, who claimed he knew the date for the end of the world. Incidentally, the end of



the world didn't happen, in case you are wondering. Even the sign itself cracked me up. What was its purpose? It gave a date for the end of the world but didn't even tell me to repent. What was I supposed to do about it besides purchase marshmallows and hot dogs to roast over the fire?

What annoyed me about this is Jesus says nobody knows the day or the hour of his return, so what made Harold Camping so arrogant that he claimed to know the date of Christ's return? I honestly think Harold Camping fell off his bike and wasn't wearing a helmet to come up with such a loony prediction.

Recently, Harold Camping died, and now he stands before Jesus as a false prophet who lowered the reputation of Jesus Christ instead of raised it because he took the Lord's name in vain. He used the name of God to promote his own false agenda.

Swearing empty promises

...do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the Lord. Zechariah 8:17 (ESV)

As Christians, when we give our word, it is a form of an oath. The word Christian literally means little Christ. We are representing Jesus in this world. When we give our word, we must be careful to not make a promise unless we plan to keep that promise. To make a promise and not keep that promise is to use God's name in vain and tear down Christ's reputation in this world since we represent him.

Watch out for people who say, "The Lord told me."

We know God can speak directly to people. He did with Paul on the road to Damascus. While the Lord can speak to people directly, that is not usually the way he speaks. I am suspicious of people who tell me the Lord told them to let me know something. We had one of these guys in my early years at CrossWinds. He would come in on Monday or Tuesday mornings with his word from the Lord of what we were to do at CrossWinds. After listening to what he said, "The Lord told me to tell you..." I thanked him for sharing but didn't put much stock in his random insights. God is just as capable of speaking to me and the rest of church leadership, not just this man who was not qualified for leadership.

If someone says they have a word from the Lord and they have a verse, we can talk about it. If they don't at least have a verse, I honestly think they came from a box of granola. All that is left is to figure out if they are the fruit, the nut or the flake. I have seen this too many times where someone says, "God told me to tell you." They are taking the Lord's name in vain. Let me share some examples.

In college, one of the guys in our group of friends began dating a girl. Soon, they spent all of their time together. They became sexually active. A few of us confronted them and told them God didn't want them sleeping together. There are verses that instruct us on this, like Hebrews 13:4.

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Hebrews 13:4 (ESV)

It doesn't look good when you are sleeping with your girlfriend and reading this verse. He had the classic response. He told me they prayed about it and God said it was OK because someday they were going to get married. He claimed God told them it was OK to live in sin. Of course, the rest of the guys didn't agree with him because we had verses on this kind of stuff. Sure enough, a few months later they broke up. He was another guy from the box of granola. He was a fruit, nut or flake. That was using God's name in vain. It was misrepresenting God, claiming God spoken to him when God never did.

Single ladies, watch out for guys who say, "God told me that you are supposed to be my wife." I had this happen when I was a youth pastor. We were vetting three candidates for an associate pastor position. Since I was on staff, I was part of the review team. We flew in one guy, and from the beginning, we knew something was wrong. He was completely depressed from the moment we

met him. It turns out his fiancée had broken up with him just days before the job interview.

Then we heard the rest of the story and understood why she ditched him. When he met this girl, he thought she was amazing. He dated her a few times, then told her that God spoke to him letting her she should be his wife. This young lady was swept off her feet that this man studying to be a pastor was given a special word from God that he should marry her. They were engaged. As time went on during the engagement, she saw his true colors. He was a manipulator and controller. She broke off their engagement. She said, “God may have told you to marry me but he didn’t tell me to marry you.” This young pastor was pulling spiritual blackmail on this girl. He was using the Lord’s name to try and manipulate her into marrying him. He was destroying God’s reputation. He was misrepresenting his God.

Single ladies, if God speaks to you about marrying someone, he will speak to both of you, not just one of you. Watch out for guys who use the Lord’s name in vain and attempt spiritual blackmail.

Don’t use the name of God as a swear word.

Probably the most obvious way to use the name of God lightly or irreverently is to use it as a swear word. My guess is that most of us don’t have a regular problem with using the Lord’s name as a cuss word. There are times we use God’s name as a swear word. If you hit your thumb with a hammer, for some reason you do not say Chubby Bunny. You do not say Hubba Bubba. You go right to the top with an, “Oh my God “or “Jesus Christ.” Why do we do this? The Bible

says the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. When we use God's name as a swear word after we hit our thumbs with a hammer, the root of that profanity is there is a lack of awe, love and respect for God and Jesus in our hearts, or even if we cussed after hitting our thumbs with the hammer, we would catch ourselves, repent and bite our lips.

If you find yourself using the Lord's name as a cuss word, admit your sin, confess your sin. God is faithful to forgive all our sin through Jesus and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let's talk social media. How many of you type OMG as a response? Some of you are trying to justify that response because you claim it means "Oh my goodness." No, it doesn't. You know what it means. I know what it means. It is taking the Lord's name in vain. It is treating the name of God disrespectfully.

Another form of swearing is what I call Christian swearing. We try to say something close to using God's name in vain but we are off just a shade so we can say we technically say we didn't use God's name in vain. For example, instead of saying, "God damn it!" we try to Christianize it and say, "Gosh darn it." We feel good because we didn't swear, but the rest of the world doesn't know the difference because our swearing is so close to the real thing it might as well be the real thing. Instead of saying, "Jesus" as a swear words we say, "Jeez." That is close but off by a sliver so we can claim we never said the Lord's name in vain. Instead of saying, "What the hell?" We say, "What the heck?" Instead of saying, "Oh my God!" We say, "Oh my gosh." We are only off by a shade so we think we can swear with impunity because we technically didn't cross the line. The

problem is, for the average person on the street, you might as well be swearing because they don't recognize the slight difference.

The Bible gives us a standard for our words and regular swearing and Christian swearing is not part of it.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)

Unwholesome means rotten. We are to only speak words that are building people up, not tearing people down.

Be careful of Christian cliches

While not as bad as swearing, we still lower the respect and honor of God's name when we sprinkle Christian cliches into our conversation. God's name should be treated as heavy, significant, and weighty. God's name is a big deal.

With Christians cliches, we don't give God's name the weight and significance it deserves. For example, a common Christian cliché people use is, "Praise the Lord. It is Tuesday!" "Well, praise the Lord I was hit by a car." "Well, praise the Lord."

Another one is "Lord have mercy." "I have cancer. Well, Lord have mercy." "The price went up at Casey's gas station pump. Well, Lord have mercy." It may sound very spiritual to constantly throw in those Christian cliches, but many times they make God's name trivial and meaningless. Remember, speaking God's name in vain means speaking it carelessly, thoughtlessly or weightlessly.

Be careful of singing the name of God without meaning.

Another common way we break this commandment is when we sing at church. Rather than fixing our thoughts on the words we are singing to Jesus, while our mouths are singing our minds are thinking about BBQ or planning the lunch menus for our families. That is singing the great name of our God thoughtlessly, weightlessly, and carelessly. It is singing the Lord's name in vain.

Don't claim God's name for your business if you won't represent him with your work.

How many of you own your own business? Some people that own their own business like to put a fish on their business card or their website. They want to let people know they are Christians. I personally don't have a problem with that. I would like to give brothers and sisters in Christ business. Galatians says we are to do good to all people, especially the household of God.

The problem is that if you are going to present yourself as a Jesus person, you need to run your business in a way that properly represents the name of Jesus. You can't steal from people. You can't rip people off. You can't over-bill. You can't under-deliver. You need to have a good attitude at work. When you and a customer disagree, you need to handle the disagreement in a way that makes people see Christ's character. Having a fish on your business card is a scary thing because it means you are representing the name of Christ. Don't put the fish on your card in vain. That fish needs to mean something.

Don't use God's name to promote a godless agenda.

One of the more common things to do is to use God's name to baptize my personal agenda. I am going to get political. I know we are not supposed to get political in church, but I will.

In 2013, the Iowa democratic candidate was Jack Hatch. Along with Tyler Olsen, he joined abortion activists to pray for increased abortion access. Let me quote from the prayer at that rally.

“We pray for women who've been made afraid of their own power by their paternalistic religion. We pray for the blessing of choice. We give thanks, oh Lord, for the doctors, both current and future, who provide quality abortions. We pray for increased financial support for low income women to have access to abortions... We pray for the families that have chosen that they may know the blessing of choice.”²

My guess is the aborted children would disagree with this prayer. Let's sprinkle a little god-talk over mass murder of our children to make it sound good. I don't think God likes abortion. To ask God for quality abortion doctors is to misrepresent God's name. It is attempting to use God's name to justify the mass murder of our children.

While I am in trouble for being political, I'll stay political. One of my favorite examples of attempting to use the name of God to promote a godless agenda was when President Barak Obama addressed Planned Parenthood, the largest abortion provider in the U.S. He finished his address by saying,

“...As long as we've got to fight to protect a woman's right to make her own choices about her own health, I want you to know that you've got a president who's going to be right there with you, fighting every step of the way,” “Thank you, Planned Parenthood. God bless you.”³

² <http://www.lifenews.com/2013/08/29/video-iowa-democrats-and-candidates-for-governor-pray-for-abortion/>

³ <http://www.lifenews.com/2013/04/26/obama-to-planned-parenthood-abortion-biz-god-bless-you/>

Don't pretend God is going to bless the mass murder of our children. God will not bless you for that. He will judge you. That is using God's name in vain.

Don't use God's name as a joke.

Sometimes well-meaning Christians who are looking for ways to try and connect with our culture use the name of God or Jesus irreverently. Let me show you some examples from T-shirts

Here is the Jesus Saves soccer shirt. Jesus is a goalie. I think he looks cute with the goatee. The problem is that Jesus created the universe. Out of love for us and his father's will, he became a man, died one of the most barbaric deaths conceived of by man and bore the weight of all of our sin to save billions of people



from sin, Satan and eternal damnation in the lake of fire. He died to make us the most blessed beings in the universe. That is a huge identity. Now Jesus is reduced to a soccer goalie. I understand this is well-intentioned, but it is using the name of God in vain. It is treating the name of Jesus casually and thoughtlessly.

Here is the Bloodwiser T-shirt. Now



the king of kings is the king of beers. You can just feel the vainness of this T-shirt. If Jesus comes back, you don't want to be wearing this shirt when you see him in the



air. If Jesus comes back and there are guys that meet him without

their shirts, it is because they were wearing this shirt and they took it off before they met him face to face.

These shirts are just a little religious humor, but given the greatness of our God and Jesus, they are using the name of Jesus in vain.

What does it mean for a New Testament Christian to not use the Lord's name in vain?

When Moses was on Mt. Sinai to get the Ten Commandments, that was not the first time he had a face-to-face meeting with God. We find Moses and God first meeting in Exodus 3 at the burning bush. Moses was tending sheep in the wilderness when there was a bush on fire that didn't burn up. He went to check it out, and it turned out God was in the bush. The bush had a big ask of Moses. God in the bush told Moses to go to the most powerful man in the world, who was ruling the biggest empire in the world, and tell him to let God's people go. "Let a few million people go who are your free slave labor force to build your pyramids and sustain your nation."

Obviously, Moses was a little freaked out. If he went to Pharaoh and told him he needed to let a few million people go because a bush told him to and the bush is pretty fired up about this issue, he knew it would not go well. Moses asked an understandable question. "Who should I say sent me?" God said, "Tell him that I AM has sent you. My name is Yahweh. I am the one who creates and sustains everything."

We know the rest of the story. Move forward a few thousand years to when Jesus was walking the earth. Jesus was healing people. Folks were trying

to figure out Jesus' identity, so they asked him who he was, and this is what he said.

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." John 8:58 (ESV)

Right after this the religious leaders picked up stones to kill him. Why did they do this? Jesus claimed to be God. The God who spoke to Moses had the name, "I am." Jesus claimed to have the name "I am." Jesus claimed to be the God of the Old Testament who freed their ancestors out of Egypt and spoke to Moses.

For some of you, this is a new connection. You are not sure I am right. Let me show you a verse that proves this beyond a shadow of doubt.

Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt... Jude 5 (ESV)

Jesus was the one who said to Moses, "Don't use my name in vain. Do not use my name weightlessly or worthlessly." Then Jesus took on flesh. Jesus died on the cross. Jesus rose from the dead. The Bible tells us what happened to Jesus and how we should treat the name of Jesus.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:8–11 (ESV)

The way we keep from using the name of God thoughtlessly or carelessly is to praise the name of Jesus enthusiastically, passionately and consistently. Since eternity is all about giving praise, honor and glory to Jesus, let's begin to do that now.

You see, the best way to avoid making too little of God's name as we see in the Old Testament is to make a big deal about the name of Jesus from the New Testament. The God who saved Israel from slavery out of Egypt and the Jesus who saved us from Satan, sin and death are one and the same.

This week, the best way we can avoid breaking this command is to make much of the name of Jesus in our thinking, our speaking and our living.

Before we go, we are going to close with a worship song. I ask you to sing this song of worship to Jesus passionately from the bottom of your heart. Great worship of Jesus is what we do now and even greater worship of Jesus will be what we do for all of eternity so the name of Jesus will always be the name above every name.



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