**Third Commandment Discussion Guide**

**Exodus 20 :7 ; Deuteronomy 5 :11**

**\* Sermon Overview**

At Fegenbush, Pastor Aaron will focus on how Jesus rescues us and restores us to bear witness to His name. His outline will be the following: (1) The Name; (2) The Command; (3) Rescue and Restore: His name in Our Lives. In the section on the command, he will discuss four ways we take the Name in vain: (a) When we speak slightly and irreverently; (b) When we profess God’s name but do not live answerably to it; (c) When we pray to him, but do not believe in him; (d) When in any way we profane and abuse His Word.

At East, Pastor Blake will emphasize awe/reverence/fear at the name of the Lord and our call to bear witness to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. His outline will be: (1) The Name of the Lord; (2) The Command of the Lord; (3) Jesus the Lord.

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to cover all that is found within these questions in your community group. These questions will give you a grasp of what the text says and means so that we can think through how to apply the text to our lives.

**1. What is the context and meaning of the 3rd Commandment?**

*In the third commandment, we continue to see what love for the Lord with all of our being looks like in daily life. Love for the Lord means revering/honoring/fearing Yahweh with our thoughts/affections/motives/deeds/words in all of life—our personal life, our family life, our church life, our work life, our whole life. However, the third commandment focuses on the negative: Exodus 20:7 and Deuteronomy 5:11 forbids the “taking the name of the Lord your God in vain,” for God will condemn/judge those who dishonor/misuse His name. We take the Lord’s name in vain when we speak deceptively in the Lord’s name, when we speak carelessly about the Lord’s name, when we swear/curse using the Lord’s name, and when we live wrecklessly/sinfully in the Lord’s name. When we take the Lord our God’s name in vain, we can be assured that judgment/condemnation is coming upon us, unless we are in Christ. In order to walk in obedience to the third commandment, Christ has redeemed us, sealed us with His Spirit, and sent us out to bear witness to His name in the power of His Spirit and with the sword of His Word.*

*As you think about this commandment, answer the following questions: How do we break the third commandment? How have you seen the Lord’s name used in vain? Why is it wrong to take the Lord’s name in vain?*

*For passages related to the third commandment, see Exodus 3:14-15; 6:1-8; 20:7; 34:6-7; Leviticus 19:12; 20:3; 24:10-16; Deuteronomy 5:11; 28:58-59; 32:1-4; Job 36:24; Psalms 29:2; 111:9; 138:2; Ecclesiastes 5:1; Isaiah 52:5-6; Jeremiah 10:5-7; 14:14-16; 27:15; 29:21; Ezekiel 36:22-23; Malachi 1:6-7; 2:2; Matthew 5:33-37; 6:9; 12:22-37; 23:16-22; Acts 19:10-20; 1 Timothy 1:15-16; James 5:12; Revelation 4:8; 15:3-4.*

*Alistair Begg writes, “So we see that the third commandment on the negative side forbids every wrong use of God’s name and on the positive side demands that we use His name with reverence and awe. Why is this so important? The straightforward answer: because God’s name is more than just a title. His name declares His character. It proclaims who He is and what He does. The name of God comes to stand realistically for God Himself.”*

*Alistair Begg writes, “According to this commandment, we must learn to avoid the ways in which God’s name is used wrongly and we must devote ourselves to honor and reverence His name.” Following the Westminster Catechisms (both the shorter and longer), Begg notes four areas we ought to honor and revere God’s name: in our thinking, our praying, our speaking, and our walking. Also, Begg notes four ways that we misuse God’s name: in perjury, in blasphemy, in flippancy, and in hypocrisy.*

*J. I. Packer writes, “What is forbidden is any use or involvement of God’s name that is empty, frivolous, or insincere.” He continues, “This touches three things at least. The first thing is irreverence, speaking or thinking of God in a way that insults him by not taking seriously his wisdom and goodness….The second thing is bad language, using God’s holy name as a swearword to voice men’s unholy feelings….The third thing, and the one that needs special stress because, as we saw, we are all so slack here, is promise-keeping.”*

*Philip Ryken writes, “What God forbids is not the use of his name, then, buts misuse. To be specific, we are not to use it in a vain or empty way. The specific misuse that God has in mind is speaking about him carelessly, thoughtlessly, or even flippantly, as if he didn’t matter or really didn’t exist at all….To dishonor God’s name in any way is to denigrate his holiness. It is a way of saying that God himself is worthless.” Also, he writes, “There are many ways to use God’s name properly. His name can be praised, honored, blessed, and celebrated. It can be lifted on high and exalted. It can be worshiped and adored….But one of the best places to learn the proper use of God’s name is the book of Psalms.”*

*Jochem Douma mentions three ways that God’s name was misused/profaned in Old Testament times: in sorcery (Deuteronomy 18:10-12), in false prophecy (Jeremiah 14:14-15), and in the taking of false oaths (Leviticus 19:12; Jeremiah 5:2).*

*Trevin Wax lists five ways that we break the third commandment: (1) By speaking untruthfully about God; (2) By cursing or swearing in God’s name; (3) By trivializing God’s name; (4) By leveraging God’s name for our own agenda; (5) By living as hypocrites.*

*Alistair Begg writes, ‘In considering each of the commandments, it is important for us to keep in mind certain principles of interpretation. (a) The commandments are spiritual and therefore require that we obey them from our hearts. Outward conformity must be the product of inward affection. (b) There is a positive and negative aspect to each commandment. Where a sin is forbidden, a duty is commanded; where a duty is commanded, a sin is implied. (c) Each commandment forbids not only the acts of sin but also the desire and inclination to sin. So where a sin is forbidden, what leads to that sin is also forbidden.”*

**2. What does the 3rd Commandment teach us about the character of God?**

*In the Hebrew mindset, to reveal your name is to reveal yourself—your identity, character, being. Thus, when God reveals His name, He is revealing to the Israelites (and to us through His Word) who He is and what He does. As we think about God’s name (Yahweh), we learn several things about who God is and what God does: (1) God is eternal, self-existent, self-sustaining, and sovereign—We know this about God because He reveals His name to us rather than someone giving a name to Him (see Exodus 3:14-15; 6:1-8); (2) God is Creator (see Genesis 1-2); (3) God is Powerful (see God’s power to deliver Israel from slavery in Exodus 1-20); (4) God is Holy—He expects/demands to be worshiped in a distinct way that is worthy of His name; (5) God is Redeemer/Savior—Note the personal element in the third commandment, “You shall not take the name of the Lord* ***your*** *God in vain.” God announces that judgment/condemnation will come upon those who misuse His name because when one misuses His name it misrepresents His character/person to the watching world but more importantly it disobeys/dishonors/disrespects/misrepresents Yahweh.*

*The list above of is by no means exhaustive, but it is an attempt to note some attributes of God from this commandment and the Exodus narrative. What other attributes of God do we see in this commandment? How does growing in knowledge of God enable/empower us to honor God’s name rightly? For other names/attributes of God, see* [*https://www.navigators.org/resource/ praying-names-attributes-god/*](https://www.navigators.org/resource/%20praying-names-attributes-god/)

*Alistair Begg writes, “The ‘name’ of God declares what God is (His essence) and what He does (His works). By means of this name, God declares Himself to be, ‘self-existing, self-determining, and sovereign.’”*

*Edmund Clowney writes, “In the Old Testament, however, the name of God is used often. To ‘call on the name of the Lord’ became a synonym for worship (see Genesis 4:26b). When priests would bless the people, they would do so by putting God’s name on them (Numbers 6:22-27). The psalms use God’s name and propose its use in song and praise on the lips of God’s people. The prophets would authenticate their message by claiming its revelation from God and placing his name on their pronouncements as a kind of validating signature.”*

**3. How does the 3rd Commandment reveal our sinfulness and need for Christ?**

*Apart from Christ, we only know how to take the Lord’s name in vain. We see evidence all around us in the culture and in our midst in lost family members/coworkers/friends. Yet, in Christ, we have been redeemed and restored to honor Christ’s name in all of our life and to bear witness to Christ’s name to all of our world (though, we do not do this perfectly). May the Spirit help us to honor Christ and to bear witness to Christ in all that we think, say, do, and desire.*

*As you think about this, dwell on the following questions: How do we see the breaking of the third commandment evidenced in the lives of unbelievers? How do we see the breaking of the third commandment displayed in the lives of believers? What is the difference (or what ought to be the difference) between the lives of believers and unbelievers regarding the use of the Lord’s name? How did Christ fulfill the third commandment in His earthly life, and how does he empower/enable us to obey the third commandment in our redeemed life? How can we help hold one another accountable for obeying the third commandment?*

*For passages related to Christians bearing/wearing the name of Christ, see Acts 4:12; Romans 10:13; 1 John 5:13; Isaiah 45:21-25; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 3:17.*

*Edmund Clowney writes, “In our praises, our prayers, our sharing of the gospel, we lift up the name of Jesus, the mark and power of our lives.”*

**4. How might the 3rd Commandment apply to our lives today?**

*Four areas where obedience to this commandment can be fulfilled is the following: (1) Our personal life—As we live out the Christian life, let us walk as those who have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb. Let our talk match our walk so that we bear the name of Christ with honor and respect to the dying world around us. Where do you need to repent of misusing the Lord’s name? How can we practically obey this commandment by God’s grace in our daily life? (2) Our family life—As you seek to teach your children, how can you cultivate a respect, an honor, and a love for the Lord’s name in your family? How are you modeling for your children a love for the Lord’s name? (3) Our church life—As we walk the Christian life together, let us hold one another accountable for how we bear the name of Christ. When we gather for worship, do we worship the Lord’s name casually, do we pray half-heartedly or in vain repetition, and do we listen to God’s Word carelessly? (4) Our going life—As we go out to make disciples, how are we bearing witness to Christ’s name in all that we say, do, think, and desire? How is our obedience to this third commandment connected to our mission?*

*What other points of application can you think about regarding the third commandment? How might it apply to people in various stages and situations?*

*Edmund Clowney writes, “In short, a believer’s words and character should be as trustworthy as those of the living God (see Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12).”*

**\* Application Questions**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to use every question, for you will have time for 3 to 5 questions in your community group. Also, please feel freedom to adapt the question or to create a question that will best help your community group “be doers of the Word” (James 1:22), for you know the stage and situation of your group members.

1. What is the meaning of the commandment? What is forbidden in the commandment? How have you seen the Lord’s name used in vain? How does God expect us to honor His name? Why is it wrong to use the Lord’s name in vain?

2. What is the significance of God’s name? What do we learn about God’s name (His essence and His works) from Scripture?

3. How can we know/feel the weight and fullness of God’s glory/character/name? How would growing in our understanding of who God is and what God does shape how we talk/use God’s name?

4. How do we see the name of God misused in our lives and in the lives of those in our culture? How do we often hear God spoken about in our circles and in the world? Do any of these ways of speaking about God misuse and dishonor his name?

5. Why will God condemn/judge those who misuse/dishonor His name? What does this word of judgment teach us about God?

6. How does God’s grace through Christ enable/empower us to obey this commandment? Why is it important for us as believers to honor/fear/respect God’s name?

7. Why is it that we think so little of speaking up when we hear God’s name misused/dishonored (perhaps you’re not guilty of this)? As parents, how can you teach and model for your children how to honor/respect/love God’s name?

8. What names/attributes of God do you know? How do each of these cultivate a love and honor of God’s name in our lives?

9. Read Colossians 3:17. In our lives, how do we apply this verse? How does obedience to the third commandment apply to every area of our lives?

10. If you are struggling to facilitate conversation in your group or if you are looking to start conversation in your group, here are some questions to prompt conversation:

A. Question of Impression—What stood out to you in the pastor’s sermon? Why did it stand out to you?

B. Question of Application—How have you been seeking to apply the sermon in your own life this week? Or, what is one way that you can apply the sermon to your life this week?

C. Question of Clarity—If you had to sum up the main idea of the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? What main themes do you see in the text and did you hear in the sermon?

D. Question of Reflection—How have you seen God at work this week in your life and in the lives of those around you? How has God been working in you this week through His Word, through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through service/evangelism? What were the highlights and lowlights of your week?

E. Question of Mission—How will you pass on what you have heard, learned, and applied this week to another believer this week so that they may know and follow Jesus? How will what you heard, learned, and applied this week equip you to share Jesus with an unbeliever this week where you live, work, and play?

11. In his book, *Asking the Right Questions,* Matthew Harmon gives the following questions for understanding and applying the Bible:

A. Understanding the Bible

1. What do we learn about God?

a. Look for God’s character (who he is, what he is like)

b. Look for God’s conduct (what he is doing)

c. Look for God’s concerns (what thing/events/people he is concerned about)

2. What do we learn about people?

a. Look for aspects of what it means to be created in God’s image

b. Look for the fallen condition

c. Look for how God’s people should live

3. What do we learn about relating to God?

a. Look for things to praise and thank God for

b. Look for sin to confess and repent

c. Look for promises and truths to believe

4. What do we learn about relating to others?

a. Look for how we should interact with and treat others

b. Look for ways to pursue reconciliation with others

c. Look for specific ways to love, serve, and care for others

B. Applying the Bible

a. What does God want me to think/understand?

b. What does God want me to believe?

c. What does God want me to desire?

d. What does God want me to do?

**\* Sermon Take Away**

With all of our lives, let us honor/fear/respect God’s name.

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

1. Monday—Revelation 5; Isaiah 35

2. Tuesday—Revelation 6; Isaiah 36

3. Wednesday—Revelation 7; Isaiah 37

4. Thursday—Revelation 8; Isaiah 38

5. Friday—Revelation 9; Isaiah 39

6. Saturday—Revelation 10; Isaiah 40

7. Sunday—Revelation 11; Isaiah 41

* **Ten Commandments Series**

1 July 1st—4th Commandment

2 July 8th—5th Commandment

3 July 15th—6th Commandment

4 July 22nd—7th Commandment

5. July 29th—8th Commandment

6. August 5th—9th Commandment

7. August 12th—10th Commandment

* **Vision Series/Journey of Discipleship Series**

1. August 19th—TBD

2. August 26th—TBD

3. September 2nd—TBD

* **Gospel of Mark Series**

1. September 9th—Mark 1

2. September 16th—Mark 2

3. September 23rd—Mark 3

4. September 30th—Mark 4

5. October 7th—Mark 5

6. October 14th—Mark 6

7. October 21st—Mark 7

8. October 28th—Mark 8

9. November 4th—Mark 9

10. November 11th—Mark 10

11. November 18th—Mark 11

12. November 25th—Mark 12

13. December 2nd—Mark 13

14. December 9th—Mark 14

15. December 16th—Mark 15

16. December 30th—Mark 16

* **Stand Alone Sermons**

1. December 23rd—Christmas Message (Passage TBD)

2. December 24th—Christmas Message (Passage TBD)

1. For the discussion guide, I used the following resources: Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*; R. Alan Cole, *Exodus*; John Currid, *Exodus*;J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*; John Currid, *Deuteronomy*; Peter Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*; Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy*; Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Exodus*; Al Mohler, *Words from the Fire*; Alistair Begg, *Pathway to Freedom*; Edmund Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*; J. I. Packer, *Keeping the Ten Commandments*; Philip Ryken, *Written in Stone*; Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*; Mark Rooker, *The Ten Commandments*; *ESV Study Bible*; *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)