

## BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

**Sermon:** “Profaning the Name” (from the “Written in Stone” sermon series)

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:7

### Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of the Book of Exodus we are exploring the third of the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses for the people of Israel. The first two commandments dealt with “No other gods” (20:3) and “No idols” (20:4-6), and now we are exploring the restriction of misusing God’s name.
- The first four of the Ten Commandments revolve around our relationship to God and worship. The first commandment focuses on who is to be worshipped. This is God or YHWH and no other gods. The second commandment focuses on how God is to be worshipped. We are to worship God without the use of idols and only through imageless worship. The third commandment demands in what manner we are to worship God. This is through reverence and respect. We are to understand that God’s name carries God’s holy identity within it and that casually using His name demonstrates our lack of reverence toward God.
- Verse 7 says, “You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses His name.” This commandment prohibits any misuse or violation of God’s holy name and is meant to ensure the Israelites give reverence to it.
- We see that profanely using God’s name is also expressly forbidden in Leviticus 19:12, “And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord”, as well as Deuteronomy 5:11 and 6:13. Using God’s name in a profane way involves saying something false about the nature of God and using His name to demean or hurt others. These passages also suggest that a key component of this commandment is to prevent someone from breaking an oath.
- During this time in antiquity, it was customary for the ancient Jewish people to avoid saying God’s name (Yahweh), since avoiding saying the name would prevent any misuse or irreverence. This mainly revolved around exploiting God’s name for personal gain or any way contrary to God’s will.

### Key take-aways from the Sermon

- Today's scripture verse addresses how we use the name of God. "You shall not make *wrongful use* of the *name* of the Lord your God." -Exodus 20:7
- In Ephesians 4:19 and Colossians 4:6, Paul teaches us to be respectful and filled with grace when dealing with others.
- The other concern in this third commandment is not that we just refrain from speaking the name of God in a profane way, it is also that we abstain from speaking the name of God in a perfunctory way. This is a nonchalant or casual manner.
- The word *profane* means to make common, to de-sanctify something. For example, when we refer to God as "The man upstairs" and things like this.
- The Essenes were a sect in Judaism that copied the Old Testament scriptures. These scribes were so in awe by the name of God, that when they wrote the name of God, YHWH, they would wash their hands and not even spell out the name of God.
- In the Hebrew culture, a name is not just a label. It also conveys the name and character of a person. See Proverbs 22:1; Ecc. 7:1; Proverbs 10:7.
- As followers of Jesus, we are called to definitively honor His name. We sometimes use the name of God in ways that bear no resemblance to who God is. This is identity theft. Identity theft: misusing someone's name is to sanction something contrary to the character of their name.
- Holy curiosity: The Seven Sons of Sceva (Acts 19). Sceva was a rogue Jewish priest with 7 sons. They dabbled in magic and mixed with their ministry, but demonstrated "curiosity about Paul developed into a reverence for the name of Jesus." (Acts 19:18). This story teaches us two things: (1) the name of God is not a "plaything", it is fire power; (2) a curious life always leads to reverence.
- Martin Luther King did not live a life of vindictiveness but a life of love. Our curiosity and reverence to the story of Martin Luther Kings can lead us to God.
- Words have meaning, but names have *power*! They can become a compass and witness.
- The Book of Exodus was not written for us to remember the name of Israel but to remember the name YHWH. Israel is a witness to God whose very name means existence, deliverance, salvation, reverence. So we use it with care.
- We are to live in such a way that our lives produce a holy curiosity that will inspire others to affirm, bless and profess the Name above all names.

### Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- What does this commandment teach us about the nature of God?
- Consider how accustomed we are today to use the name of God so frivolously and inappropriately. How have we become so casual when evoking God's name? How can we correct this and restore God's name in a holy and reverent way?
- Reflect on the importance and significance of a name. Why were you given your name? If you have children, what is the significance of their name(s)?
- Which biblical names do you find that tell a story or convey a sense of reverence, esteem and faithfulness?
- In what ways do we exploit the name of God? How can we avoid doing so?
- How does Rev Dr Chappell define *identity theft*?
- What is the idea of a *holy curiosity* and how can we create this for others?



## NOTES

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