

BE REVERENT OF GOD**EXODUS 20:7**

Sometimes all you have left in life is your name and the good reputation behind it. After the Civil War, a powerful financial corporation organized a new insurance company. The board of this corporation approached the famous Confederate general, Robert E. Lee, about helping them market or advertise this new company. They offered Lee the position of honorary president. They told him he would have no actual duties even though he'd receive a comfortable salary. Their strategy was pretty simple. They wanted to use Robert E. Lee's name to sell insurance to their customers. After presenting the details to him, they heard Lee tell them simply but with finality, "Gentlemen, I have nothing left but my name and that is not for sale."

When you read the Bible, you'll come to the conclusion God is very interested and concerned about His name. Why is that? God's name reveals something profound about His reputation, character, and personality. We're on the third message today of ten having to do with the Ten Commandments. God's Big Ten. Although they were first given to the people of Israel, God gave these ten commands to all human beings everywhere for all time for the purpose of enhancing and enriching our lives. They're laws that liberate us to experience godly success in life. They were never intended to limit you from enjoying anything good or worthwhile. But because it's almighty God who gave us these ten statements, they were never meant to be suggestions or opinions we can just ignore or reject without serious consequences. God's Big Ten are authoritative. There's value in reading all ten of them again today.

In the ancient world, people gave names to whatever gods they worshiped. But God didn't allow the Israelites to give Him His name. Instead, He revealed His name to them: "I am that I am" or "I will be who I will be." If you enjoy the old King James Version, that comes out as "Jehovah." Other translations use the name "Lord" instead. Most Bible scholars now agree the very best translation of God's name from the original Hebrew is "Yahweh." They can't be 100% certain because the Jewish editors who made copies of the Bible over many centuries never wrote the vowels of God's name – just the consonants: YHWH. The reason was the third commandment we consider today. Here it is again. "You must not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name." (Ex. 20:7 NLT)

Be reverent of God. Jewish editors were so concerned about using God's name inappropriately, they preferred an abbreviation of it when they copied Scripture. They refused even to pronounce it. God took the initiative when it came to His name. It was as if He said, "You can't make Me the way you want Me to be. I am who I am. I will be who I will be." God's name points to His greatness, His authority, His sovereignty, and His ability to be everything we will ever need. What does it mean to be reverent of God and His name in 2018? Is it the same as what it meant 3,500 years ago when God's Big Ten were first given? In most cases, yes. I suggest you can do one of two things with God's name. You can either walk on His name or you can walk in His name. Ultimately, it's really all about showing God proper reverence and respect.

WALKING ON GOD'S NAME.

The first way we can walk on God's name is to use it in profanity. Did you know the word "profane" comes from two Latin words? "Pro" means "out of" and "fanus" means temple. Profanity, then, means to take something "out of the temple." When you include God's name in cursing or swearing, you take it out of its sacred context of worship and reverence and reduce it to an expletive. The worst example today might be when someone tells God to damn another person. Is it just a thoughtless expression of anger? Well, let's think about it. Someone is using God's name to insult someone else. Even worse, someone is commanding God to execute His eternal judgment on another human being who angered him or her. Someone is telling God to destroy forever another person who is disliked intensely at that moment even though he or she was created in God's image and is someone for whom Jesus died and rose again. I know it's a common profanity in our culture; nevertheless, it dares to take God's place. Who am I to command God to do anything? Who am I to tell God to damn or destroy someone else? What slips out in a moment of anger or exasperation reveals much about how we look at God, at life, at others, and ourselves.

Profanity is like pornography – you know it when you see it or hear it. I still remember working in a drug store as a teenager. A man and his young son were buying some items. The boy accidentally dropped and broke something. His dad became irate at his son and exclaimed, "Jesus wept!" It was an odd statement, but even then I knew Jesus was somehow being disrespected. That wonderful name was ripped out of a place of respect and worship and turned into a rebuke for a childish mistake. God's name was walked on. Sometimes it's appropriate to say something. I was an assistant coach on our youngest daughter's soccer team for a while. The head coach, Rodney, had a bad habit of including Jesus' name whenever he rebuked a girl for her performance. Jesus' name was walked on. I finally had to tell Rodney it was offensive to me, because he was using the name of my Savior and Lord as a curse word. To his credit, he apologized and made an effort to change his language.

Another way we can walk on God's name is to practice carelessness using it. This might well have been God's primary concern in giving us this commandment. Using God's name carelessly and thoughtlessly. It can happen when we use God's name impulsively as a convenient expression of fear, anger, joy, amazement, or surprise. For example, "I just caught a 10 pound fish. Oh, my God! I just heard Suzy's pregnant. Oh, my Lord!" Don't make God's name an exclamation when you communicate. God says when you use His name, take it seriously. Reverence it.

When you use God's name to try and impress others, it's careless and thoughtless. It's possible to use God's name as a kind of spiritual cliché to try and make people think you're spiritual. How about those old bumper stickers? "Honk, if you love Jesus!" or "God is my co-pilot." Respectful? Reverent? How about flippant remarks like "Hallelujah, thank you, Jesus, the Buckeyes pulled out the win." Even something like, "Well, bless God, that was a great sermon" can be a careless use of God's name. I still appreciate many things about my Pentecostal upbringing, but some people overused

God's name. It became a kind of verbal filler in their conversations. Jesus this, Jesus that, the Holy Spirit told me to go here and do that. We need to take seriously the warning attached to this commandment, "The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name." (Ex. 20:7 NLT) Don't be quick to gloss over using God's name carelessly. "I didn't mean anything by it. I didn't mean it that way." Regardless, God said, "That's the point. Don't be careless with My name."

Or, sometimes people develop a bad habit of assuming they're speaking for God. "God told me to say this, or to go there, or to do this." Or worse yet, "God told me to tell you what to do." Really? Forgery is when you use someone else's name to get something you want. Don't be a spiritual forger by presuming to speak for God. God can speak for Himself. Using God's name a lot doesn't impress God. I'm not sure it impresses people much either. It's your lifestyle and attitudes that honor and please Him ultimately and truly impress others – not how often you can use God's name in a sentence.

Perhaps the most serious and dangerous way to walk on God's name is to practice hypocrisy. It can happen, ironically, when we worship God. We sing great songs about God each and every Sunday morning. Did you mean the words you sang about God and to God today? If the attitude of your heart isn't reflected in those words of praise to God and His name, isn't that a kind of hypocrisy? Sometimes the way we worship God can resemble what God said about the people of Israel, "These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." (Is. 29:13 NLT)

Probably all of us have been hypocritical in our walk with God at some point or another. No, no one should expect perfection, but God and other people are right to expect authenticity. When we blow it, just admit it, ask for forgiveness, and move on. If your kids witness hypocrisy in your home, own it. If people you work with or go to school with observe hypocrisy, admit it. If a non-believer calls you out for an attitude or an action that doesn't match up with Jesus, thank him or her for calling it to your attention. When there's a major gap between our words about God and to God and our everyday attitudes and lifestyle, we become hypocrites. And hypocrisy can be ever so damaging.

A young Jewish boy once lived in Germany. His father was a successful business man and the family practiced their Jewish faith. But then they moved to another German city and the boy's father announced they'd no longer attend the synagogue. Instead, they were going to join the Lutheran church. The boy was surprised and asked why. His father explained it was for business reasons. There were so many Lutherans in this new town and he could make good business contacts at the Lutheran church. His son had a deep interest in religion, but he became so disillusioned with his father that something died within him. He didn't believe his father had any real convictions. The hypocrisy of the father turned his son against any and all religion with a vengeance. The son eventually moved to England and he began to write. His name was Karl Marx – the man who wrote something called *The Communist Manifesto* in which he called all religion "the opiate (the drug) of the masses." Perhaps the entire 20th century would have been different historically if not for hypocrisy. The fact is there's many ways to walk on God's name. What's the alternative?

WALKING IN GOD'S NAME.

The Bible says, "All the nations may walk in the name of their gods, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever." (Mic. 4:5 NIV) What does it mean to walk in God's name? It means to reverence God's name continually. That happens when we offer Him sincere praise continually. It consciously and meaningfully thanks and honors God for who He is, what He's done, and what He means to us. We mean what we sing and what we pray. One way to grow in your reverence for God's name is to study all the different names for God found in the Bible. You might even do that with your children or grandchildren. It will help you and them to reverence God's name. For example, you can learn and discuss how "Yahweh tsidkenu" means "the Lord our righteousness," "Yahweh nissi" means "the Lord our banner," "Yahweh shammah" means "the Lord who is present," and "El Shaddai" means "the Almighty One."

People who learn how to praise God sincerely and continually are often the same people who learn how to praise other people sincerely and continually. In other words, the practice of vertical praise to God can lead to the giving of horizontal praise to other people. Remember, this commandment is really about your tongue and the words we use. God's Big Ten touch every area of life ultimately. We tend to downplay the importance and impact of our words. God never does. Jesus said, "For whatever is in your heart determines what you say." (Mt. 12:34 NLT) Speech reveals character. What you say and how you say it reveals a great deal about who you are. Social media has made it even easier to "trash talk" people, humiliate others, and generally use words to destroy others. Criticism, fault finding, judging others harshly – only too easy. One way to honor God's name is to use our tongues to praise and encourage creatures made in His image sincerely and continually. Build them up. Comfort them. So often verbal praise is what your spouse needs from you. Verbal encouragement is what your kids and grandkids need from you. There are people where you work, where you go to school, and right here where you worship and serve the Lord who desperately need to hear and receive verbal support, encouragement, and blessing. When you use your tongue to honor God and then honor those He's created, it's an act of reverence for God. By doing so, we're actually taking God and His name seriously.

We can reverence God's name continually through sincere prayer. Sometimes we can make God's name less than meaningful because our prayers are self-centered and immature. Someone said our prayers can end up sounding like we're just putting "all of our begs into one ask it." Do you only pray to God when you're in trouble or when you need something? Is your conversation with God kind of a long string of prayer clichés rather than a sincere effort to connect with and relate to God? Real prayer takes God seriously. We make the effort to communicate with Him, not coerce Him in some way. Our model is Jesus who began His prayer with these words, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." (Mt. 6:9 KJV) Most of us probably learned the King James Version of that prayer. What does it mean to "hallow" God's name? Newer English translations help us to better understand Jesus meaning. "Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy." (NLT) "Our Father in heaven: May your holy

name be honored” (GNT) “Our Father, dwelling in the heavenly realms, may the glory of your name be the center on which our lives turn.” (TPT)

Here’s another way to walk in God’s name. Rely on God’s name completely. The Bible says, “In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.” (Ps. 33:21 NLT) In yet another place it says, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Col. 3:17 NIV) Do everything in my life in His name. In other words, go to your job and do your work in Jesus’ name. Raise your children in Jesus’ name. Relate to your neighbors in Jesus’ name. Enjoy your retirement in Jesus’ name. Take a vacation in Jesus’ name. Apparently, all of life can be lived in Jesus’ name.

Relying on God’s name means you and I are consciously depending on God at all times for His power, protection, and provision. There is power in God’s name. When David – just a teenager at the time - confronted Goliath in battle, I love what he said to that very large, terrifying man. “You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of Heaven’s Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” (1 Sam. 17:45 NLT) In addition, Jesus invited us, “Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!” (Jo. 14:14 NLT) Why do we end so many of our prayers with the words “in Jesus’ name, Amen”? It’s a recognition of Jesus’ mighty power. It’s also a reminder we have access to God’s presence only because of Jesus and what He’s accomplished. We need Jesus and the authority invested in His name to give us access to a perfect and holy God. Power.

There is protection in God’s name. The Bible says, “The name of the LORD is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe.” (Pro. 18:10 NLT) The devil might be attacking you in some way today. Life’s troubles might be overwhelming you today. Take refuge in Jesus’ name. Speak out that name when you pray. It’s like running into a fortress with very thick walls. Protection. There’s also provision in God’s name. Jesus invited us, “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” (Jo. 16:24 NIV) When you ask in His name, you ask according to His will. You don’t ask for sinful stuff. Or stupid stuff. If Jesus can sign His name to your request, you can have it. Provision.

Let me suggest one more way to walk in God’s name. Represent God’s name clearly before others. If you’re a follower of Jesus, your attitudes and lifestyle either brings credit or discredit to God’s name. There are several reasons why so many people never become followers of Jesus themselves. Sometimes it’s because they’ve only met Christians who, frankly, didn’t seem so very different from them in terms of attitudes, lifestyle, and vocabulary. They say, “If he’s a Christian, so what? If she’s a Christian, why bother? They’re no different than me. Who do I need to believe in Jesus?” If you call yourself a follower of Jesus, then act like Jesus. Talk like Jesus. Adopt Jesus’ priorities for your life. Stop being just a believer and start being a disciple. The simple fact is you and I are advertisements for God and His name. Are you a good or a bad advertisement? Again, perfection should never be the expectation. It’s authenticity – genuineness - that makes an impact on a lost person who’s sincerely pursuing a relationship with God.

Representing God's name clearly means sharing your faith with others as God gives you the opportunity. Connecting people to God was Jesus' core mission. It's the core mission of every follower of Jesus, too. You and me. Are you praying for any spiritually lost people regularly? Are you asking God and looking for ways to develop relationships with people who don't know the Lord yet? Can you share your own story with ease and comfort as to why Jesus is important to you in one or two minutes if you were given the opportunity? We'll address all that and more this afternoon in our *Overcoming Evangeophobia* seminar. Come and join us at 3 o'clock in the Chapel. Is representing God's name clearly with both your life and your lips in a world of spiritually lost people something that's truly important to you? If you're truly Jesus' follower, it must be and it will be.

George Beverly Shea was Billy Graham's longtime associate and soloist at his evangelistic crusades. On one occasion, Shea was at some kind of Air Force event with many dignitaries and soldiers present. A man came up and said, "Would you sing for us?" Shea said, "I'd be happy to." The man asked, "Could you sing 'How Great Thou Art'?" Shea told him that would be fine. Then the man leaned in closer to Shea and said, "You know, we have some people here today who aren't Christians. Could you just leave out the verse that says, 'God His Son not sparing'?" In a gentle, kind way, Bev Shea replied, "Oh, no. I couldn't leave that out. That would be to deny my Lord. It's all right. I just won't sing." The man replied, "Oh, well, it's all right. You can sing about Jesus." George Beverly Shea thanked him, stood up, and sang about his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You and I will have many opportunities in life – large and small, obvious and subtle – to bear the name of Jesus. Yes, some will be offended by us, or will ridicule us, or will dismiss us when we do. Don't ever be ashamed of the One who died and rose again for you. Bear His name with great joy and in victory for its privilege and honor.