

Taking The Lord's Name in Vain | Exodus 20:7 Sermon Discussion Leader's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To discuss practical ways we can honor the Lord's name and avoid taking His name in vain in our everyday lives.

Sermon Refresher: For many of us, when we think about the 3rd commandment from Exodus 20:7, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain," we tend to think about cussing and "watching our OMG's," but this commandment is about so much more than that. When we take God's name in vain, we use Him as a means to an end and use His name to support our own agenda. Instead, we want to honor God's name by representing Him well in all aspects of our everyday lives.

Icebreaker: Tell about a nickname you or a friend had growing up and the story behind it. Or share if there's a story behind your given name.

Transition: Funny nicknames given to us is one thing; irreverent use of God's name is another.¹ While we may instinctively believe that the Ten Commandments are helpful, moral guides, many of us do not know what they are, what they mean, or how they are to be applied to our lives. Let's spend some time discussing how we can honor God by honoring His name.

Discussion:

1. Keith shared the story of a soldier named Alexander who served in the army of Alexander the Great. This soldier was associated with cowardice and Alexander the Great felt he was "giving him a bad name." When we bear the name of Christ in the title Christian, we can either give God a good name or a bad name. List off anything that comes to mind that our culture today would associate with the name Christian.

¹ *The Ten Commandments: What They Mean, Why They Matter, and Why We Should Obey Them*, Kevin DeYoung.

2. In their 2012 book *UnChristian*, Barna researchers put together their findings after 3 years of extensive interviews and research with those who considered themselves outsiders to the church. They claim: “Christianity has an image problem” as a result of many negative perceptions of Christians. The book explores the top traits that non-churched people think of when they hear the word Christian. They were: Hypocritical, only concerned with getting them saved, too political, anti-homosexual, too sheltered and judgmental. Describe a time when you experienced someone giving God a bad name.

3. Sometimes we have a difficult time wrapping our minds around what it means to take someone’s name in vain because this isn’t a phrase we typically use in our culture. Keith reminded us that the word vain means empty, nothing and worthless. He said, “We are not to speak about God carelessly, thoughtlessly or flippantly. To dishonour God’s name is saying that God himself is worthless.” Discuss what it could look like to take God’s name in vain in our prayer life, in our worship and in our reading of the Scripture.

4. One way we take God’s name in vain is when we use God’s name as means to an end, expecting the name of Jesus to be “magical” and for Him to just give us what we want. Keith used the example of Isaac Bruce saying that his life was spared in a car wreck because of the fact that he had called Jesus’ name repeatedly. Share about a time in your own life when you thought using God’s name in this way would get you what you wanted.

5. Another way that we can take the Lord's name in vain is by using His name to support our own agenda. We see this happen when people say, "The Lord told me...." or "The Lord told me to tell you...." Keith reminded us that this is a way to keep people from questioning your plans. Tell about a time when you experienced someone taking God's name in vain in this way. Or, if you haven't, share about what your reaction would be.
6. One way we can honor God's name is by reflecting his character to the world around us. Pick one area of your life (work, family, neighborhood, relationship, politics, play) where rather than taking God's name in vain, you could honor His name.

Sharing and Prayer: Refer to The Crossing App. When you open the app, click on Other (bottom right of the screen with three dots), click on Devotional, click on The Lord's Prayer (expanded). Scroll down to section entitled: "Hallowed Be Your Name" from the Lord's Prayer. The group leader will read and pray through the phrases below the heading on behalf of the group.

Next, spend some time as a group confessing the ways in which we have broken this commandment and taken the Lord's name in vain. Grieve the ways in which we see the Lord's name taken in vain in the culture around us, especially in the church and in our own lives.

Conclude with a time of receiving God's forgiveness for the ways we dishonor his name. Ask for Holy Spirit to give us the humility to experience the forgiveness we have in Christ when we fail and to empower us to honor God's name more fully.