

## DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 15 FEBRUARY 2021 – 21 FEBRUARY 2021



**UPPER  
HUNTER**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear church family,

The Third Commandment is this: “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” (Exodus 20:7) This commandment applies in a wide range of situations and not merely in particular words and phrases we might choose to use. Here are some ways Kevin DeYoung understands and applies the Third Commandment:

- Wherever the people or things that belonged to the Lord were defiled, the Lord—whose name they bore—was also dishonoured and the Third Commandment broken.
- There is no place in the Christian life for using the name of our Creator and Savior as an expression of shock, outrage, or anger.
- The Third Commandment also speaks against vain repetition of the Lord’s name. As Jesus reminds us, we are not heard for our many words (Matt. 6:7). We should not babble on like the pagans do, carelessly inserting the Lord’s name in our prayers like a comma.
- [P]astors, speakers, and authors must not be peddlers of God’s Word, using His name and Word as a plaything for personal profit (2 Cor. 2:17).
- [A] joking, light-hearted approach to the Lord’s name is inappropriate.
- We ought to laud God’s actions as good, just, and wise, and not profane His name by accusing Him of evil, getting angry at Him.
- [I]t profanes the name of the Lord when out of feminist sensibilities some refuse to call God “our Father,” to name Him as He has named Himself.<sup>1</sup>

You can see that the Third Commandment applies in many ways. As Christians, we bear the name of God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Since Christ is our Lord, we must live lives that honour His name in all that we do and say, think and feel so God may be glorified through us (1 Cor 10:31).

A little caution, here, though. Reading the question and answer 100 might motivate you to tell your friends and neighbours to stop using swear words (especially when they involve God’s name). But be careful, because the Catechism and the Ten Commandments themselves are speaking to believers. The whole structure of the Catechism, guilt, grace, —and then— gratitude, implies that. The Ten Commandments as well were first given to Israelites who were already rescued by God. “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” (Exodus 20:2) So, as God’s rescued people, as Christians who bear the name of Christ, we are being told to watch our word and conduct.

Now, when someone uses God’s name as swear words, you might dislike it or even feel offended. This is actually natural since, as Christians, we know God personally and we love Him. Similar to how I would feel offended if someone misused or bad-mouthed my wife’s name, it’s understandable and even appropriate that we feel offended when God’s name is misused. Moreover, unbelievers will one day bear the consequences of misusing God’s name (unless they repent and believe in Jesus). So we may sometimes ask an unbeliever to stop using God’s name as swear words. However, we cannot always expect them to understand why or even change their behaviours. The law can only tell us what is right and wrong. It does not have power to change people in any real and spiritual sense. The gospel has the power. The gospel can change the hearts so one may indeed want to honour God’s name. So we must proclaim the gospel to the unbelievers, not demand a change of behaviour through the law. In fact, this is true for Christians too. We can learn about God’s demands on us through the law, but the law does not empower us to do what God demands. The power comes from the gospel of grace. May we be a gospel-people who uphold the law (Romans 1:16, 3:31).

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee

<https://www.upperhunterpc.com>

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *The Good News We Almost Forgot*, p171-173.

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## THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM<sup>2</sup>

### Lord's Day 35

#### Q99) What is God's will for us in the Third Commandment?

A) That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God by cursing, perjury, or unnecessary oaths, nor share in such horrible sins by being silent bystanders. In a word, it requires that we use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe, so that we may properly confess Him, pray to Him, and praise Him in everything we do and say.

#### Q100) Is blasphemy of God's name by swearing and cursing really such serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent it and forbid it?

A) Yes, indeed. No sin is greater, no sin makes God more angry than blaspheming His name. That is why He commanded the death penalty for it.

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## COLOSSIANS 3:17

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

*The Bible tells us that God created the whole world. It also tells us how the whole world turned away from God, but God loved the world and sent His Son to save it (John 3:16). This basic gospel truth tells us that Christians are "doubly owned" by God. We God's as He made us. And we are God's as He saved us. This is why everything we do and say, in fact, everything we are must serve our God, our Creator and Saviour. As Paul says else where, "whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." (Romans 14:8) How does God's ownership of you express in your life? How visible or real is it for you that Christ is your Lord? Do your words and actions reveal that you belong to Jesus as your Master?*

### Prayer

*Dear heavenly Father,*

*Thank you for making me and rescuing me. Even though I had failed to honour You with my words and actions as You deserve, you have loved me, and sent Your Son to die in my place so I may be forgiven. What an amazing love! I am still struggling to speak rightly about You. I still fail many times in loving You in my words, actions, and thoughts, even in my feelings. Please change me by Your Spirit, and make me more like Your perfect Son, Jesus. In His name I pray. Amen.*

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<sup>2</sup> The text of the Catechism is usually from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>, but time to time, for the sake of clarity, I have also adopted the translation used in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* by Kevin DeYoung.