



Three

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# The Third Commandment

Family Study Guides • The Ten Commandments Series

# Three

## The Third Commandment



*“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.”*

*We suggest that as you use this Family Study Guide, select and focus on a main portion or two that you feel will help your family’s study into the commandment. You do not need to cover every aspect, discussion or scripture presented in this guide. Select the aspects or principles most relevant or helpful to your family.*

### Objectives:

- As a family, discuss what it means to take God’s name in vain, and why it is wrong.
- Deepen your family’s true respect for the Creator God.

### Memory Verse

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7, New King James Version).

“Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse His name” (Exodus 20:7, New Living Translation).

### 1. What does it mean to “take God’s name in vain?”

- a. To “take up” the name of the Lord “in vain” means to “misuse” it or to use it for no purpose.
- Vain means empty, futile, useless, false, unreal, worthless, pointless, to no purpose.
  - We should “take up,” “carry” or “lift up” God’s name with honorable speech, thoughts and actions.
  - “You are not to use My name for your own idle purposes, for the Eternal will punish anyone who treats His name as anything less than sacred” (Exodus 20:7, The Voice Bible).

b. Discuss: How does the meaning of “vain” in this commandment connect to what God says in the First and Second Commandments?

### 2. What are two ways in which God’s name is sometimes taken in vain?

- a. Have you ever noticed how some people will say God’s or Jesus’ name anytime they are startled, amazed, hurt, angry or upset? People also combine God’s name with a curse word.
- How do you think God feels when His holy name is used in that manner?
  - Consider the meaning of “vain.” How does just randomly using God’s name fit these synonyms?

- b. Another way we can take God’s name in vain is by bringing shame upon His name by our actions.
- When we follow God’s ways, He calls us His children and we become a part of the family of God. In that way we “take up” or “carry” His name, just like you carry the last name of your parents.
  - “Some, however, did receive him and believed in him; so he gave them the right to become God’s children. They did not become God’s children by natural means, that is, by being born as the children of a human father; God himself was their Father.” (John 1:12-13, Today’s English Version).

### **Following Rules**

Every family has rules to follow. We honor our families by following those rules.

Discuss some values that “define” your family and behaviors. [For example, “Respect our elders,” “We keep our promises,” etc.] If we behave differently, in a sense, we end up taking our family name in vain.

Similarly, God has rules for His family and we honor Him by keeping His laws. If we don’t obey Him, we have taken His name—but in vain.

“You are so proud of knowing God’s laws, but you dishonor him by breaking them. No wonder the Scriptures say that the world speaks evil of God because of you” (Romans 2:23-24, The Living Bible).

It is wrong to take God’s, or anyone’s name in a vain manner.



### 3. A Biblical example

- a. In Leviticus 24:10-15 we find the story of a man who cursed God, or used hateful words along with God's name. Using God's name in this way is called blaspheming God. Read this passage of Scripture as a family.
- b. Discuss what happened to the man in this passage and why.
- The man was stoned to death for blaspheming God. This was how they dealt with very difficult people in the camp of Israel.
  - Because of Christ's sacrifice, we now are able to be forgiven when we repent after we've done something wrong.
  - We do not stone people now as they did at that time, but this example shows that God takes it very seriously when someone uses His name in a wrong way.

#### How would you answer?

Joey's teacher often says, "Oh, my god." It bothers Joey. What should he do in this situation and how should he do it?

Melissa heard her friend say, "Jesus Christ" when she got mad. Melissa tried saying it herself the next time something bothered her. What effect does this have on Melissa's friend? Her family? Her church? Melissa herself?

Your brother or sister has a habit of misusing God's name but wants to stop. What advice do you have that would help him/her?

While your friends at Church do not actually use foul language or say things like "OMG," they do other disrespectful things at Church services, such as texting each other during the sermon. They haven't gotten caught. It might be fun to do the things they are doing. Could that also be taking God's name in vain? Why or why not?



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## Family Discussion

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The Third Commandment says that we should not misuse God's name, and that God does not take it lightly if we do.

### **How can God's name be misused?**

Teach your child to put God first by helping him learn to set aside time each day to pray and read about God.

#### **1. Making His name unimportant or using it in a “vain” way**

- a. Review the meaning of “vain.” For example: We should all respect the office of the President of the United States, Mr. Joe Biden. What if we all started saying all the time: “Joe, Joe, Joe...” and never really thought of him as the President. We would be using his name, but it would not be honoring him as President.
- b. What (who) is “holy” in this commandment and what does it mean to keep something holy? Tie the First and Second Commandments to the Third Commandment.
- c. People use God's name often—but not in the context of honor and respect. How many of you hear God's name used at school or on TV in a casual manner? (Example: “Oh, God” or texting “OMG!”) (With the older students it would be helpful to go over some commonly used words that break the Third Commandment.)

#### **2. Using God's name as a curse word instead of to worship and honor Him**

- a. The word “damn” is not a curse word by itself. What does it mean? People are using God's name to curse things. “Do not bring shame on the name of your God by using it to swear falsely. I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:12, New Living Translation).
- b. We cannot invoke God's name to curse someone. This uses God's name uselessly. It is also a type of stealing God's good name and changing it into something disrespectful.

#### **3. Using God's name to “endorse” something that God does not say**

- a. Jeremiah 23:36 says “But stop using this phrase, ‘prophecy from the LORD.’ For people are using it to give authority to their own ideas, turning upside down the words of our God...” (New Living Translation).
- b. What if you were talking with some friends and told them, “My mother wants me to smoke this cigarette!” That is what people today do with God. They say that God wants them to worship Him by observing Christmas, Easter or church on Sunday. Is that true? If not, then it is lying and using God's name falsely. We must all be careful of trying to make something wrong or right by trying to attach God's name to it.
- c. If we are going to use God's name, we need to make it very meaningful. We can say “God says for us to keep His commandments.” That is quoting Him and using His name properly.

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## Family Discussion (continued)

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### **How often is God's name misused?**

Have each family member count the number of times that they hear His name misused at school, on TV, at work or with friends in a given time period, maybe for a couple of days. Then talk again and compare your results.

### **How does God want us to use His name?**

How can we speak in a way that will honor Him? Discuss ways of using God's name that are pleasing to Him.

- Praising God shows that we appreciate Him and all that He gives us.
- We can praise Him in prayer.
- We can praise Him in song. David, the person the Bible calls “a man after God's own heart,” wrote poetry that he put to music—called psalms.



### **Do you know what right and godly language is?**

Think about another way to honor God's name. “Let there be no filthiness [obscenity, indecent] nor foolish and sinful [silly and corrupt] talk, nor course jesting, which are not fitting or becoming; but instead voice your thankfulness [to God]” (Ephesians 5:4, Amplified Version). Are you willing to do what is right in a world where vulgarity and coarse language is commonplace?

### **How do we keep this commandment without offending or judging others?**

How do we respond when Grandma keeps Christmas? What do we do when Uncle Bob curses using God's name? Explain that many people do not know any better and it is not the child's job to confront or to change them. “Behave yourselves wisely [living prudently and with discretion] in your relations with those of the outside world [the non-Christians]” (Colossians 4:5, Amplified Version).

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## Additional Resources for Your Family Studies

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### **UCG Study Booklet “The Ten Commandments”**

<https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets/the-ten-commandments>

### **UCG Beyond Today Bible Study Series “The Ten Commandments”**

<https://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/beyond-today-bible-study/ten-commandments>

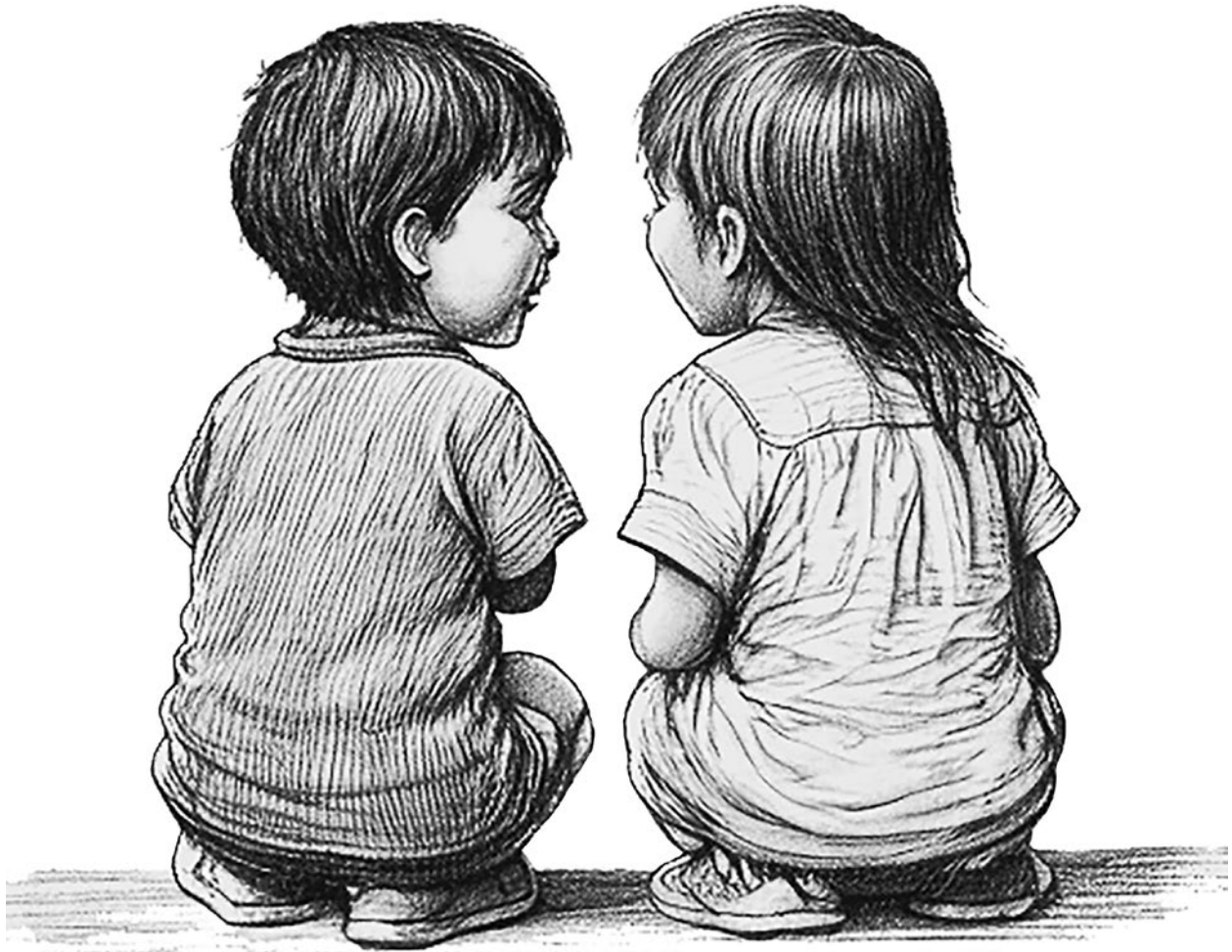
### **UCG Bible Study Guide “The Third Commandment—Do Not Misuse God's Name”**

<https://www.ucg.org/teen-bible-study/teen-bible-study-volume-3-ten-commandments/third-commandment-do-not-misuse-gods-nam>

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Coloring Page

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**“Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them”  
(Ephesians 4:29).**

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## “Save the Last Word for Me” Activity

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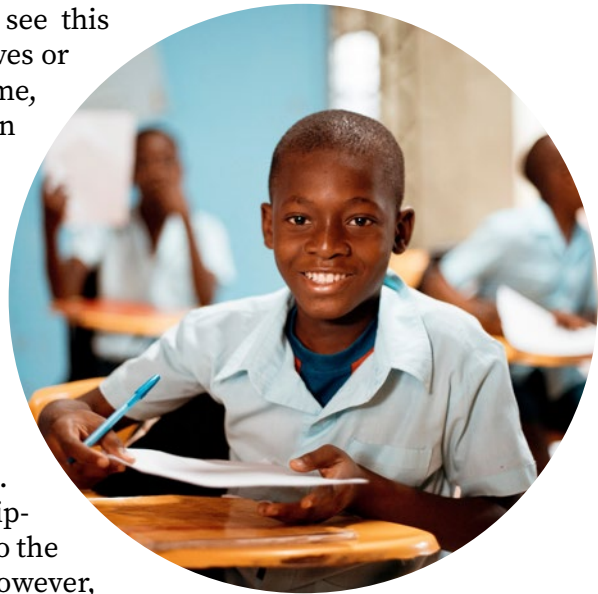
This is a discussion strategy to help all participants discuss and explain the importance of a scripture or statement. The scriptures below all relate to keeping God’s name holy.

**Note:** This strategy can be used to discuss any set of related scriptures.

1. Give each participant an index card with the scripture written at the top (example: Colossians 3:8). First, instruct the participant to look up the scripture in their Bible and write it on one side of the card. Then, on the other side of the card, have them write a comment or reaction to the scripture.

- Some possible reactions: How do they see this statement applied or not applied in their lives or in society? How would it be helpful at home, school, with friends or at work? What person or event in the Bible comes to mind when you read this scripture?

- **Instructors:** This is the time it is important to circulate and check in with participants as they think about what the scripture means. Help them to understand the meaning accurately if needed before they form their thoughts.



2. Divide into groups of about three to five students. All participants in the group will share their scripture cards. The first student reads their scripture to the group and shows where to locate it in the Bible. However, the student isn’t allowed to make any comments about his or her scripture until all other members of the group give their reactions.

- What do they think the scripture means? Why do they think it is important? How might this apply to their lives or other examples from the Bible? (It may be helpful to time this part for about two minutes.)

- The student who read the scripture gets the last word in the discussion by reading what they wrote on the back of the index card. This process continues until everyone in the group has shared at least one scripture and has provided the last word in the discussion.

3. Come back as a whole group and discuss for three to four minutes how participants deepened their understanding of this commandment or a particular scripture through this discussion.

### Scriptures

Colossians 3:8  
Exodus 20:7  
Ephesians 4:29  
Ephesians 5:4-5  
Psalm 145:3, 21  
1 Timothy 6:20

Philippians 4:8  
Romans 2:21-24  
Matthew 12:34-35  
Ezekiel 39:7  
Matthew 12:36-37  
James 5:12

Malachi 1:6  
Hebrews 4:13  
Leviticus 19:12  
Proverbs 31:26  
Proverbs 17:4  
Proverbs 18:7

Matthew 18:19-20  
Acts 4:12  
Revelation 3:8  
Revelation 22:4  
Jeremiah 23:36  
Romans 2:23-24



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## Poetry Activity

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Fill out the missing words in the poem below. Be sure to cover the answer column on the right before you begin. When you're done, uncover and check the answers.

### Praising God's Name!

(words to choose from:    too    enough    wear    own    sweet    planned)

Answers

(cover before copying)

I think that God is very grand  
for all the good things He has \_\_\_\_\_.

planned

I'm thankful for the sky so blue  
and for the earth beneath it \_\_\_\_\_.

too

For us to breathe, He made clean air  
and gives nice clothes for us to \_\_\_\_\_.

wear

He made good things for us to eat—  
some food is salty, some is \_\_\_\_\_.

sweet

With family I'm not alone  
and God provides the things we \_\_\_\_\_.

own

He helps me out when things get tough  
I cannot praise my God \_\_\_\_\_.

enough