

LORD

Our fall discipleship series focuses on the Ten Commandments. Not only what they teach us not to do, but what to do. Jesus is Savior and Lord. Once we know Him as Savior, it's time to begin to allow His lordship in every corner of our lives. I can easily recognize Jesus as "Lord" in some abstract way. He's Lord of the universe. He's Lord of all history. But it gets harder when I think about His lordship in my own life. Is He really my master when I'm thinking about my relationships with my family? Is Jesus my first consult and guide when I'm arranging my finances? So much of discipleship is simply about loving Jesus more—more than desires of the flesh, more than money, more than what my neighbor has. The Ten Commandments are a great measure of our hearts. Do we love Jesus more than these? Jesus is Lord.

LORD • EXODUS 20:7 AND 2 PETER 2:1-3 • Tim McConnell • September 2, 2018

What do you think about what you think, when you think about what you *think* about what you think about? How confident are you in what you think about things? It depends doesn't it? What do you think about what you think about diet and fitness? Do you know enough? Are you confident that what you think is right? Score of one to ten, what do you think about what you think about health? What do you think about what you think about parenting? Six? What do you think about what you think about the economy, financial planning, money management? Pretty confident? How about God? How about Jesus? What do you think about what you think about God? I've heard it said that when we're young we're very open, malleable, humble; we don't have a lot of well-formed opinions about things so we are open to new information and changing our views based on new info and new experiences. But when we get older, we are like cement—all mixed up and set for life. It takes some force to break things up and incorporate new information.

What if your view of God was formed with some misunderstandings? We adjust our view of health, we adjust our view of diet. I didn't even know what kale was two years ago, and now it is apparently the only thing that can keep us alive. We adjust our view of parenting philosophies. We accept when scientists tell us Pluto is a planet then tell us Pluto isn't a planet; we adjust. Fine. But somehow in our religious lives we are not as ready to adjust and grow, even though the truth is none of us are done growing in our knowledge of God. We all have some distance to go! So what do you think about what you think about God? If we're not careful about this, we will find ourselves stuck in the cement of a false view of who God is and what God cares about and how God addresses good and evil, life and death and everything else. We move out on a false foundation assuming God is like this or not like that, and we start to make decisions in our lives based on that view of God. With each decision made, there is more pressure to maintain the view that informed that decision—do you see? So the cement hardens around false assumptions of who God is. Instead of living in true knowledge of God, we get lost under false assumptions about God. Will you allow God to correct your view? The

Lord is Lord of my mind.

What does all this have to do with the third commandment? Don't take the Lord's name in vain. This is one of the first commandments I remember thinking about when I was a kid. Uh-oh. Don't let those words slip out, even though all the other kids do. How would you like it if someone used your name as a curse word? Not nice. Of course, this is the commandment that gets all the easy jokes. A pastor stopped a man on the street he hadn't seen in church for a while, "Where've you been?" The man said, "I've been on the golf course on Sundays." "What? And skipping church?" "Well, Pastor, I hear more people cry out to the name of the Lord on the golf course than any Sunday in church." Ha. Ha. Ha. But if you really think that's all the third commandment is about, hold on. When the Bible says "the name of God" it means a lot more than a few particular words we are not supposed to abuse. The name, just like we use that word, means the reputation. You protect your good name. God protects His good name. It's not a silly commandment about cussing, this is a very deep and theological topic. The name of God is all God has revealed to us about Himself. It's God's character. To misuse the name of God, then, is not just about irreverent language, it's about bending the truth about God that God Himself has revealed. God tells us who He is. The third commandment asks, "will you have God as Lord of your mind?" When what you think about God disagrees with what God has declared of Himself, what will you do? Take every thought captive. Let the Lord be the Lord of your mind.

Moses wanted a proper name. Back in Exodus 3 when he was being sent to rescue God's people out of slavery in Egypt, Moses asked God in the burning bush, "What should I tell them Your name is? They're going to want a name." God said to Moses, "Just tell them I am who I am. They'll know who you're talking about. Tell them it's Me." There's no mistaking it. "God also said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation'" (Exodus 3:15). God is basically saying, there's no name. I'm not going to give you a name. You can't look at

My driver's license to prove My identity. I'm God. I am the Lord. That's who I am, and I am who I am. Now, Moses, and all those who followed went ahead and took what God said and made a name out of it. "I AM." Yahweh. As if that was what God said was His name, but what I understand God to be saying there is that His reputation, His character, His identity, it's too large to be contained in some single word. His name is all that He has proven Himself to be to us. Now as we eventually learn, God is ready to reveal it all, not in a name, but in a person—His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but—we miss this or forget it sometimes—He is also God Himself. Jesus is God Himself incarnate, in human flesh. So Jesus says, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). He tells His disciples, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:9). Jesus isn't a 'second god' and the Holy Spirit isn't a 'third god.' They are all three one God. That's the meaning of this word, Trinity: a tri-unity. God is one and we don't locate the God-head any more in the Father than in the Son than in the Spirit. They are not three acting like one, three becoming one, three agreeing like one—They are one and They are three. And this, to us, is nonsense. Lots of people eddy out right there. There you go, this illogical gobbledygook again. I'm out. But listen, this is exactly what the name of God is all about. God reveals Himself to us and it's beyond us.

We receive what God shows us of Himself, and, truth be told, we don't get it. We don't understand it. It doesn't fit into our categories of logic and reason. It is an unresolvable conundrum, an unsolvable equation to us. But that doesn't mean it's false. That proves it's true. If God was something that could be perfectly understood by us, that wouldn't be God. Any so-called god that sits square within the confines of human reason is no god at all. God shows us Himself—His name—and the mystery of it, the fact that what God shows us of Himself blows our minds, is actually one of the very best arguments for the truth of it. And what we are supposed to do, what the third commandment tells us to do, is stay faithful to what God has revealed of Himself. Don't bend it. Don't reduce it to make it understandable. Don't misrepresent the mystery. Don't change God's reputation to make it more palatable to those around you. Just stay faithful to what God has revealed.

C. S. Lewis once told a story about standing in

a dark toolshed. It was bright outside, but dark inside, and there was a shaft of light coming down from a crack near the roof. He observed the beam of light and all the dust and particles floating around. But then he moved himself into the beam and let the light fall on his face. Looking up the beam of light, he saw something totally different. The toolshed disappeared. The darkness was no more. "Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90 odd million miles away, the sun. Looking along the beam, and looking at the beam are very different experiences." The name of God, God's self-revelation, is like that beam of light. It isn't ours to understand or manipulate; we either stand in it and see, or step aside and stay in the dark. To stand in it and see is to allow every thought, every opinion, every ethical conclusion, every philosophical claim, every bit of knowledge on which you have built your life to be redefined in the light of Christ.

God insists that His reputation is His name. We understand God's name to be all that God has revealed of Himself. "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). The name of the Lord is misused when we misrepresent God, disregard what He has revealed or otherwise teach something about God and His work that is not founded in Scripture. When a verse of Scripture is taken out of context, the name of God is being misused. When health and wealth prosperity is being promised to those who give to the church to the profit of the preacher, the name of God is being misused. When preachers preach a bent Gospel, suggest all paths lead to heaven, present a friendly-grandfather God who never follows through on His discipline, a loving Santa Claus God who only brings candy, a universalist God who forgives all things with no repentance and no cost to grace, the name of the Lord is misused. Forgiveness is open to all, but grace isn't free—the cost was paid by Jesus Christ on the cross. The cheap grace version of Christianity, Christianity without the cross, this is where the name of the Lord is misused. So Peter warned the church, "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing

swift destruction on themselves" (2 Peter 2:1). To follow the way of the third commandment is to honor the name of the Lord, to step into the blinding light, the beam of God's self-revelation, and resolve to bring every thought we have about God captive to the truth He has revealed.

Can you defer to God as your Lord? Can you change your mind? What if you've had a belief, an opinion, a fact in your mind for years and years and years, but something in the Word challenges that belief, contravenes that opinion or reveals new information about that fact? Will you trust the Lord to be Lord of your mind? The problem comes when we've lived on the basis of a fact or assumption for so many years we have made major decisions; we've shaped our lives on these things. Can I still honor God as Lord of my mind? Don't let the cement set entirely. But what you allow to change your mind is the critical thing. Allow the Word of God to reshape your knowledge of God day by day, more and more, removing any false notions you have picked up along the way, correcting confusions and wrong assumptions, bringing every thought you have about God captive to the Lordship of Christ. He is Lord of your Mind.

For "The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe" (Proverbs 18:10). Or Psalm 124:8, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." And Jesus is that Name. Do you see? I'm not just saying Jesus is the proper name of God, I'm saying Jesus Himself is the fulfillment, the perfect incarnation, of the character and reputation of God. Jesus Himself is the name of God; Jesus Himself is the mighty tower you run to and find life. Jesus is your help. Jesus is your Lord. That's what it means when it says in Acts, "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21). Not a false name, not a god of your own making, not a spiritual path you have constructed in your own mind as you have picked up this or that half-formed notion of who God is or might be. No. Jesus. Jesus. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

STUDY GUIDE

LORD • EXODUS 20:7 AND 2 PETER 2:1-3

UP: Connect With God Through Spending Time in God's Word

Read aloud the two passages for the week: Exodus 20:7 and 2 Peter 2:1-3. Allow a few moments to silently reflect on what you heard. Underline or note words or phrases that seem meaningful.

- Re-read Exodus 20:7. Do you think using the name of God as an expression of shock, outrage or anger ("Oh my God!") is breaking the third commandment?
- The Old Testament listed a large number of violations to this command. Things like: blaspheming, cursing the name of God, uttering false oaths in God's name, sorcery, child sacrifice, cutting corners in sacrifices, unlawfully touching holy things and putting unholy things in holy places. Whenever people or things belonging to God were defiled, the Lord was also dishonored. What are some ways in which people dishonor the name or reputation of God in our culture?
- God doesn't want us to empty His name of its meaning or use it in a careless/wicked way. So, if we are called to not misuse God's name, how *should* we use it? And what does this tell us about God?
- The third command also sought to stop the Israelites from falsely signing God's name to ideas and deeds which were not His. We do this today if we say things like, "God told me ____" Have you heard people do this? What is the result or effect of doing this?
- Re-read 2 Peter 2:1-3. These false teachers are deliberately misrepresenting the Lord. They are motivated by greed and this is leading to scandalous behavior which is giving Christianity a bad name. The church has continued to experience this. How should we respond when we encounter this?
- As Christians, we bear the name of Christ. We are called to act, think and speak in ways which God and represent God to our culture. What does it look like for you to represent Christ in your life? Are there any adjustments you need to make to better honor God?

OUT: Connect With the World Around Us by Joining God in God's Mission

Take a few moments to consider one person in your life whom you hope to intentionally and faithfully represent Christ to this fall. Close this time by praying for this person.

IN: Connect With the Family of God

As you prepare to engage God's word, take a few minutes to consider the people in your life. Who is hurting? Who is struggling? Take a few minutes to bring these concerns to God in prayer.