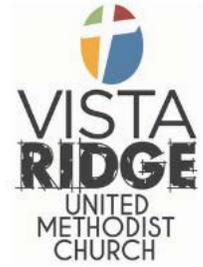




grow. pray. study.



*Words of Life: Reading the Ten Commandments Through the Eyes of Jesus*

“Keeping Promises, Hallowing God’s Name”

**Scripture:**

Do not use Yahweh your God’s name as if it were of no significance; the Lord won’t forgive anyone who uses his name that way. *Exodus 20:7*

You must not swear falsely by my name, desecrating your God’s name in doing so; I am Yahweh. *Leviticus 19:12*

You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one. *Matthew 5:33-37*

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

*This week we are memorizing:*

Do not use Yahweh your God’s name as if it were of no significance.

**God’s name expressed all that God is MONDAY Psalm 9:7-11, 24:7-10**

The Hebrew poetry of the Psalms reflected Yahweh’s people speaking to and about Yahweh in times of fear, joy and everything between. All of them were reasons for worship. In many ways, they put their ultimate trust, not in their own strength and skill, but in the goodness and justice that Yahweh’s name communicated. The Psalms made it plain that “God does not ignore the cry of the oppressed.

It’s just not God’s nature.” \*

- At Abraham Lincoln’s funeral, Methodist Episcopal bishop Matthew Simpson said, “To a minister who said he hoped the Lord was on our side, he replied that it gave him no concern whether the Lord was on our side or not.... ‘But God is my witness that it is my constant anxiety and prayer that both myself and this nation should be on the Lord’s side.’” How does Yahweh’s character make it worthwhile to be sure that you are “on the Lord’s side”?
- It seems likely that Israel used Psalm 24 to honor and celebrate Yahweh’s presence with them, especially at the Temple in Jerusalem. But phrasing it as an invitation also carried a reminder for all God’s people: “It also presupposes that one way or another it’s quite possible for the people of God to keep God out of its midst, as [Revelation 3](#) indicates with its picture of Jesus standing outside the door of a church and knocking to see if he will be admitted.” \*\* In what ways can you keep the door open for God in your own heart, and in the life of your congregation?

**Prayer:** Great “I Am,” thank you for being a safe place in difficult times. Help me keep learning how to keep my mind and my heart always open to your loving, guiding presence. Amen.

\* John Goldingay, *Psalms for Everyone, Part 1: Psalms 1–72*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013, p. 33.

\*\* Ibid., p.78.

### **Not just about words, but about integrity TUESDAY Leviticus 19:12, Deuteronomy 23:21-23**

Many of us, especially if raised religiously, have heard a narrow grasp of the third commandment’s meaning. Some well-meaning parents or Sunday School teachers have seemed to apply the commandment only to avoiding a few “bad” words, especially when we’re angry or frustrated. Yes, habitual profanity is usually a limited way to express ourselves. But today’s readings show that the commandment spoke to a far more serious point—using God’s name to confirm a promise we do not keep.

- Leviticus 19:12 was part of a set of guidelines which grew out of Leviticus 19:1-2: “Yahweh said to Moses, Say to the whole community of the Israelites: You must be holy, because I, Yahweh your God, am holy.” How did that prepare the Israelites (and us) to think about the specific commands as a part of a life built on God’s holiness, not just random demands?
- Jesus echoed Deuteronomy 23:22 when he said, “I say to you that you must not pledge at all...Let your yes mean yes, and your no mean no. Anything more than this comes from the evil one” (Matthew 5:34, 37—more about this on Thursday). Have you ever, intentionally or by mistake, over-promised and under-delivered? In what ways can you practice greater honesty in your dealings with others and with yourself?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount was not the first time you tried to teach your people the importance of honest promises. Guide me, as one of your people, to live out the full reach of the third commandment. Amen.

### **A “strong tower,” yet dishonored by ungodly lives WEDNESDAY Proverbs 18:10, Jeremiah 7:1-7**

Proverbs 18:10 pointed to one reason that YHWH (God’s personal name) occurred around 6500 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. “Name’ is an important concept in the Bible...a person’s name says something about the essence of their very being to others.” \* Yet by the time of the prophet Jeremiah, too many Israelites had turned that idea into a deceptive reliance on simply saying the right word, without any connection between the worshipper and the God whose name they used so liberally.

- “Yahweh, the name of God in the OT, reveals a timeless being who is stable and also able to adapt—a powerful message to our ancestors-in-the-faith and to the faithful today. The Lord God has been for all time and will continue to be for all time, and the Lord God meets and provides for humanity in the moment.” \*\* In what ways does trusting that your God has those qualities give you confidence to “find refuge” in God, particularly at life’s difficult times?
- Jeremiah spoke to people using God’s name, associated with the Temple, as a reason to ignore his prophetic call to change their way of life. “The triple repetition of this phrase [“Yahweh’s temple”] seems to point to some kind of magical incantation that invokes protection....During the time of Jeremiah the people have apparently developed a kind of blind superstition regarding the temple.”  
\*\*\* What kinds of changes was God calling them to (Jeremiah 7:6)? What might it look like for you to live out those principles today?

**Prayer:** Eternal God, you offer to be the strong tower to whom I can entrust my life. But you're not a magic charm. Give me a serious desire to live with you as Lord of my life. Amen.

\* Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, sidebar note "Name as Identity" in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 1032 OT.

\*\* Ibid. \*\*\* Zondervan, *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 173907-173910). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

## **Jesus: your life, not just your mouth, honors God's name THURSDAY Matthew 5:33-37, Matthew 7:21-23**

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount he forcefully taught the value of honesty in what lies behind our words as well as in the words themselves. Our integrity shouldn't come and go ("I swear I mean it this time")—it should be a given. And when linked with God's name, partial integrity dishonors God's name. "An oath invoked a deity's witness that one was telling the truth." \*

- Honesty begins with being honest with yourself and God (often a trusted small group, counselor, or accountability partner can help us.) How well do you understand the inner or outer forces that most often tempt you to "shade" your words or promises to other people, especially those you care deeply about? How easy or hard is it for you to be honest with yourself and God?
- "It's not even enough to name Jesus as *Lord*, or perform extraordinary activities (like throwing out demons or working miracles) in his name. What matters is that one put into practice in one's life the true righteousness of which Jesus had spoken in [Matthew 5:20](#)." \*\* How would you define the difference between showy outward "righteousness" and an inner as well as outer life that puts "true righteousness" into practice?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, there are easy ways for me to claim your name—a sticker or fish symbol on my car, for instance. Give me strength to do the harder, but much more important, of living out your eternal goodness and mercy. Amen.

\* Zondervan, *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Location 219213). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

\*\* Eugene Eung-Chun Park and Joel B. Green, study note on Matthew 7:21-23 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 18 NT.

## **Jesus: I AM walking among us FRIDAY John 8:58, John 10:7, 9, 11**

In seven places in John's gospel, Jesus used the words "I AM" about himself. These were loaded words, a likely parallel to Yahweh, the divine name God taught Moses and the Israelites. In John 8:53, Jesus' opponents asked, "Who do you make yourself out to be?" Jesus' striking reply was, "I assure you, before Abraham was, I Am." His hearers tried to stone him for that! "I am the good shepherd" was equally bold. It evoked God's response to the failure of Israel's spiritual shepherds in Ezekiel 34:11: "Yahweh God proclaims: I myself will search for my flock and seek them out."

- In John 8:58, "Jesus claims to be God (John 1:1, 18), the God of Israel (see Exodus 3:6, 3:14, cf. Deuteronomy 32:39, Isaiah 41:4; 43:11, 25; 45:18-19, 51:12, 52:6)." \* The more we study, the more we realize that Jesus used words carefully. In Mark, we read, "The high priest asked, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the blessed one?' Jesus said, 'I am.'" (Mark 14:61-62) Reflect on the magnitude of the claim Jesus made in those various settings. That's not the sort of thing a sane moral teacher who knows he's just human says. Do you believe Jesus' claim? Why or why not?
- When Jesus said "I Am the gate," he also pictured a physical reality for those who watched over sheep. Scholar N. T. Wright noted, "In many Eastern sheepfolds, the shepherd lies down at night in the gateway, to stop the sheep getting out and to stop predators getting in. Here Jesus

seems to indicate the way in which the shepherd keeps the sheep safe, and, like God himself in Psalm 121:8, watches over their going out and their coming in.” \*\* In what ways has Jesus been “the gate” who offers you spiritual safety?

**Prayer:** Lord God, you taught Moses your eternity and power in the Hebrew name “I Am.” When you became flesh in Jesus, you again called yourself that. You pledged that I can be your child, and I’m thankful that I am. Amen.

\* J. Ramsey Michaels, study note on John 8:58 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 189 NT.

\*\* N. T. Wright, *John for Everyone, part 1*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004, p. 150.

### **Saved by Yahweh and a new name honoring Christ SATURDAY Acts 2:14-21, 11:19-21, 26**

When the apostle Peter quoted Joel 2 in his sermon on the day of Pentecost (just 50 days after Jesus' crucifixion), the key verse with which he ended was again one that, in Hebrew, used the divine name: “everyone who calls on Yahweh’s name will be saved.” Peter showed how strongly and quickly early Christians linked Jesus' gift of salvation with the saving power of Yahweh in the Hebrew Scriptures. Meanwhile, by Acts 11 we find a new name for believers in Jesus surfacing in the city of Antioch, a name still in use (though sometimes too hollowly): Christians.

- This week we’ve seen some of the ways God’s people honored God’s name, not as a kind of magic word, but rather as a sincere expression of Yahweh’s life-giving and life-changing power. And not long centuries later, but within a very few years, we see a similar desire to honor Jesus the Christ.
- Scholar Craig Keener wrote of the word “Christians” in Antioch: “The title seems a political nickname (resembling Pompeians— members of Pompey’s party— and other titles of political parties). Those who believed that Christ was king could be accused of treason, and the title “Christians” became a legal charge ([1 Peter 4:16](#)), though it was soon embraced by Jesus’ followers as a welcome title.” \* It seems fitting to end our study of the third commandment by reflecting on Peter’s words: “honor God as you bear Christ’s name.” Identify one or two ways you wish to more fully honor God in your life as a “Christian.”

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, keep growing in me a quality of life that honors your name, and shines your glorious love and grace like a beacon to all the people who come in contact with me. Amen.

**Family Activity:** Honor God's name by worshipping Him! Create a special worship box for your home. (You can purchase plain ones at a craft store or simply use a shoebox.) Design the outside with words, pictures and symbols representing your family and faith. Inside place objects that help your family worship together. You might include a Bible, a prayer cloth, a candle, items from nature, pictures, art supplies, and Christian music. Each week spend some time worshipping together at home. You might also try going on a nature walk and praising God for creation or serving in a nursing home or soup kitchen. Whether in a time of intentional worship or in everyday life, always use the name of God with respect and love. \* Zondervan, *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Location 248892). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.