

**The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe**  
**Adult Bible Studies**  
**Week #16**

**Exodus 20:7**

**January 30/31, 2024**

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**Exodus 20:7**

1. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment/Word
2. Context of the Law of God
  - a. The giving of the Law is enclosed in the telling of the Story of Israel
  - b. This is unique in the ancient Near East
  - c. This tells us that:
    - i. Judeo/Christian faith is about a relationship with a personal God
    - ii. God is the “chief actor” in the biblical story
    - iii. The Law is a “gift of grace” – ie, based in God’s love for people
    - iv. For humans, “religion” is primarily about our response to the acts of this loving God
    - v. Exodus (and Law) are the continuation of the story of Genesis (Creation)
    - vi. The Law is about how to have a successful/blessed relationship with God and thus a successful/blessed human life
    - vii. Fretheim: “Life in relationship with God means that certain words and acts do justice to that relationship in a way that other acts and words do not. Yet life is not to be shaped simply in terms of particular commandments; the life of faith is also narrative (story).” (p. 207)
3. The Ten Commandments
  - a. The rest of Exodus (plus Leviticus and the first part of Numbers) happens at Mt. Sinai
  - b. At Sinai, a specific covenant is executed, and is within the larger covenant established with Abraham
  - c. God is like a mother eagle who protects and provides for her young
  - d. The Commandments are based on response of those who are protected and provided for
  - e. Israel is to be a “kingdom of priests” whose purpose is to bless all the other nations of the world
  - f. Commandment #1: You shall have no other gods – Israel & God are in an exclusive relationship
  - g. Commandment #2: You shall make no images of me – God will not be reduced to a mere thing (and later, the only “image” of God acceptable is God Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ)
4. Commandment #3
  - a. In essence this word is about God’s identity, character, personality, and reputation – “who God is” and “who God is not”
  - b. Name
    - i. A name is not merely a word or sound that identifies something over against other things
    - ii. A name is about identity, character, personality
  - c. “Taking the name in vain” is not primarily about “bad language”
  - d. When God’s Name is used it is to be used for the right purposes, and with correct understanding of who God is
  - e. God’s Name as Character or Identity is something that human beings do not fully understand – God is mystery, beyond, other, outside human comprehension
  - f. God’s Name is NOT to be misused for empty phrases, easy religion, simple ideology of a social or political sort
5. What is at stake here?
  - a. That humans will not actually know God because what we “know” is actually false
  - b. That humans will make God to be what we want or need him to be and not who God actually is
  - c. That humans will miss out on the blessedness of relationship with God because – practically speaking – we don’t know the real God
  - d. That humans will actually do more harm than good with our “religion” as we invoke “God” for our twisted/sinful purposes
6. To misuse, misunderstand, or mislead as we use God’s name is sin (“the Lord will not acquit) because it:
  - a. Dishonors God
  - b. Destroys true relationship with God
  - c. Cancels the purpose of Creation

## Questions for Your Life Today

- A. How many times a day do you use or hear the word “God?”
- B. How many of these instances are actually intended to speak to or to speak about God?
- C. Name instances of God’s name being used in our society where you suspect that God’s actual identity and character are misunderstood and misrepresented?
- D. How might you discipline your language (and thought) in such a way that you do not disobey this commandment?
- E. How might you learn more about God’s true nature so that, in speaking to or about him, and in being in relationship with him, you come closer to him and to the blessed life that he wants you to have?

Notes by The Rev. Dr. Jack Baca, Senior Pastor, The Village Church, Rancho Santa Fe, California

### Resources:

- a. Interpretation Commentary on Exodus, Terence E. Fretheim, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1991
- b. The Communicator’s Commentary Series, Old Testament, Exodus, Maxie D. Dunnam, Word, Inc., Waco, TX, 1987
- c. The Old Testament Library: Exodus, Brevard S. Childs, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1974