



CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS

7401 UNIVERSITY AVE., CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50613
(319) 277-0924

INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG
WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG

Loving God Beyond Our Words, Part 1

Matthew 15:1-9

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' But you say, 'If anyone tells his father or his mother, "What you would have gained from me is given to God," he need not honor his father.' So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

Well, we're continuing in our series here today entitled *The Laws of Love*. It is a series, as we stated from the very beginning, born out of the heart of God, giving us instruction and direction in our lives.

The very heart of God is a heart of love. God is love, and in Him there is no darkness, the Bible tells us. And so when He does anything, it comes out of the very core of who He is, which is a great, powerful, purifying, demonstrating love.

Not only is creation all a display of God's glory and His love, His beauty, His majesty, but so are His laws—His ways. The first verbal law that God gave in the Scriptures is the law He gave to Adam: not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when we eat of it, we would surely die.

Now, because of Adam's disobedience to the first law of God, we are aware of evil, and we understand that evil is present in our world. We experience decay and death because of our disobedience against God's first law.

But we are looking now at the first written instructions from God. The Bible says He penned these with His finger in tablets of stone. These are God's instructions for us, given in love to us, to guide us down the pathway of life.

Jesus said of these laws, which we have numbered as ten of them, they can all be hung on two: first of all, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and second, love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets can be hung on those two laws—laws of love.

These are instructions about God's commissioning to us about love: how to love God first through the first three or four, depending on how you number them (different traditions number them differently), and the last five through ten, or four through ten, about how we are to love each other by God's definition, not by human ideas of love.

What has God said to us about love? They're in His laws, His axioms, His ways, His principles.

The first one: if we are to experience and know love that comes to us all, love comes from the heart of God. We must simply, as God said, put Him first—have no other gods before Him. “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”

This is very loving of Him to say, because He is the source of our lives. He is the source of our breath. He is the source of human flourishing. He is the source of all things that are good. That's why God has said, in love to us as part of His creation made in His image: come to Me first.

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” Jesus said, “and all that you need will be given to you.” It's a very loving Heavenly Father saying, “Come to Me first.”

And then, in His second instruction, He says, “Don't go elsewhere first. Don't have any graven images or idols that you bow down before. Don't have some other thing—created thing or person, something, a part of creation—that you put before Me.”

For the things of creation came from Him, and they're fading away, and He is eternal and everlasting. So God, in love, is inviting us to come to Him first and turn away from other things that we would prioritize above Him—money, pleasure, ease, and other things, the lusts of the flesh, the pride of life.

As we turn away from those things and turn towards God, we can be infused with His life.

Now He goes on, continuing to instruct us in His guidance for how we are to love Him. Knowing that we're sinful, He instructs us with what we need.

I want to talk to you today about this third instruction He gives, and I have entitled it *Loving God Beyond Our Words*—not just with our mouths.

Wayne read it out of Deuteronomy chapter five, verse eleven, when Moses was recounting these instructions for the Israelites before they went into the Promised Land. But it was given by God and recorded for us in Exodus chapter twenty, verse seven, when He wrote it with His finger on a tablet for Moses.

And He said this: “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold those guiltless who take His name in vain.”

What is God saying here? What does this instruction mean?

To understand what God is saying to us here, in my mind, we have to understand what does God mean by a name—His name? And then what does God mean about taking a name and then doing it in vain?

What is a name to God?

To us, as human beings, we describe a name in our modern day as a word or set of words by which a person, animal, place, or thing is known, addressed, or referred to. For instance, we have a building in our nation known as the White House—that’s its name. Most people know when you mention the White House specifically what we’re talking about—it’s a reference to a place.

When I describe the place of Nazareth Church to people, which is the name of this church here, this building and this body, I describe it with two names—it’s two street names. It’s at the corner of University and Main. I use names to identify these things, and that’s generally how we use names.

But I was talking with the children about deeper meanings behind names. And when you get into the Scriptures, this is how God sees a name. He sees a name as more than just an identifier of something; He sees a name describing the essence of someone or something.

We see this in the Bible in Genesis, when God first gave a name to someone. Here’s how He did it: He formed the first man from the dust of the ground—from the earth, from the soil, from the dirt—and then He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.

It says in the text, God gave him the name *Adama*. *Adama* is the Hebrew word for earth, ground, or soil. It signifies that the essence of Adam came from the earth and that his life came from God. Adam himself is a creation, a part of the creation, and he is of soil and dirt. “From dust we came, to dust we shall return.” But the life in Adam comes from God, and it is a description of our humanity.

The first name, Adam, can also mean red or ruddy, as if from clay. So God gave the first man a name—Adam—and it was not just an identifier of who he was; it was a description of his essence, his very being.

Then we see the second name given to the first woman, and she was created differently. You see, God made Adam from the dust of the ground, but the first woman was taken from the flesh of the first man—a portion of his flesh. God caused him to fall into a deep sleep, and from his flesh God fashioned together another being out of the flesh from Adam.

Then He brought this being to the man, and Adam now was given naming rights. He said to this new being, “This is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. She shall be called”—and here it is—“woman,” out from man.

The essence of a woman is coming from a man. God separated us at that point into two genders, but we came from one, and now we're separated into two. So she is called "woman"—it's her essence, coming out from man.

Later, Adam would give her a specific name, and that name would be *Eve*. *Eve* comes from the Hebrew word *Eva* or *Chava*, which means, in her essence, she is the source of all human life—to give life, to live. The Bible says Adam called her Eve because she would become the mother of all the living—the eve of humankind.

Are we sensing that a name is more than an identifier in God's economy? A name is a description of the essence of a being—the essence of a person, the essence of a thing.

So when we read this text, we should look into what this word for "Lord" means. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain," is what God is saying to us.

The word *Lord* is capitalized this way over six thousand times in the Old Testament because it is a reference to the personal name of God, which the Jewish people did not like to utter out of reverence. They thought it was too holy and too respectful to be uttered—His specific name. So they capitalized L-O-R-D in the Scripture text, referring to His personal name, which is *Yahweh*.

And so what does *Yahweh* mean? *Yahweh* means, in the context throughout the whole Scriptures, that God is declaring to us the essence of who He is. It literally means, from the Hebrew verb "to be" or "to exist"—the existing One.

In other places, God says, "My name is I Am. I exist. I am the existing One. I am who I am. I always have been, from eternity past to eternity future. I Am."

That is *Yahweh*. He is the most real thing that exists. Everything else that exists is a spin-out from the great *I Am, Yahweh*.

You can begin to see why the Jewish people revered the name. You know, we have this modern-day idea that refers to God as "Source." I've said this before—it's a kind of new-age way of referring to God—and it's true He is the source, but His name is *Yahweh*.

It has been argued that you and I honor His name thousands of times every day by design, because when we breathe—if you just quiet down and listen—every human being that is alive and breathes... just listen when you breathe. Hear it: the breath of life comes from *Yahweh*.

That is His name—*Yahweh*. This is a name; it means life. It is the source of all things. It is a reference to the Creator.

But there are many other names in the Scriptures about God. When He is using this, there's a reference to Him being a jealous God right before this, and another portion of the Bible says His name is

Jealous—not in the jealousy of sinful jealousy, but in a jealousy of longing for people to come and get to know Him.

He's given us free choice because He wants us to be in His presence and experience His life and enjoy fellowship with Him. He's jealous for this. His name is Jealous. Just like sometimes when my wife is gone for a period of time or we're separated, I become jealous to be near her.

But God has given other names: *El Roi*—the God who sees. It's a description of His essence; it's not just a personal name. He's one who sees all things. *Jehovah Jireh*—the Lord who provides. *Jehovah Rapha*—the Lord who heals. The Everlasting Father, the Eternal Shepherd of His people's souls.

And then, of course, Jesus is given names: Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End. When He returns, His name will be written on His thigh in red blood—it says, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

These are all descriptions of the essence of the plural God, *Elohim*, who was there in the beginning. “In the beginning, Elohim—the Three in One—said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

He's known as *Adonai*—the Master of all; *El Shaddai*—all-sufficient, all-powerful; *El Elyon*—the Most High God. So a name is an essence of someone or something.

Now, what does it mean to take a name?

To take a name—my parents, I talked with the children about this—they gave me a name: Timothy. And I've stuck with it. We obviously have the freedom to change a name—people can go down and change their names; it's kind of a cool, hip thing to do for some people now—but I believe in God's sovereignty.

He often gives people names, and I have received into my being the essence of Timothy, one who honors God. That is a part of the mission of my life.

And then Carl—I like Carl. It comes from nobility. It comes from strong, free men. I'm going to keep that name. I take that name—I like it. It comes from ruddy, hardworking, barrel-making men.

So I have received into my heart and being the name Timothy Carl Bodtker, and I work to live the essence of my name. I don't want to take it in vain or in a meaningless way.

What does it mean for you to take a name?

My wife used to have a different name, but when we got married, she took my last name and has now taken to herself, in her essence of being, the name. She's owned it and taken it—to take it for ourselves, to take the nature of someone or something into our mouths, our being, our identity.

And what does it mean to do this in vain? God has said to love Him well, we should not take His essence or His being and claim it for ourselves in vain.

What does that mean? To claim it for ourselves in a meaningless or dishonoring way. Some versions say, “You should not misuse the name of the Lord.”