

Each week of 2019 we will take a brief look at one or more questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To read previous weeks' briefs go to [oakhillpca.com/wsc](http://oakhillpca.com/wsc)

Q. 53. *Which is the third commandment?*

A. The third commandment is, *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

Q. 54. *What is required in the third commandment?*

A. The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, Word, and works.

Q. 55. *What is forbidden in the third commandment?*

A. The third commandment forbids all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God makes himself known.

Q. 56. *What is the reason annexed to the third commandment?*

A. The reason annexed to the third commandment is, that however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment.

When God assures Moses of his presence and his commitment to rescue the Israelites out of Egypt, he does so by revealing his name. "I am who I am" (Ex. 3:14). Phonetically, this verbal statement of self-existence is transliterated as Yahweh. In English translations, this personal name of God is translated "the LORD" (note the capitalization).

Since God's name reveals his self-sufficiency, his holy character, and his covenant faithfulness, his name becomes synonymous with the LORD himself. In Exodus 34:5-6, when God reveals his name again to Moses, he accents his character and covenantal faithfulness. Solomon builds the temple "for the name of the LORD" (1 Kings 8:20). David declares his trust is in "the name of the LORD our God" (Ps. 20:7). And Proverbs 18:10 boldly proclaims, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe."

Such esteem for God's name continues in the New Testament. Jesus teaches us to pray, "Hallowed be your name" (Matt. 6:9). Paul commends that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13). And world history will culminate with "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phil 2:10).

Since God is holy and true in his whole being, his name is holy and true as it represents him. How we treat God's name is one with how we treat God. Therefore, the Third Commandment calls us to honor his name. This is more than not using God's names as curse words. As Q. 54 explains, obedience to the Third Commandment involves a reverent attitude towards God, his character, his works, his titles (which accent his works and character), and his Word. God has graciously chosen to reveal himself. Let's honor him.