

# **Reclaiming the Name of God**

*By Bobby Schuller*

I want to begin by reminding you that you have something good to give to this world. Many of us, we think that we have nothing. We have very little, we don't have anything to offer, but I know you have something good to give this world. And the worst thing you can do is keep it all to yourself. You have something good to give. You are the light of your world. And when I say your world, I mean that fifteen feet of space around you. All around you, there are people, you may not recognize it, that need you. That want what you have. And God is asking you to give it to them.

What I mean is that you are literally a light in a world that is constantly critical, constantly negative, constantly angry. You're the kind of person that is generous, loving, joyful, positive, knowledgeable. You have a wealth of good things to give to the hurting people in the fifteen feet of space around you. You are a light to this hurting world. And if you don't hear anything else I say, hear that. Build your faith. God's going to do something great through you.

Think about the time when you felt most alive in your life. When was that? When did you feel most alive? Sometimes you feel most alive when we're having fun or at a party or something like that, but I think the time when people feel most alive is when they're the most generous. And I don't just mean with money. I like to say generosity instead of

service cause service has a sort of like suffering attached to it. But generosity is almost like an overflow of sufficiency. Think about a time in which you did something heroic. Maybe you're that type of person who runs into burning buildings and rescues cats, I don't know. But maybe it was something simple like you stood up for somebody, or you encouraged someone. Or maybe you were, you gave some of your wealth or some of your time to someone who was in need. And I would argue that we feel most alive when we live this life that I call the life of the open hand. This life of generosity, of just everything about us is about giving to others. Just giving. Giving your knowledge, giving your time, giving what you have to make people's lives better. And I think that's why one of the reasons, if you've ever been poor or if you are poor, that poverty is so hard. You feel like you have nothing to give. But I want to tell you no matter how poor you are, how sick you are, you've got something good to give this world. You've got something real good to give this world. And the world needs you! The world needs you.

Even young lovers, who are so in love they feel so alive, usually they're just being radically generous to one another. I know Dave Ramsey, one reason I really like his stuff on finance; his ultimate goal is to get people out of bondage to debt and to build wealth so they can be generous. He tells a story about the first time he left a hundred dollar tip at a deli, and it was a single mom who was serving him, he left this hundred dollar tip and he got in his car and he looked inside and he saw

her do the tip dance. It feels good! It feels good to help people in need. And that's what God has called you to do. And that is it. People need you. They need you. Without you, this world gets a lot darker, and I'm proud of you, and I'm happy that you're doing what you do.

The purpose of religion, of good religion, is generosity. The whole reason we have church it's just to give. To give this music, to give knowledge, to give beauty, to do whatever we can, and especially to give you the word of God. And if you think about Christianity, Christianity begins with a gift. For God so loved the world that he (AUDIENCE – gave) that he gave. He gave us the greatest treasure in the world, Jesus Christ. The purpose of religion in general is to give a gift, and we give the gift of eternal life that was given to us in the life and body of Jesus Christ.

And that's so important because we are in this series of the Ten Commandments. This was on my heart for a long time, and I was really hesitant to preach on the Ten Commandments because we're the face of positive Christianity. I didn't want to fall into this temptation of sin management, but the more I study the Ten Commandments, and my grandpa believed this, too, the more I believe that the Ten Commandments are ten steps to a godly society, a society of dignity, a society where people are treated with dignity and respect. And if you've come here very often at all, you know that we believe every single human being deserves dignity, even our enemies. Everyone deserves dignity because everyone is loved by God.

So the first commandment we talked about was 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.' The second is 'you shall have no other gods before me.' Today we're going to talk about the third commandment. The third one is 'you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.' You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

So I remember when Hannah and I were with a couple and we were talking about this series as it was coming up, and she said what do you think is the most misunderstood of the Ten Commandments? And without even blinking, I absolutely said the third commandment. Everybody thinks 'do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain' means something it doesn't. This command is not about profanity. It's not. Oh my god. Did I just break the third commandment? I hope not, I'm in the pulpit. That's a little crass. It's disrespectful to say things like that. And profanity is certainly not good. But this commandment is not about that. First of all, God is not God's name, Yahweh is. God is God's office. But more than that, this commandment is not about what you say as much as it is how you act. And just give me a minute, I'm going to explain what this command really means.

So God's people in the book of Exodus are in slavery. They've been enslaved by the Egyptians. And God calls this young man at the time, Moses, into a cave. Moses came in. And there's God in the burning bush. And God speaks to Moses and he says Moses I'm going to send you to

Pharaoh, and you're going to lead my people out of captivity and into the Promised Land. And he says I am the God of your ancestors, and the God of Israel. And then Moses says when I go to the children of Israel, whom shall I say sent me? What is your name? And God says I will certainly be with you for I am that I am. Therefore tell them Yahweh has sent you. God says that he's giving Moses his name, and that also means that by carrying his name the very presence of God himself is with Moses, and almost more importantly, the authority of God is on Moses to do the things God can do to bring about the freedom of God's people. And the reason that's so important is that when you do things in God's name, you do it with authority and with power. As Christians, we do it in the name of Jesus. All that we do is in the name of Jesus. When we pray, it's in the name of Jesus, especially when we pray for a miracle. We're praying for it in the name of God. What does that mean? That means if you are a Christian or a Jew, if you're a religious person, you do things in the name of God. Whatever you do, you do it in the name of God, whether you like it or not. You carry his name, which means you carry his personality, his person, his authority with you.

The third commandment 'do not carry the name of the Lord your God in vain' should be carry, not take in Hebrew, is this: carrying the name of the Lord your God in vain means doing evil in God's name. Doing evil in God's name. That's what it means. It means acting on God's behalf when God didn't ask you to act on his behalf. You know we're a

positive place, we don't like sin management, but I have to just say that in Christianity, sometimes people have gotten rid of the idea that some sins are worse than others. But that's actually not in the bible. It's the phrase, I think, they say all sins are equal in the eyes of God. It's one of those bible verses that doesn't exist. It's not there. All sin separates us from God. All sin is not from God and will lead to death. But some sins are worse than others. You know that. Until you learn something otherwise, you know that stealing your neighbor's newspaper is not as bad as murder. Right? So let's not be silly. There are sin's that are worse than others.

So that begs the question, well what's the worst one? What's the worst sin there is? According to the Ten Commandments in Jewish tradition, the third commandment is the worst one. Carrying or taking the name of the Lord's name in vain is the worst sin in the bible. Very simply, the only thing worse than murder is murdering in God's name. Why? If God is the source of all life, everything good in this world, and we do evil in his name. As Dennis Prager says when you murder in God's name, you don't just kill the person, you kill God. Of course you can't kill God, but what he means by that is you attack the main thing that gives life meaning, purpose and eternal life to everybody who needs it in this world. Evil done in the name of God is the greatest argument against Christianity; the most commonly used and the hardest one to defend against.

So this year we celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of 9/11. I remember where I was when this happened. I was in a cafeteria in college, in Oklahoma. It happened at 7:00 my time. I was getting ready to go to class, and the north tower was on fire. And at the time they were reporting, that an accident had happened. An American Airlines, I think it was, flight or United I can't remember which one was the first, accidentally flew into the tower. They were reporting on it. They were saying what was happening. And maybe twenty of us students or so were in this little cafeteria watching the screen, when all of a sudden a second plane hit the second tower and all of us just froze. And the commentators on the news froze. And what we didn't know is that the world would never, ever be the same again. This was one of the greatest evils I've ever seen in my life. Probably you, too. And my guess is every single person in this room, and everyone watching on TV knows exactly where you were when you saw this happen.

Obviously thousands of innocent, good people died from all around the world; children. So the murder was obviously heinous and evil. But the thing that makes it so maddening is that it was done in the name of God. What's so maddening is the 19 young men in their 20's who did this thought the instant they were going into those buildings, they were going to heaven. They will be judged. There's something very frustrating about that. And just after that, I'll tell you, atheist activism in American went to an all time high. An all time high. So the suffering that we experience

some of these evils, when they're especially done in the name of religion, are so evil, so evil.

I'm saying all this because in the darkness of this world, God needs Christians like you. He needs men and women of God like you to stand in the gap. And I will say that on 9/11, men and women of God stood in the gap and they stood for what was right. People came out to help and every flag in America was flying. Democrats and Republicans. Everybody were all united. It was amazing. I mean it was like this one moment of incredible unity and anyway, it's very sad.

So some of the greatest evils that have been done in the world were done in the name of religion. And these evils were not from God. Sometimes, and more often, the evil that's done in the name of God is done to an individual. Maybe you're here today, or maybe you're watching on TV and you say I can never go to church again because of what my dad, who claimed he was a Christian, did to me. I could never believe in God because of that mean girl in high school who said she was a Christian. The things she said and did to me. These things that were done to you, I want to say as a pastor, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. But they weren't from God.

But you are. God wants to use you and send you into a hurting world. God wants to make you into the kind of Christian you want to see in the world. We don't need more cynics in our world. We don't need more people criticizing Christianity. We need people like you who are a

positive face and voice for the good news of Jesus Christ, and you're going to do it. I believe in you.

There's a great book called "Blue like Jazz." It came out ten/fifteen years ago. I read it in seminary. It's this great story about this guy Donald Miller, he was going to a school at Reed College in Oregon. And it's like one of the most liberal colleges in America in Portland Oregon, which is like, you know, keep Portland weird, one of the weirdest cities in the world, proudly. And while he's there, they have this thing called the renaissance festival, which is a big festival they put on in the college. They have security come so that the police don't have to be there. And there are a lot of drugs, lots and lots of drugs.

And Donald was telling that at this very liberal college, there was this handful of Christians, he and like a handful of his friends, they decided they were going to have like a coming out of the closet party where they were going to tell everybody, as afraid as they were, that they were Christians. And they were trying to think of a way to do this. And being in their class, they were constantly hearing about the inquisitions and the crusades and all this stuff.

And so this is what they decided to do at this basically drug fest. They put together a confessional booth and on the thing it said 'for the confession of sin.' And Donald Miller dressed up like a monk and sat inside this confessional booth, and then on the other side was a chair where people were invited to come in. But here was the twist: people

would come in thinking they had to confess their sins, but instead what they did is they confessed the sins of religious people to those who came into the booth. So the booth actually became a place of asking for forgiveness.

So the first guy that comes in, he sits down and he goes okay what is this? I got to confess my sins? I got a lot, man. And he said no not today. And he's dressed like a monk. The purpose of this is for me to apologize to you. I'm so sorry for the ways in which religious people have hurt you. And the guy says you're serious, aren't you? Yes I am. I'm really sorry for the ways that religious people have hurt you. He said the guy began to tear up. And they then had a nice long conversation about faith and Christ, and they had multiple people come through and he said it was just a constant stream of tears and hugs. We will never understand the depth of pain that is caused by people who do evil in the name of God. Not only are people treated poorly, they're treated poorly by who they think is God, who's supposed to be the source of all love in this world. So you get caught off from God, what do you have left?

That's why it's so important as a believer, as a man or woman of God, that when you make a mistake, you apologize. What you're saying is I didn't do this in God's name. This isn't Christian of me. I'm sorry. I'm a human being. I mess up sometimes. And you know what? That's okay. In some ways, apologizing for your mess ups is one of the most human, loving kind things you can do. It's a mature thing to do. And the more

you do that, the more people actually, I think, respect you, and respect the name of God. You see whether we like it or not, we carry God's name. You carry God's name. You carry it. You have his authority, you have his life, you have his salvation, but you also have a responsibility to do good and to be good.

Jesus, when he's looking in his Sermon on the Mount, and he's talking to all of these people, he says you are the salt of the earth. If the salt loses its saltiness, it's no longer good for anything except to just be thrown out and trampled by men. You're the salt of the world. People need what you have. They need it. People need you. We oftentimes lose what Jesus is saying when he says that we're the salt of the earth because we think of salt as just the cheapest thing you can put on your French fries, and I put a lot of it on my French fries. I love salt.

But salt is one of the cornerstones of civilization. Almost any city that was established in the ancient world couldn't be established unless they had salt. You know why? We've had refrigerators so long, we forget. Yes, salt is used to store food. You can't store food or clean food without salt. Pickles, beef jerky won't exist without salt. And I remember when my grandma, the first time I realized this, my grandma would tell me growing up in the Ozarks how they would store food. They would salt everything and the stuff they couldn't salt she would dig a hole outside, like milk and stuff, put it in the ground, put some ice on it, and cover it up. And that was how you kept food clean. We have refrigerators and so

we're separated from that but we forget the fact that salt preserves. Salt becomes a source of all nourishment for hungry people. You nourish people. You are a source of nourishment.

And the second thing about salt is that salt's incredibly valuable when this was written. You know the term salary? That comes because Roman soldiers were paid in salt. Salary. Salt. Light bulb, pretty sweet. In fact anything that starts with the letters S-A-L probably have something to do with salt. Like salad – salted vegetables. Salami – salted meats. I could go on and on but I won't. Salt is a very, very precious commodity and at times it was, you know, the idea of sprinkling salt on stuff today, only the super wealthy would do something like that. Salt was almost always mixed into some kind of a sauce and spread.

So salt was extremely valuable. And that's what Jesus says to you. Not only do you preserve people, but what you have is so valuable, it's so valuable people need you. People need you. And what you've got is so good, and I'm so proud of you. Keep doing what you're doing to the people who need you because Jesus then says you are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bushel. No, they put it on its stand and it gives light to the whole house.

We also forget in Jesus' day, there was no electricity, there were no matches. The way people usually did fire and light back in those days is in the middle of a town you'd have this thing called a hearth and

everybody would have to walk to the hearth. If you were rich, you usually lived towards the center of town, but if you weren't, you lived on the outskirts and you needed fire, the kid or somebody would have to take a torch or something, walk all the way to the center of town, light a torch and come back if the neighbors weren't around, or whatever. Or if you've ever been camping, and you've tried to use flint, lighting stuff with flint takes forever. It is such a pain. And you could try and do that for thirty minutes, but..

So what people typically did as convenience, they'd have these little clay lamps filled with olive oil, typically, and they'd have like a candle. It was just lit like a candle, burning. And then they'd have these little clay bushels, or sometimes baskets, and when they left the home they would leave the lamp burning, but place this little dome with holes on it over the lamp so that if something fell on it, their house wouldn't burn down. Protects it from burning, but it has holes in it so it can get air. And then when they come home, they have all the fire they need on their little candle. So when they come home, they would just take this bushel off and then it would be like turning a light on and the whole room would go (WOW) and light up.

That's what he says you're like. Why are you hiding your light under a bushel? (SINGS: Hide it under a bushel) thank you. A couple of you got it. I'm going to let it shine. Yes! This idea is that so many of you have been.. you have this light in you, this light. You could light up the

whole room, light up the whole world, but you've got under a bushel. Take it off. Start shining. Maybe you're afraid because you say I can't shine for Christ because I'm not perfect. Welcome to the club. You're a human being. You're going to make mistakes. We all do. You're like, oh you don't know, people know my past. You know? The devil always reminds you of your past, doesn't he. But God loves to remind you of your future. It's very good. And I think that the fact that.. if you have a big nasty past, praise God for that! That you've been rescued from that and that God is working on you. You have a testimony. You can tell people look at the ways in which God has used my life.

So you have something good to give to people. Don't be ashamed of your faith, don't be afraid to help others, to defend others, to say good encouraging things to others. Man there are so many times where I said the smallest, littlest thing to somebody and I said it in passing and later found out that was a really big deal to them. Don't discredit your words. Don't discredit what you have to give to a hurting world. Be aware of the needs of the people in the fifteen feet of space around you. They are there. Have listening ears and meet the needs of people who are hurting. And we're all hurting. Be the kind of person that is always available to shine the light.

I think that sometimes we hide, and this a temptation for me to hide that I'm a pastor. I once went golfing with a guy over here at Riverview. And if you've ever been to Riverview, it is the cheapest golf

course within about ten miles of here, but it's pretty good. Pretty good. But you can go for about twelve bucks. So I'm golfing with a guy. He's completely drunk and he's got his shirt off, which that's a first. But I liked this guy. And we were having a great time, and we were about nine holes in, and of course he was cussing like a sailor, but was still very funny. I'm not going to lie, and very fun. And about hole eight or nine, he says so what do you do for a living? I wanted to say social worker so bad. And the saddest thing about this is when I told the guy I was a pastor he just played over there the rest of the time. And that's not his fault, that's the fault of a lot of religious people who have made him feel like an outsider when he's messed up or when he's having too much fun or whatever.

So some of us are like that with our faith. Sometimes we don't want to let people know that we go to church. Or that we're a Christian because of some of things Christians do that we don't like, or maybe we're not proud of this or that in our life. You need to let people know you're a Christian so God gets the credit for how great you are. And you are great. It's always the bad Christians, very often, who are like I'm a Christian! You're going to hell!

Guys, we need believers who are sane, happy, joy filled, life giving, imperfect encouragers, and that's what you are. You're doing a great job. You're doing so much better than you think. So let your light shine. Let people see in you what they need to see in God. A God who loves them,

who cares for them, whose involved with their lives. That's you! People need you. And what you've got is good, and they need more of it. You're doing great. I'm proud of you.

The lesson here – do your best and God will take care of the rest. If you believe it, say amen.

Let's pray: Father, we thank you that you love us, and I just want to pray over my friends, in Jesus' name, for all that are watching on television and all that are here in this church, Lord, that you'd show us what you see, that you're proud of us. You've forgiven us of our mistakes and our sin, and you so believe in our future. You call us loved, you call us talented, you call us blessed, Lord, we receive it. And I pray in Jesus' name that every person hearing my voice would be the light of the world; would take that bushel off and be brave and do things to encourage others, serve others and give to others, we thank you. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.