

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Why "Don't Take God's Name in Vain" is Not What You Think with Dr. Carmen Imes

(November 16, 2022)

What does it mean to take the Lord's name in vain? I bet you think, as I've thought for years, it means using the name of the Lord flippantly. Is that really the best interpretation of Exodus 20:7. Well, you are going to be surprised today to learn that's probably not the best interpretation. In fact, my guest today studied that one verse for five years. Yes, five years. She is someone that wants to know what that verse means. Her name is Dr. Carmen Imes. She has her PhD from Wheaton. She has been a missionary. She's taught at several colleges. Now she's at Biola. And she has a book called Bearing God's Image, and this is a fascinating book and also a fascinating subject. And it has implications for how we live today. So, Dr. Imes, thank you for joining us here in Denver.

Dr. Imes:

Thanks for having me.

Frank:

Yeah, it's your hometown, isn't it?

Dr. Imes:

It is. Yes. Born and raised.

Frank:

We are here at the Evangelical Theological Society and Philosophical Society meeting. And we're meeting with scholars, and apologists, and theologians, and we want to bring you the best of the best. That's why Carmen is with us. Now, Carmen, how did you decide that you were going to investigate this topic? First of all, what is the actual translation of Exodus 20:7? This is one of the 10 commandments, ladies and gentlemen. What is the proper translation?

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Carmen:

I would translate it; you shall not bear the name of Yahweh your God in vain.

Frank:

You shall not bear the name of Yahweh...

Carmen:

So, bear in the sense of carry. Most English translations say something about taking the name in vain, not taking the name in vain, and then we say, Well, what does it mean to take a name in vain? We have this long tradition of understanding that as using God's name flippantly or as a swear word or something. And after my investigation, I'm quite certain that's not the right reading of the command.

Frank:

How many different interpretations did you find in your five year study?

Carmen:

23.

Frank:

23. Now, is the Lord not clear or do we have a problem? What is the deal with 23 interpretations?

Carmen:

Oh, yeah. I think that the Hebrew is a little bit mystifying if you're just trying to read the command by itself if you don't take the context into consideration. And so, translators have come to that verse, and they've said, What does it mean to lift up or carry God's name? Like, we don't carry names, so that must be an idiom for something else, it must be figurative. And so, then they go looking for parallels in other places to try to figure out well, what would that then mean? And I think the problem is that we've connected with the wrong parallels. And if we just read that verse in its natural literary context in Exodus, I think a different picture emerges.

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Frank:

Okay, before we dive into the details, how does this have implications for Christians living today? Because the 10 commandments were given to Israel. Yes, that's repeated in the New Testament. But why is this such a big deal?

Carmen:

I think it's a really big deal. I would even argue that if Christians want to understand our identity, and our vocation as followers of Jesus, we have to go back to Sinai. We have to see what's happening with the 10 commandments. I don't think these have been set aside in Christ. I think we actually need to drill down. Maybe my best way of illustrating that is in 1 Peter 2:9-10. Peter is writing to a mixed audience of Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus, and he calls them a chosen nation, a royal priesthood of people for God's own possession, God's treasured possession, depends on the translation.

And those titles he takes exactly from Exodus 19, which is the titles that God gives to Israel at Sinai. So, if Peter is talking to a New Testament church made up of Jews And Gentiles and he's saying, You are God's treasured possession, then we should go back to Sinai where he first says You're my treasured possession and say, Well, what does it mean to be God's treasured possession? And so, I'm convinced that we need Sinai in order to understand our vocation, our mission as the people of God.

Frank:

Okay, we're gonna unpack that during the course of the show, but before we do, I'm curious to know why you spent five years on one verse? How did this come about? How did this become an interest for you?

Carmen:

I might have been cheating but the way that I picked my dissertation topic, in conversation with my potential mentor at Wheaton College - I knew that at Wheaton, you have to come in with a topic that your supervisor wants to work on. And Daniel Block is the man I wanted to work with. He was nearing retirement, so I just asked him, What topics do you still want to supervise before you retire? Like, what needs to be done, I didn't feel like, as a master student, I was in a

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position to know what needs to be done in the field of Biblical Studies. I didn't feel like I had that vantage point, and he did.

And he could have said, Carmen, that's cheating. Figure out your own topic. But he didn't. He actually gave me a whole list of, here are some topics that I think are worth pursuing. And on that list was this command. And he attached to his email a sermon that he had preached on this command. And I was just taken by it. I thought, this is so illuminating and it's so much more powerful and relevant than I ever imagined this command would be. And I don't think I'll ever get tired of that topic. So, here we are 10 years later, still talking about it, and I'm not tired of it yet.

Frank:

So, why do you think the traditional interpretation or maybe the common interpretation we have today, which is sort of you're using the name in a flippant way, why did that take hold? And why is that wrong? I mean, we would agree we're not supposed to do that, right. We're not supposed to flippantly use the name of the Lord, but that's not really the heart of this passage. So, how did this come to be the main interpretation?

Carmen:

Frank, that is such a good question. And I don't have a definitive answer for, How did we get off track. But I would say, we as human beings, like specificity and certainty about... Just tell me exactly what I have to do so that I know that I'm not breaking the rules. And I think this command is so broad that there was this tendency to be like, Well, just give me a checklist. I just want to know exactly. And so, that human tendency to want to self-justify, Well, I haven't done X, Y, and Z, so I must be okay. I think that's part of it.

Frank:

So, you decided to really dig deep into this 23 interpretations. Is that our issue, or God's issue, or combination? I mean, how do we come up with 23 different interpretations of one verse?

Carmen:

I think when we come to the scriptures, we're trying to understand it as best we can, but we're all coming from our own social location, our own life experiences. And, like it or not, we bring

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that with us to the text. And so, there are certain things that we think would be obvious, or that don't occur to us, because we just don't have that cultural background. And so, you know, well, we don't carry names, so it must mean something else. And so, we're casting about for another explanation. But I think in the context of this passage, it's very clear what it means to carry a name. And so, if we just look at that context that can help us see what we are actually being asked not to do.

Frank:

You know, I first got a wind of this from Dennis Prager. You know who Dennis is. Dennis has written a couple of books. I think one is called *The Rational Bible*, and his interpretation of this passage is similar to what you're saying that what we're not supposed to do is basically do evil in the name of the Lord. That would be taking the Lord's name in vain or bearing God's name in an evil way.

Carmen:

Yeah. That's very similar to my reading, that we would use God's name to authorize something. Like, we claim divine blessing or divine authority for what we're doing and what we're doing is actually really problematic.

Frank:

So, Dennis is on to something here.

Carmen:

I think he's onto something. I think my reading is a little broader yet than that.

Frank:

Okay. All right. Well, how much broader is it?

Carmen:

So, I understand this command as a warning not to misrepresent Yahweh at all. And so, it's not just how we use God's name to authorize what we do, but it's the fact that we claim to be the people who belong to Yahweh, then we have to live in such a way that that's on display in our lives. That people can look at us and see what Yahweh is like, see his character on display.

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Frank:

Alright, we're gonna unpack that further right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. My guest is Dr. Carmen Imes and we are diving into Exodus 20:7. You say that's really narrow. It's got a lot of implications for today, friends. Don't go anywhere. We're back in just two minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. If you're low on the FM dial looking for NPR go no further. You will never hear this on NPR. We're here to tell you the truth. That's our intent anyway. Our website is CrossExamined.org.

My guest is Dr. Carmen Imes. Her book is Bearing God's Name. And actually, I said, Bearing God's Image in the first segment. That's because I'm confusing it with her second book, which comes out in June. I have an advanced copy. It's called Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters. That's coming later. But you can look up Dr. Imes. What is your website so people know where to find you?

Carmen:

CarmenJoyImes.blogspot.com. I have a blog there. I have a YouTube channel. If you just look for Carmen Imes that should pop right up.

Frank:

Alright. Now, in the first segment we were talking about really the key to understanding Exodus 27, bearing God's name properly. Don't take God's name in vain is really the context. So, what is the context of the passage?

Carmen:

Yeah, so, if you can imagine where the 10 commandments are, it's right as the people are just arriving at Sinai in Exodus chapter 20. And they're at Sinai for a good long time. Maybe only about a year in narrative time, but all the way through Leviticus and the first 10 chapters of Numbers they're at Sinai. And right here in the close context, in Exodus 28, Moses is up on the mountain. God is giving him the instructions for how to build the tabernacle and he gives these

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very detailed instructions on clothing that the high priest is supposed to wear. And part of those instructions include - there's a chest, like a pouch, on the high priest's chest that has 12 gemstones on it and each of the gemstones is engraved with one of the names of the 12 tribes. And it's, it's to signify that Aaron, the high priest, represents them. When he comes into the tabernacle into the presence of God, he's representing all 12 tribes.

Carmen:

And Exodus 28 describes that using the exact same phrase that we have in the name command. So, it says, And so Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on his breast piece. And that, I think, is key because Aaron is representing the tribes. And he also has on his forehead a gold medallion that reads, wholly belonging to Yahweh. So, he actually, literally, is carrying God's name on his forehead. And I think that this is important because we've already seen in chapter 19 that God calls them a kingdom of priests. You will be for me a kingdom of priests. So, I don't think it's a stretch for us to look at the high priest as a visual model of what's true of the entire Israelite nation. He's the high priest, they're a kingdom of priests. So, we watch him to find out more about their vocation.

So, he's representing Yahweh to the people and he's representing the people to Yahweh. And so, he bears these names on his body. And so, with that very close context for the name command, when God says to the people, You shall not bear the name of Yahweh in vain. I think what he's implying is that they too have been branded or stamped with the name of Yahweh. They have an invisible tattoo, if you will, and that indicates they belong to God, and therefore, they are his representatives among the nations. And God says that in so many different ways throughout the time at Sinai. All the earth is mine, all the nations belong to me, but you will be my treasured possession. God selects Israel from among the nations to represent him to everybody else. And so, to bear his name in vain would be to accept that role as his representatives and then to misrepresent him. So, to bear God's name in vain is to do anything that would cause others to look and say, Hmm, if that's what Yahweh is, like, I want nothing to do with it.

Frank:

And how often does that happen in our culture today, when Christians aren't bearing the name properly?

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Carmen:

I mean, all you have to do is pull up any news site and you don't have to dig very far to find a scandal of a Christian leader who's been caught doing something that's contrary to what they preach. And yeah, I think this is a prime example of bearing God's name in vain.

Frank:

Yeah, of course, the only thing the media will cover are scandals.

Carmen:

Yes.

Frank:

So, they're not going to cover the 95% of the time when Christians are out there digging wells, feeding the poor, and taking care of orphans, and loving their neighbor in all sorts of ways. You're never going to see that on the news. So, we need to keep that in perspective...

Carmen:

Totally.

Frank:

But it's also important to note that when we don't bear God's name properly, we're bringing shame on his name.

Carmen:

That's right.

Frank:

We obviously don't want to do that. Now, how does this compare to bearing God's image, which is the subject of your next book, Carmen? I mean, it's one thing to bear his name, but we all bear his image, whether or not we're Christians, correct?

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Carmen:

Yes. And that was the question I was asked more than any other right after the book came out. Everybody said, Oh, if bearing God's name is kind of a representative role, isn't that similar to being God's image? And my response was, yes, it's similar. They're both representative roles, but it's not the same, because every human being is the image of God, and only the covenant people bear God's name. So, the name bearing is a smaller subset of humanity. But I think it's absolutely crucial that we recognize every human being is God's image.

And I would argue, there's no way that the image of God can be lost or destroyed or marred in any way. Like we, by being human, are God's image. It was actually, back in maybe 2009, my first ETS meeting, where I heard John Kilner give a plenary address about the image of God. And he said, I used to talk about the image being lost, or destroyed, or marred in some way. And then I realized the Bible doesn't actually teach this. There's brokenness in our relationship with God, there's maybe relational strain, but you can't be any less the image of God than you are right now.

Frank:

What does it mean? Because I know that theologians debate what the image of God means. What's your best assessment of what it means?

Carmen:

My take on it is that it's not a capacity that we possess, but it's who we are, it's our human identity. So, in the ancient Near East, if somebody built a temple to a god, a deity, they would put an image of that god in the holy place. And that was a statue that people would then bring worship to. And it's that same word that's used to describe humanity as being God's image. We are that *Salim*, which is a physical thing you would set up in a temple. So, God creates the world as his cosmic temple and then he says, I don't want you to make images of me because you are my image. Some of you will hear in my voice Tim Mackey's voice from The Bible Project. In the Image of God video, he uses those words. He says, I don't want you to make any images of me because you are the image of God.

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Frank:

But technically, God is not a physical being, so what does it mean? It doesn't mean a physical image.

Carmen:

So, we're his physical representations, because he's not physical.

Frank:

Right.

Carmen:

Like, we're the reminder to the planet, to all creation, of God's rule. So, in a similar way to bearing God's name, we're representatives of God's rule. And so, that has implications for our function or our vocation. But I think it's important that we recognize we are the image. The image is not something we do, because we all fall across a range, a spectrum, of ability and disability. If I got hit by a car this afternoon, and was in a coma, I don't lose my status or identity as the image of God, even though I'm not doing anything in a coma. So, I think that's super important for ethics. I think the treatment of every human being with dignity derives from this teaching in Scripture that every human being is the image of God.

Frank:

So, to dig a little deeper then, humaneness is not necessarily capacity, but it does entail certain capacities.

Carmen:

It usually does.

Frank:

I mean, we have the ability to reason, right.

Carmen:

Usually, but if someone was unreasonable, they wouldn't be less the image of God. That's what I feel like it's important for us to say.

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Frank:

Well, my kids always claim I'm unreasonable.

Carmen:

You can just say, Well, I'm still the image of God.

Frank:

That's right. [both laughing] So, how would this differ from say any other animal? They're not made in the image of God. In what way are they not made in the image of God?

Carmen:

Well, and that's where I think when we tie the image to capacity, we run into trouble. Because animals are quite intelligent, and they are even relational, and there are all sorts of things we're learning about the animal world that are increasingly impressive. And then that gap between animals and people seems to narrow. Like, what sets us apart? What sets us apart is that God makes us to be part of his family. There's a kind of kinship that is part of being the image of God. And I get this from Genesis 5, where it talks about Adam having a son, Seth, in his own likeness, in his image. And it connects that back to humans being in God's image. So, we are the image of God, like Seth is the image of Adam. Seth is not Adam, and we are not God, but we're family. And so, we have this intrinsic relationship that, even if we turn our back on God, there's no way to erase that family connection.

Frank:

Now going back to the bearing God's name. You and I have a mutual friend, Dr. Michael Heiser. By the way, those who are watching or listening, pray for Dr. Heiser, as he is still dealing with pancreatic cancer. And we pray that his current treatment is going to help him recover completely. He has pointed out, and I'm sure others have, but he really helped me understand this that, in the Tower of Babel when God disinherited the nations in Genesis 11, then Genesis 12 is God saying, now I'm going to re-inherit the nation's beginning with Abraham. So, how does this work into the bearing God's name? We are today re-inheriting the nations. It's interesting that Jesus says, Go therefore make disciples of all nations. He doesn't say people, he says nations. So, how does bearing God's name relate to re-inheriting the nations? Or does it?

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Carmen:

Yeah, that it's a great question. I would say that these two concepts of being God's image and bearing God's name connect in Genesis 12, as you mentioned. Genesis 1-11 is this downward spiral of humanity in rebellion against God. Again, I would say they haven't lost the image of God, but they're estranged from God, And God wants to restore creation to himself, he wants to restore humanity to himself. And so, he selects Abraham and his family to be the channel through which his blessing can come to all nations. And so, those of us who are now rightly related with God, and who bear his name, our vocation is to invite others into that right relationship with God.

So, I talk about it in Bearing God's Name as a game of blob tag. We often think of election, theological concept of election as being picked to be saved. Like God picked me, aren't I great? And that is not how I see the Bible presenting election. I see it more like when God chooses you, it's like, he says, Tag, you're It. So, blob tag is the one where, if I'm It and I tag you, then we're both It and we're running around trying to tag as many other people as we can until everybody's been tagged. Now, I'm not a universalist. I don't think, inevitably, all people will be tagged. But I do think that our vocation is not to sit back and say, Okay, great, I've been picked, now I can just post from here till eternity. But it's more of like, I have a job to do. I've been tagged. That means I've gotta get up off my duff and I've got to tag as many people as I can.

Frank:

Well, we do. We're going to do that, and we're going to do it in the next segment too, so don't go anywhere. We're here with Dr. Carmen Imes. Her book is Bearing God's Name. And she has a newer book coming out. We'll mentioned it again in just a minute. Don't go anywhere. We're back in just two minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. My guest is Dr. Carmen Imes. We are talking about bearing God's name and also being God's image. But before we do that, I want to mention as we come up to Thanksgiving and into the Christmas holidays, we've had some donors step up to give us a \$100,000 matching gift. That means any money you give, up to \$100,000 before the end of the year, will be doubled. So, what a great way to double your impact.

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As you know, we are completely donor supported. When we go to a college campus and do I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, we don't charge students a dime. And the podcast, the TV show, everything we do online is funded by you. We don't talk about this very much. In fact, I probably haven't mentioned donations since the end of last year, but as you come up to your end of year giving, if you would consider CrossExamined.org, you will double your impact up to \$100,000. And I want to point out that all of the donations go 100% toward ministry and 0% toward buildings. We are completely virtual. You don't come to us we come to you.

Alright, let me get back to Dr. Imes. Carmen, you have written this book, *Bearing God's Name*, and you mentioned there are a bunch of other interpretations. What are some of the other interpretations that maybe aren't the one we typically think of, using the name of the Lord in a blasphemous or a flippant way, that may have some truck to them? That could possibly be true, but you don't think they quite meet the mark.

Carmen:

I noticed, as I was looking through the history of interpretation, that there are people who have this impulse; they will start off and say, Well, this command is telling us not to make false oaths. But it can be extrapolated more broadly to anything we do that misrepresents God. You know, they would start narrow and then they would have this sort of impulse. But I think it's broader than that and I would say their impulse was correct, it's broader, but the exegetical basis of that was just lacking. And so, I think Martin Luther is one who does that. Who says, Well, it means this, but it's broader, we can apply it more broadly.

So, I think that there has been for a long time, a sense that, wow, this is a really narrow...if we take it as not saying God's name disrespectfully, that's a very small thing to focus on at the top of a list of God's Top 10. Right? So, it's right near the top of the list and you would expect something weightier towards the top of the list. And also, others have noticed, there's an also a command telling us not to bear false witness. And if the name command is about not taking false oaths, or not misrepresenting God verbally, then how is that different than false witness? That seems like two commands in a list of God's Top 10 that are mostly the same. So, I think there's been for a long time people like, Well, this must be broader, or this must have more weight, but they haven't quite known how to get there. Now, I wasn't the first person to

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suggest this this. There's a long history of minority voices who have thought that this was about representation, not about speech.

Frank:

How about ancient Jewish interpretations? How did they take it? Did they get close to what you're saying here?

Carmen:

There are some. And now you're asking me to reach back several years in my research to resurrect some things that are not as sharp in my mind anymore. But some of the Targums, which are the Aramaic translations of the Old Testament, some of them are expansive. Some say explicitly this is about oath-taking, but others seem to use language that fits this context a little bit better. This reading of not misrepresenting God. Maybe my best examples came from the early church fathers. So, just immediately after the New Testament, some of the people who are writing; Clement and Barnabas, they talk about signing on to the Christian faith, like being baptized, as taking on God's name. And so, they have this sense that you shouldn't be baptized and then go out and take God's name in vain, like, bear God's name in vain. So, they saw it more holistically as a representation.

Frank:

So, Dr. Heiser has always said that we have to transport ourselves back to the time when the text was written and try and understand it as they would understand it. So, how would the Israelites who have just left Egypt understand this command? Would they understand it in the thin way, which is, well, I just can't use his name disrespectfully, or...?

Carmen:

I don't think any ancient Near Eastern person was that dumb, honestly, to just go around throwing around the names of deities. They had this sense that a god's name had great power and that it needed to be stewarded carefully.

Frank:

Well, that's an interesting point because they already wouldn't say his name, right. I mean, they wouldn't even pronounce it, when they wrote it in a text, they would wash their hands. They

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didn't want to say the name, so why would even need the command if it just meant, don't say the name? They wouldn't say the name anyway, right?

Carmen:

Yeah, so the practice of not saying God's name actually developed later in Israel's history. I'm convinced that God invites his people to say his name. When God reveals Himself to Moses at Sinai in chapter three and four, he says, My name is Yahweh and that's what I want to be remembered by. And there's no sense of, but don't say it. Like, here's my name, but don't say it.

Frank:

Where did that come from?

Carmen:

That's still a bit of a mystery to me. Some people suggest that it's because of this command that they were trying to be super careful. Well, we're not exactly sure what it is we're not supposed to do, so let's just not ever say it and then we'll be sure not to break that command. Others have said, No, we can't directly trace the non-pronunciation of God's name to that command. There were other considerations about just a deep reverence of really wanting to treasure the name of God and not sully it in any way.

Frank:

Okay. This command comes from 10 Commandments, it's repeated in the New Testament, so it is a command for us because it is repeated in the New Testament. So, what do you say to Christians watching or listening right now, about how they ought to conduct themselves with this command in mind?

Carmen:

I tell my students that it's kind of like being on a sports team. If our Biola basketball team plays an away game, and let's say they're just playing really scrappy on the court; they're pushing people around, they keep fouling, they're trash talking the ref, and then afterwards, you gotta like hold them back because they're about ready to go pummel the other team. Because they're wearing Biola jerseys, everybody who's watching then has a poor impression of Biola University. Now, thankfully, this is a fictional illustration. This is not from personal experience watching this.

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But I think this is how it is when we sign on to follow Jesus. We are wearing jerseys, we're part of Team Jesus, and therefore the world is watching us to find out, Well, what does it mean to follow Jesus? Sometimes Christians think of their faith as something that's entirely personal. It's a set of beliefs that I hold, it's none of your business, it's between me and God and it's about where I'm going when I die. And I really think that if we take this command seriously, it helps us to see that our lives are on display for a watching world. That this is not about just me and Jesus, that I have a responsibility to be God's ambassador, I'm representing him.

So therefore, everything we do; the way we drive, the way we talk to the person who's cleaning the public restroom as we come through, the way we handle our money, the way we handle our time, all of these things are indications of our allegiance to God. As Michael Heiser would say, believing loyalty. We it's not just a list of doctrines that we assent to, it's actually a loyal way of life. Like we're demonstrating by our life that we actually belong to Jesus.

Frank:

It's been said before, ladies and gentlemen, that God gives us the dignity of causality. In other words, we're not just here as people who have fire insurance waiting for our bodies to break down.

Carmen:

Right.

Frank:

God gives us the dignity of affecting not only time for eternity, as ambassadors for him. Now, he didn't need to do it this way. He could have just revealed directly to everybody what he does through natural revelation. We get that, the witness of the Holy Spirit. But I mean, he doesn't need us to preach the gospel. He could do it directly himself, but he's chosen to use us to bear his name to the world. So, we could actually get in on affecting time and eternity, correct?

Carmen:

Yeah, we're never off duty. This is our calling.

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Frank:

Right. We just have a few minutes left. Tell a little bit more about what you're doing. You have a YouTube channel; you do a weekly Torah Tuesday. What's that all about?

Carmen:

Yeah, so the pandemic hit right after Bearing God's Name came out, like three months later. And so, all the speaking engagements were canceled. I had a bunch of trips planned and they were all canceled, so I had time on my hands. And I was beginning work on a commentary on the book of Exodus and was really excited about what I was discovering. Really great stuff that I wanted to share with people and I didn't want to wait five years for the commentary to come out. And so, I thought, What if I just did kind of really homespun videos at my desk and posted them on YouTube? Just like, Hey, here's what I learned this week. And so, I started producing videos during the pandemic. I did a full year of videos and then took a year off while we transition to Southern California and got set up and re-launched last June. So, now there's a video coming out every week and it's just a tidbit on what I'm learning in Exodus. It's been a really fun way to connect with people around the YouTube channel Carmen Joy Imes.

Frank:

Ok. Look it up folks. You'll get a short video.

Carmen:

They're like five to eight minutes. Yep.

Frank:

Yeah. And you've got a new book coming out in June called Being God's Image. What's the essence of that?

Carmen:

Yeah, I'm looking at the dignity of what it means to be God's image and how that impacts us in every area of life. I'm thinking more broadly about, What does it mean to be human? And I touch on a lot of hot button issues in the book; gender, gender relationships, race, disability, creation care, eschatology, because all of these things are impacted by how we understand what it means to be the image of God.

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Frank:

Well, you're doing great work, and it's intriguing work, actually. Because I've always thought about that command and said, Yeah, it does seem a little thin. Is that what that whole thing is about? There's a lot more to it.

Carmen:

Yeah, why God cares so much about what we say? Is he that fragile?

Frank:

Right. It's less about what you say, although what you say is important, and it's more about how you live. And that appears to be what that command is really about.

Carmen:

Yeah.

Frank:

So, what do you teach at Biola?

Carmen:

I teach Old Testament. So, I do a huge Old Testament history and literature class that's required and then I have an elective on the Psalms. I teach biblical theology.

Frank:

Alright. Excellent. Well, thank you for being on the program.

Carmen:

Yeah. Thanks for having me,

Frank:

Folks, check it out, Bearing God's Name. And then also check out the new one, which I know is about six months away. It's called Being God's Image. That'll be coming out as well. Also, if you would check out her YouTube channel, you'll get one short video a week, at least. And there's some so many of them up there already, so you can avail yourselves of that.

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Carmen:

You'd be busy for a while. You can binge the Torah.

Frank:

That's right. You can binge the Torah. We'll get to some of your questions right after the break so don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with me, Frank Turek. We're back in just two minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. We're actually coming to you from Denver, Colorado from the Evangelical Theological Society meeting. It's basically a bunch of nerds. We're all here just nerding out trying to learn from one another about Christianity, about philosophy, about apologetics, about some of the issues we just spoke to Dr. Carmen Imes about. And I'm joined for this final segment by our creative director here at CrossExamined.org, Ms. Phoenix Hayes. Phoenix, how are you?

Phoenix:

I'm fantastic.

Frank: Now Phoenix, you and I are researching a topic for a new book. It's really about identity. We have an identity crisis in our country right now, maybe actually around the world. And so, we're trying to research that and write a book about it. It's interesting that Carmen is talking about us bearing God's name. That's what the commandment says that we ought not bear God's name and image. But who in our culture is telling us what our identity is, if not God? Who's telling us who we are, what our identity is now?

Phoenix:

It's a funny, almost trick, that I would say the elite, the academic elite, those in power, those now in positions of political power, are playing on us. They're pushing the idea that we look internally to find our identity. So, most people will tell you, I look within me, and in fact, that's how I initially approached this project. But the more you dissect it, the more you realize it's only an illusion that people are looking internally. The very idea to look internally is coming from these people in positions of power and influence; our teachers, our university professors, those that have the greater voice in the media, and of course, it then influences our politics. So, the

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elite, and those that have the biggest microphone, are telling us where to draw our identities from and which identities are valid and which aren't.

Frank:

So, we're supposed to look inside of ourselves, we're supposed to follow our heart, despite the fact that God says, don't follow your heart, guard your heart because everything you do flows from it. So, they are trying to suggest that if I look inside myself, and I say that my identity, even though I'm biologically a man, I can be a woman or some other in between, that's what they're telling us.

Phoenix:

Right.

Frank:

So, why should we take what they say as gospel, do you think?

Phoenix:

For generations, we haven't, because reality defies that conclusion. But there is always going to be an appeal, an appealing idea, about being the ultimate authority on anything about who you are, about what you do with your life. So, that message gets absolutely eaten up by society today, and I'm sure it has done its cycle throughout civilization, and each time it ends up collapsing because it can't sustain itself. But the most dangerous thing I see with this idea is, if you can choose your gender, for example, and separate it from your biology, it completely removes the idea of personhood from an encapsulated idea, which leads to massive moral and philosophical problems when you extrapolate that idea. For example, what would you say to someone who holds this idea that identity and personhood is separated from biology, and now they're pregnant and deciding what to do with this thing that is...

Frank:

Yeah, they might say, Well, it's a human being, but it's not a person. That's one of the ploys or arguments, if you will, that the pro-abortion side have said. They've tried to say, Yeah, sure, you could find human DNA in there but it's not a person. Well, this is an artificial distinction. Who's to say who a person is and who isn't? Why is that even an issue? We know from science, that

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genetically it's a human being, so why would you ever say that it shouldn't be protected as a human being?

Phoenix:

Right.

Frank:

You don't even need the Bible to know this. You know that an unborn child is a human being from the moment of conception scientifically, so there's no reason to have some elite come in and put this artificial measurement on to say, Oh yeah, okay, we agree it's a human being, but it's not a person. What does that mean? So what?

Phoenix:

That's right.

Frank:

If you want to say it's not a person, whatever that means, that is irrelevant to the fact that it is a human being. And what Dr. Imes's point was is that if Christianity is true, and if God exists, then we are made in God's image. If God doesn't exist, well there's no right to anything anyway. Right? There's no right to abortion or no right to life.

Phoenix:

Exactly.

Frank:

So, here's the problem with elites. They're telling us who we are, when in fact, they're just human beings like the rest of us and they have no standard beyond themselves by which to say that we have certain rights or don't have certain rights, or we ought to live a certain way or not live a certain way. Unless there's a standard beyond us, a transcendent standard, a standard that we're obligated to obey because that standard created us - that's God's nature and his nature is good - unless he exists, then there's no right to anything. There's not only no right to abortion, there is no right to life. So, elites telling us what we are, in my view anyway, they have no ground behind them, they have no authority behind them, they have no external standard

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by which we ought to say, Well, you're right. There's got to be a standard beyond us that we're obligated to obey. Otherwise, there's no right to anything.

Phoenix:

Right.

Frank:

And the same thing is true in the gender world. I mean, you have now people saying, Well, you know, whatever my gender is, it's just whatever's on my heart. And we've said this before, Phoenix, as you know because you handle all of our social media, we have so many people looking at our videos related to transgenderism. But transgenderism presupposes fixed genders. In fact, why does it presuppose fixed genders?

Phoenix:

Well, simply because you can't transition from A to B without there being a distinction between A and B. This is precisely why this entire ideology is so circular. You ask someone, okay, gender is a spectrum, right? What's at the end of each of those spectrums? That's the problem. And sure, certain people, as you move closer toward the middle, you'll have men that exhibit more culturally feminine characteristics or whatever, but they're still men. And simply because these people that float in the center of the spectrum exist - and that's fine - people like to ignore the fact that there are two ends to that spectrum that creates it in the first place.

Frank:

Right, right. If I'm a man and I think I'm a woman, I have to have some idea what a man is and some idea what a woman is...

Phoenix:

Precisely.

Frank:

...to know that there's a problem here. And if I want to make the so-called transition, which biologically is impossible - people try and do it anyway - I have to have some idea of what a man is and some idea what a woman is in order to do that. Think about it this way friends, too.

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There's only, in the mammalian world, two things you can do. You either can produce an egg or you can produce a sperm. There's no third thing you can produce in between. Those are the two genders, the two sexes. You're either going to produce a sperm, or you're going to produce an egg, and if you can't produce either, okay, fine. That would be against the norm, that would be the exception rather than the rule. But there's nobody out there producing something in between, right. So, there are no genders in between a man and a woman.

Phoenix:

Right.

Frank:

As you just said, Phoenix, we may exhibit certain qualities culturally that we would say are masculine or qualities that we would say are feminine even though we are not. If I'm a man and I'm exhibiting certain feminine qualities, that wouldn't mean I'm a woman. I'm still a biological man, my gender is still male, even though I might exhibit these qualities. But again, you wouldn't even know any of this unless those two genders existed. So, as you're reading and you're trying to research for this book on identity, what are some of the most intriguing ideas you're coming across right now? What are you reading right now that's intriguing you?

Phoenix:

Well, of course, this this comes up again and again. The biologists and scientists of the world think that the fact that intersex people exist is their trump card in this argument, And yet, it does absolutely nothing to support their position. In fact, it almost exacerbates their position because they're leaning on a biological fact to prove a philosophical idea. And of course, they expand the numbers beyond what is actually factual. But even if we go with the current numbers that say 1 out of every 450 people are born intersex - and that doesn't even mean anatomically speaking. It could be a chromosomal issue, most of whom are completely unaware of it because they look male or female. The fact that this category exists does nothing to support the idea that, therefore you can choose gender.

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Frank:

Right. And that would be, in the old way of saying it, a birth defect anyway. It would be against the norm but it wouldn't prove that there's this spectrum of genders between a man and a woman.

Phoenix:

Not at all.

Frank:

And those that do have that very rare condition - sounds like 1 in 450 is a bit high - but even if that were true, it would be the exception rather than the rule. Those that do experience that, as I understand it anyway, at some point in their lives, if they have ambiguous genitalia, they have the surgery to try and correct the problem. But that's not what we're seeing our culture today. What we're seeing our culture today is we're seeing people with perfectly functioning healthy sex organs having them either removed or in some way mutilated in order to try and - which is impossible - transition to the other biological sex. It doesn't happen. So, there are so many implications here.

So, thanks for joining me on this Phoenix. Once this book comes out, which probably will be in a couple of years, we're just starting the process, we'll talk more about this in detail. But we just wanted to sort of add this to the discussion we had with Dr. Imes because where we come from, and who created us, that is our standard. It is not what we might think about on our hearts. God has made us men and women, he's made us in his image, and we as Christians then bear his name. And we have to do that rightly. If we're going to love other people we have to bear his name properly. We have to tell other people the truth, so we don't enable them to go down a path which is going to be destructive in their lives. That's why we're talking about this topic here.

Alright friends, great being with you. Don't forget about the \$100,000 matching gift. Any money you give at the end of the year to CrossExamined will be matched up to \$100,000. Thank you for helping us do what we do. You're reaching people through us. God bless. See you next week.

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