

Protect Human Life and Hearts from Murder (Exodus 20:13)

I want to start talking to the boys and girls here. God gave us 10 commandments and 10 fingers. I want to help us remember them so we know them like our right hand (parents can help review)

- #1 – God must be #1 in your life, first place, 1st command: ‘*you shall have no other gods*’
- #2 – (hold up 2 fingers for 2 I’s): no idols or images in worship, don’t bow (bend fingers)
- #3 – (3 fingers like W over mouth): guard our Words from His name in vain (3 in Trinity)
- #4 – (4 fingers up with thumb laying down, needs to rest): rest in the Lord of the Sabbath
- #5 – 5 fingers (sign language for dad and mom), raise hand to honor, will go well (high 5)
- #6 – ‘*you shall not murder*’ – 1 finger wag (for no), then going into other hand to stab/kill

REPEAT

PRAY. Father help us to remember these truths. We ask you to write your law on our hearts. Help us to store up your Word in our heart so we might not sin against you in these commands. Help us to love you with all we are and to love all our neighbors as much as we love ourselves. Help us to put nothing before you as #1, and to honor you rightly and reverently and restfully. Help these boys and girls and all of us to honor parents and to honor life, for the glory of Christ.

There was a cartoon where schools had guards checking kids before they enter for:

- guns, blades, bombs, or copies of 10 Commandments.

That was a joke, but in all seriousness this is 1 out of 10 America wants: *you shall not murder*.

- At least all agree that we don’t want others to murder us.
- I’m not on a mission to have unsaved schoolteachers teaching the Bible or praying.
- As a church and parents, that’s our mission
 - o but why human life can’t be murdered we must do a better job explaining.
- A 20th century estimate of 175 million were killed by 4: Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, Mao.¹

Ultimately governments or guards can’t stop all that – we all must guard human life and hearts.

OUR STUDY TODAY: What the 6th commandment is NOT saying What ‘*you shall not murder*’ IS saying What God is saying to us about our guilt and need

Ex 20:13 in the KJV says ‘*Thou shalt not kill.*’ Modern better versions: ‘*You shall not **murder.***’

- But the 6th commandment doesn’t forbid all killing. There’s other Hebrew words for *kill*.
- 1. [This is not about killing animals.](#) The Hebrew word in v. 13 is never used of animal death
- In v. 24 of this same chapter in context, God commands animals to be killed for sacrifice
- People only using the KJV may be confused, but ancient Hebrews knew the word in v. 13
- Keep a finger in Ex 20 and go back to Gen 9 to see what God said in the context earlier
- Gen 9 is after the flood, and in v. 2 God lists beasts, birds, fish, creepers, crawlers, etc.

³ *Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.*
[but v. 6] *Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image*

...

This is what makes human life set apart from plant and animal life: we’re made in God’s image.

- Only humanity is said to be made in the image of a sacred God, that’s the sanctity of life.

God gives animals to be killed for food, but to unjustly take human life assaults God's image.

- In ch 4 Cain murdered Abel, and God said that shed blood cried out from the ground.
- Lifeblood cries for justice to God to the end of the Bible
- Souls of martyrs cry 'how long?' But not animals

Evolutionists, atheists and moral relativists can say murder is wrong, in spite of their worldview

- but only God's Word explains that right by God-given conscience and absolute truth.
- If it's all relative (true for me vs. for you), no God's law, who's to say no murder. Why?
- If man isn't in God's image and is an evolved animal, why not kill like animals?

My former pastor Phil Johnson said he'd see animal rights activist signs with *thou shalt not kill*: 'when I was in college, I once ran into a group of religious fanatics...passing out literature about the evils of killing animals... holding signs that said, "Jesus was a vegetarian." They were convinced He had to be a vegetarian, because they believed eating meat is morally tantamount to murder. So I showed them Luke 24 [where Jesus asked the disciples if they had any meat and they gave Him some and He ate it before them, other times multiplied loaves and fishes. Phil offered to take the guy out to the fish and chips place down the street].'² It's not you shall not kill animals, it's don't murder humans.

You shall not murder in God's law means 'never unlawfully take a human life'

2. [The 6th command is NOT against capital punishment.](#) In fact v. 6 of Gen 9 calls for death
 - If you unlawfully take the lifeblood of a fellow image-bearer, you forfeit your lifeblood
 - This is before Israel and its law, and it's also a NT principle of law and order in Rom 13
 - Government law enforcement and armed forces bear the sword, deadly force, execution
 - But right before Rom 13, Rom 12 ends warning against personal vengeance done by us
 - Jesus taught not to take revenge in own hands, but if you live by the sword, you die by it³
 - Go back to Ex 20 but know the commandments include a death penalty for some crimes

To let cold-blooded murderers live doesn't value life in God's image, according to God

3. [This is NOT forbidding killing in self-defense or in war.](#) This past week recalls 9/11, war. It wouldn't be murder for F16s to shoot down a plane trying to take out the Pentagon

- or for the hostages to storm the cockpit and kill hijackers if needed to save other lives.
- In Ex 17 Amalek was what some scholars call the first terrorist group in scripture.

Dt 25 say Amalek attacked, killing women and children from behind, God said wipe them out.⁴

- "just war" defined as a just cause, a last resort, to defend life, including civilian life, etc.⁵

Even then Christians shouldn't hate but should pray for enemies to surrender and be saved

Ex 20:13 says '*You shall not murder,*' but that verb is never used in OT for warfare or self-defense. Look at **22:2**: *If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him...*

- A thief in the night could lose his life as a homeowner defends himself and his family

When possible, life should be preserved, including your own or others endangering your life

Neh 4:14 commands 'fight for...your daughters, your wives, and your homes.'

So that's some of what the 6th commandment is NOT saying, but what IS Ex 20:13 saying?

1. [No murder or manslaughter of any kind](#)

A few verses later, **21:12** "*Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death.*"¹³ *But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee.*"¹⁴ *But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.*

The worst kind of murder is willful cold-blooded pre-planned, no legal mercy for that

But the 6th commandment verb isn't just premeditated or a particular degree as defined today.

- In Num 35 the Heb. verb from the 6th commandment translates 'murder/manslaughter.'
- Manslayers claiming they didn't mean to slay a man could flee to cities of refuge for trial.
- No 1 witness could convict a suspect to death, there had to be 2 or 3 to establish guilt.
- If a death blow came by iron object or tool (stone or wood), a killer got the death penalty.
- If they fought with something in hand they knew could kill, it was prosecuted as murder.

35:20 *if he pushed him out of hatred or hurled something at him...²¹ or in enmity struck him down with his hand so that he died, then he who struck the blow shall be put to death. He is a murderer...* [but v. 22 says he could live in refuge] *if he pushed him suddenly without enmity, or hurled anything on him without lying in wait or... without seeing him dropped it on him, so that he died, though he was not his enemy and did not seek his harm* ... Motive matters in God's law, but the verb in 6th command includes all manslaughter (some allowed asylum).

Violent blows from hate or enmity that lead to death makes one a 'murderer' in Num 35\

In God's law, it wasn't just the physical that made murder, it was wishing harm, hate in a heart.⁶ As a church, here's in our What We Teach: 'We teach every person as created in God's image must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity, and we teach that abuse, hate or harassment of individuals is to be repudiated as contrary to Scripture (Jas. 3:9-10, 2:8-9)... We teach the dignity and sanctity of all human life, including the pre-born, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death (Gen. 9:6; Ps. 139:13-16).'⁷

2. Preserve unborn or vulnerable life or your own (i.e., abortion, euthanasia, suicide)

21:22 *"When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm [i.e., born premature but not injured], the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine."²³ But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life...*

So mom is alive but her baby isn't born alive, even involuntary "abortion" was treated as a crime

We'll look at that verse and the rest of ch 21 in a few weeks when we get to it.

- But unborn life is part of God's law of 'life for life.'

The Bible also warns against *murder* of other vulnerable ones,

- the 'poor and needy' (Job 24:14), orphans, widows, foreigners – God avenges their life.⁸

Every ethnicity and disability and the elderly losing faculties still bear God's image

God's Word says 'No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of his death' (Eccl 8:8).

- To take God's place by taking your own life is murder, no better if physician-assisted.

Suicide is selfish and hellish, that's a dark place to never go. In Christ there's always hope.

- Sometimes medically there's not hope to keep yourself alive without artificial respiration.
- Some pregnancies need to bring a baby out before it can survive for a mom to survive.
- But there's ways for natural causes to run their course without breaking God's law
 - o (ending treatment that can't cure vs. ending life).

Machines to delay natural death aren't in scripture but don't use means to cause unnatural death

Intentional overdoses, injections that kill, internal abortion, those are all grave sins

3. Protect life from carelessness or negligence (I get this wording from ESV note in margin)

20:13 footnote: The Hebrew word also covers causing human death through carelessness or negligence.

21:28 *When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten, but the owner of the ox shall not be liable.²⁹ But if the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has been warned but has not kept it in, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death.* Same penalty as murder for gross negligence, ignoring warning, think drunk drivers today

Dt 22:3 talks about fencing for 2nd stories people walked on to protect from falling,

- and it uses the word blood guilt if someone fell and died.
- Think fences around pools today to protect kids.

Don't just think of prohibiting accidental death due to carelessness, think of protecting life, too.

- I know of a couple here that protected the life of an embryo by adopting and raising it.
- others working with pro-life centers that rescue babies from being carelessly discarded.
- PTL for those here who protect and serve, nurses from NICU to hospice care,
 - o or other special care for all life.

Let's also prevent death by driving and living carefully, being careful with our own health, etc.

The NT talks about the value of bodily exercise and medical care⁹

1 Cor 6:19 '*your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...You are not your own...So glorify God in your body.*'

Heidelberg Catechism on 6th commandment includes 'I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself...to protect [neighbors] from harm as much as we can...love our neighbor as ourselves'

This takes us to our 3rd final point today: What God is saying to us about our guilt and need

Don't relax, thinking this is finally 1 of the 10 commandments you're not guilty of. No, friend.

Lev 19:16: *Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life....¹⁷ Do not hate your brother in your heart ...¹⁸ Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, **but love your neighbor as yourself.** NAS says this right before: *You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to **act against the life of your neighbor**...You shall not hate...in your heart...but you shall love your neighbor as yourself...**

God's law linked acts against life with hate in the heart, and the remedy was love for neighbor

We already saw Numbers and Deuteronomy also make hate key to murder as biblically defined.

- It's not enough to not beat him to death with a club, you must not even bear a grudge.
- Murder isn't just outward harm, it's inward hate.
- It's not just manslaughter that acts against a life, it's malicious slander.
- Some of you recklessly endanger reputations by gossip about sins of others.

Most never shoot to death with a gun, but many shoot their lips and you can kill relationships.

- God commands never seek revenge.
- Stop killing others in bitter thoughts, bitterness kills you.

I said last time don't dishonor other parents by how you speak of them, speak to them in love.

If you're upset at what other children of God did or said, don't be a talebearer (prayer concern)

Snide remarks are like a sniper's marksmanship. You can assassinate someone's character

It's sinful to talk bad behind their back, it's stabbing them in the back (a metaphorical murder).

- In the board game Clue you solve a murder mystery (Lady Red in a kitchen with a knife).
- But there can be a murder she wrote: sister so-and-so in the coffee shop, her weapon was words.
- You may never cut someone's throat or thrust a dagger in their chest,
 - but Pr 12:18 warns against cutting remarks or rash words like sword thrusts (NLT, ESV).
 - Ps 64:3 says sinners can have '*tongues like swords [and] aim bitter words like arrows...*'
 - James 3 says the tongue is full of deadly poison and it curses men made in God's image.
 - It adds if there's bitterness or selfishness there's disordered desires,
 - o you don't get what you want, you murder.¹⁰ For some, looks can kill!

Turn to 1 John 3 and we'll see the NT makes what Lev 19 said even more clear and convicting

Rom. 13:8: *...he who loves another has fulfilled the law.* [Then it quotes Ex 20, including] ... *“You shall not murder,” ... and if there is any other commandment... all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*¹⁰ Love does **no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.**

Paul understood ‘you shall not murder’ was summed up in ‘love your neighbor,’ don’t do him harm

Look at 1 Jn 3:15 *Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.* That’s comprehensive guilt for all of us who’ve ever hated and it condemns us to no eternal life.

This is deadly serious to God and damning to all our hateful thoughts, words, and deeds

- But there’s hope for us like Paul, who once breathed out murderous threats at Christians.
- John originally hated Samaritans, asking if they could call down fire on them (Lk 9:54).
- They didn’t have eternal life, but God can save and change murderers or haters.
- They recognized their guilt and need and looked beyond law to the Lord of life for grace.
- So let’s look to Jesus, too, in Mt 5

We could also look at Mt 15:19 where Jesus said out of the heart comes murder

Today most say ‘I’m a pretty good person for the most part. It’s not like I’ve murdered anyone.’ NT Jews heard a limited interpretation of the 6th commandment from Rabbis. But Jesus said Mt 5:21 *You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’*²² *But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.*

- Jesus says it’s not just the act of murder, it’s the anger behind murder, and the abusive words we can use
- And Jesus expands from earthly judgment to eternal judgment, going deeper to put us in deeper trouble
- When He says ‘insults,’ the verb means ‘empty head’ (blockhead, bonehead, knucklehead, numbskull)
- Fool is the Greek root word for moron (or idiot, good-for-nothing, or what you say as cars cut you off!)
- Some of you were guilty while driving in to church today, and all of us are guilty of v. 22 in days past
- In the NASB, v. 22 ends with ‘whoever says “you fool” shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.’

By that word from Jesus, I’ve been a serial killer with words. You’re a mass murderer at heart. God is saying we’re all guilty and hell-deserving in speech or sinful anger. We all need a Savior

So did Moses who wrote Ex 20, he killed an abusive Egyptian in Ex 2 and fled justice

Moses later was sinfully angry at Israel, struck with a staff in anger, wanted to take his own life.

- Moses fell short of what he wrote, but God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger...

He shows it in His Son suffering abuse verbally and physically, to rescue the abused and abuser

- He was insulted, called worse than a fool, to save and display how to not revile in return
- killed by a cunning cold-blooded premeditated plan, Jesus died for the sin of His enemies

He offered no self-defense, though He’s over angel armies He could’ve called to war

DeYoung says when we’re ‘fuming, scheming, steaming mad, drinking our bubbling exploding cup of wrath... what do we do? We look to the garden of Gethsemane and find Jesus there with another cup... not the cup of our wrath but [God’s] wrath for sinners like us. It’s his righteous, perfect anger directed toward people like us, who have so often displayed such unrighteous, unholy anger... We deserve that cup, but [Jesus] took it upon himself. The only one who never... committed murder in the least degree in his heart was murdered for [heart] murderers... us. We have all poured out the cup of wrath on one another, but only Jesus drank from that cup for us’¹¹

- Jesus drank the bitter cup reserved for me, wrath for my every bitter thought or evil deed.
- On the cross Jesus literally died in the place of a murderer; instead of Barabbas set free.

Acts 3:14 ‘a murderer [was] granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead.’

- One of the co-conspirators, a partner in crime of Barabbas begged Jesus to remember him
- Jesus mercifully did give him paradise. Even murderous gang members can have pardon.
- Isa 53 describes the worst murder ever, the best man ever was marred beyond recognition
 - o For killers who strike down enemies, Jesus was struck down by God and afflicted
 - o He was pierced through for our transgressions, including your backstabbing gossip
 - o For abortionists crushing little lives, Jesus was crushed for their iniquities, too
 - o For those wounded deeply by abusers, by His wounds they can be healed, too!
 - o For men with oppressive words, He was oppressed yet He opened not His mouth
 - o For sins of murder and manslaughter and slander He was led as a lamb to slaughter

My sin upon His shoulders, ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers, it was my sin¹²

Whether anger or abortions some here have had, God forgives that or any sin for all who repent.

- I think of David murdering Uriah for his wife and Saul of Tarsus murdering Christians.

God can save and change you like he did them if you ask Jesus to as your Lord and repent

- Mt 5:17 says Jesus didn’t come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.
- Jesus didn’t weaken God’s commands, He deepened God’s commands.
- He filled full the law’s meaning and fulfilled it by keeping it for us.

In thought, word and deed He obeyed from the heart to transform hearts, thoughts, words, deeds

Jesus endured sinful anger to cure sinful anger on the cross with ‘Father, forgive them...’

He gives grace to repent and stop killing others inwardly or verbally, and to heal hate and hurts.

Look at Mt 5:23: *if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come ...go privately humbly, ‘I think I’ve hurt you, if so, please forgive me and I’ll pray and strive not to do it again.’* If they keep hurting you as an enemy, v. 44: *I say to you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute...*

I end in Eph 4:31: *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

Illustration from David Contreras a month ago? Uncle to Alterton kids, husband of Faith’s sister

¹ Estimated from a former national security director of President Carter and cited by Al Mohler, *Words from the Fire: Hearing the Voice of God in the 10 Commandments* (Moody, 2009), p. 114.

² Phil Johnson, “Thou Shalt Not Kill,” www.sermonaudio.com The GraceLife Pulpit, 10/19/2014.

³ See Matthew 26:51-52 vs. “turn the other cheek” for personal hurts or persecution as opposed to protections for life in Romans 13.

⁴ Deuteronomy 25:17-19.

⁵ ‘The “just war” is, in a word, *defensive*. It includes at least seven distinctions: 1) just cause, 2) just in tension, 3) last resort, 4) formal declaration, 5) limited objectives, 6) proportionate means, and 7) noncombatant immunity.’ – Summarized by Kent Hughes from Arthur Holmes, *The Just War*,” *War: Four Christian Views* (InterVarsity Press, 1981), p. 120-21.

⁶ See also Deuteronomy 4:42, 19:4-6, and Joshua 20:3-6.

⁷ <https://www.gcb.church/distinctives>

⁸ Psalm 94:1-6.

⁹ 1 Timothy 4:8, 5:23, Luke 10:34-37, etc.

¹⁰ James 3:6-8, 14-18, 4:2.

¹¹ Kevin DeYoung, *The Ten Commandments* (Crossway, 2018), 104-105.

¹² Stuart Townend, “How Deep the Father’s Love For us.”