

Command 6 - Do Not Murder

July 1, 2018

Welcome to CrossWinds. If you are a visitor, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. It is great to have you on this rainy, wet holiday weekend! This summer at CrossWinds, we are studying the Ten Commandments. So far, we have learned we fall woefully short when it comes to keeping any of these commandments. For example, the fourth commandment talked about taking a day of rest, yet we don't like to rest because we are addicted to work. Next week, we will look at the seventh commandment, which talks about sexual fidelity; yet all of us struggle with lust. Later in the summer, we will look at the tenth commandment, which talks about coveting — that is a burning desire to have other people's stuff. We call that keeping up with other people around us. We fall short on that one too. We are constantly buying junk we don't need but we buy it because everybody else has it. Every day catalogs show up in our mailboxes and in our inboxes. Those catalogs are intended to encourage us to covet and to buy. We fall woefully short on keeping these commands.

Today, we are looking at the sixth commandment, which is about murder. Finally, we have a command that we can feel good about! This is the one command we have not broken! I hope nobody here is a murderer.

The problem is that when we look at this command a little closer, we get a different picture. This is probably the one commandment we break most frequently and most blatantly. There is far more to this command than we realize.

While this is one of the shortest commandments in length of words, it is one of the richest commandments in depth of meaning. Let's read it together then we dig into our study.

You shall not murder. Exodus 20:13 (ESV)

We are going to look at this commandment from a few angles. First, we will see what this commandment means. Second, we will see why God gave it. Third, will see when killing is the right thing to do. Fourth, we will see the many ways we break this command.

What does this command mean?

The key word in this command is murder. If some of you grew up with the King James, you will remember this command reads differently in that old translation. Here is the way it reads in the King James.

Thou shalt not kill. Exodus 20:13 (KJV 1900)

There is a big difference between murdering and killing. If we can't kill, we should not be eating steak. If we can't kill, Christians should not serve in the military. If we can't kill, criminals will never die for their crimes. If this command means we can never kill, we are not in a good place in this world. Thankfully, it turns out the old King James translation is a little misleading when it uses the word "kill" to translate the Hebrew word in this commandment.

In Hebrew, there are eight different words for killing. Each one describes a different type of killing. The Hebrew word used in this command is the word *ratzach*. It is never used to describe the killing that takes place in capital punishment done by a legal system. It is also never used to describe the kind of

killing that takes place in time of war. It is also never used to describe the killing of animals. This means the King James translation of this command as “thou shalt not kill” is misleading. The Hebrew word *ratzach* is used to describe unlawful killing. This is why many modern translations say, “You should not murder.” Murder is unlawful killing. It is a more accurate representation of the Hebrew word *ratzach* used in this verse. Even the word murder is still an incomplete translation. Remember *ratzach* describes any type of unlawful killing. It ranges from intentional cold-blooded murder all the way down to causing the unintentional death of others through carelessness or neglect.

Why did God give this command?

Man is created in God’s image.

The reason God says all form of unlawfully taking human life is wrong is because human life is valuable. Human beings are different from anything else in creation because only human beings are created in the image of God.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

Even though human life is made up of the same chemical compounds as animal life, human life is vastly different from animal life because each of us bears the image and likeness of God. To wrongfully destroy a human life is akin to breaking into a master painter’s art gallery and destroying his one-of-a-kind masterpieces. When we destroy those one-of-a-kind paintings, you don’t just destroy his work, you insult the artist who poured himself into those works.

My friends, we are one-of-a-kind pieces of art created by God. God has poured himself into us, so each of us carries the image of God, even though that

image is deformed by sin. When someone takes human life he or she is assaulting God, who made us in his image. Taking human life is to assault the creator of life.

There is a vast chasm between plants and animals compared to human life.

While we should take care of plants, trees, corn, cattle, birds, and fish, they are completely different from us. They were not made in God's image. In fact, God gave them to us for food so we can have steak, hamburger and salads.

Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Genesis 9:3 (ESV)

This means we can turn anything into jerky. We can have alligator jerky, turkey jerky or beef jerky all to the glory of God. While we can freely kill and eat plants and animals, the exact opposite is true of people.

And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image." Genesis 9:5–6 (ESV)

God said there is a vast chasm that exists between animal life and human life. Mankind is created in the image and likeness of God so we don't treat people like we treat animals. Many people have lost sight of this. They believe there is not a vast chasm between human beings and animal life, but they believe there is only a small evolutionary jump between animals and man. This is not true.

The teaching of evolution diminishes the difference between animals and humans and leads to non-biblical thinking, elevating the life of animals and diminishing the life of humans. This is why you find people protesting for animal rights and to save the whales but the same people have no problem aborting

their children. This is why you have people pushing for physician assisted suicide, like Jack Kevorkian did a few years ago. Their reasoning is simple. I love my dog. I don't want to see my dog suffer. When my dog gets old and is no longer able to enjoy a good quality of life, I take it to the vet and have it put down. If I can do this for the dog that I love, why should I not do it for my grandmother that I love since we are not much different than animals?

In a society that pushes evolution, the end result is that human beings are not worth much more than animals. The end result is human beings are treated like animals.

God says that is completely false. All human beings, whether they are super young in the womb or super old in the bed, whether they are super smart or super slow, whether they are super strong or super weak, bear God's image, so they are to be given dignity, value and worth.

When are we allowed to take life?

While this commandment is adamant that all human life is sacred, it also says that because human life is so sacred there are times human life can be taken and even should be taken. That is not because human life is worth so little but because human life is worth so much. The ultimate punishment is reserved for those who commit the ultimate crime. Those who shed the blood of man, by man shall their blood be shed.

Life can be taken in times of just war.

Christians have held different positions on a Christian's involvement in war. Some Christians hold to the position of pacifism, which means Christians should never be involved in war because it involves killing. We have already learned that is not a biblical position because "that shalt not kill" is not what this command teaches. While war and the death that follows is always ugly and should never be glorified, there are times when killing in war is justified. In the book of Joshua, God sent his people into the Promised Land to destroy the inhabitants of the land. God told his people to declare war and to kill in war. As we study the reason for these wars, we find they were all God's judgment on the very sinful people that lived in the land. These were people who burned their newborn child alive in fires as worship to the god Molech and engaged in prostitution for worship. God's judgment upon those people for their sin was that his people were to wipe them out. In addition, another reason God justified these wars against the Canaanites was to stop the spread of their sin and ensure that God's people would not become infected with the practice of their sin. In short, God's wars were to stop the spread of evil and sin.

This is the same rationale behind what theologians have called a just war. A country's army has an obligation to defend the security of its citizens from evil aggressors and to defend the weak and defenseless around them. When an army is defending the weak from evil and defending the citizens of a country from evil, killing is involved, but the soldiers are fulfilling their God-given duty of keeping evil in check and keeping it from spreading to other people.

Examples of this in our own country's recent history are when the United States went to war in World War II. This was the United States going to war to stop the spread of Hitler and his plans to enslave Europe and ultimately to enslave the world. There was a lot of killing that took place but it was to stop the spread of an evil aggressor and to defend the weak and powerless. That was a just war.

Another example in recent history was when Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait. The United States military was involved with a coalition of nations that came to the aid of the weak and defenseless people in Kuwait. In more recent years the United States went to war with Al Qaeda after it attacked the World Trade Center towers and sent 3,000 Americans to their deaths. At that point, it was the duty of the United States military to fight against Al Qaeda to defend the freedom of the American people.

The killing that takes place in war is never to be glorified, but the proper use of a country's military power is to defend the people of the nation against evil and to defend the weak and defenseless in this world from evil, that is, to keep evil in check.

Interestingly, when John the Baptist was preaching a message of repentance, Roman soldiers asked him what they should do in order to repent and get right with God. Look what John said:

Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages." Luke 3:14 (ESV)

If it was wrong for Roman soldiers to be in the military and to defend the citizens of Rome, this was John the Baptist's opportunity to say that. He didn't tell soldiers to get out of the army because in the army you kill people and violate one of the Ten Commandments.

In a similar way one of the first Christians in the early church was a Roman centurion named Cornelius. Cornelius is painted by Scripture in a wonderful light as a man of great faith and love for God's people. As a centurion, he commanded 100 Romans soldiers that were skilled and experienced in taking life. God didn't chastise Cornelius in Scripture. He showed Cornelius as a great example of faith in Scripture. Clearly it is not wrong to take life in war when the war is just and you are defending people from evil.

Life can be taken in capital punishment.

Just as there are times when killing is appropriate because a nation is protecting itself from evil, they are also times when death is appropriate inside society when a country is protecting itself from the internal evil of criminals. As we saw earlier in Genesis 9:6, the Bible says that whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. Since human life is so valuable, God delegates his authority to the state to take away the life of someone who is guilty of murder.

The key thing to remember is the Bible never gives individual people permission to take the law into their own hands. Individuals are never allowed to be the plaintiff, the judge and the jury. Capital punishment, when it is justly administered, must come from the state. When the state administers the death

sentence on those who have committed murder, that is not unlawful killing. It is not murder. It is called justice. The apostle Paul taught this in Scripture when he spoke of the government's role in society.

...for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Romans 13:4 (ESV)

Remember, a sword is not to tickle people. It is to kill people. The execution of a murderer by the government is the proper way God has designed the government to act to protect the live of its citizens. Death of a murder is the appropriate response of the state to the murderer, because life is so valuable that those who take life should have their lives taken. In addition, when murderers are not executed, they are eventually released back into society. What often happens when murderers are released? They kill again. In addition, capital punishment protects life. If those who take life know their lives will be taken, they are less apt to kill when they know that the ultimate punishment will be their nation's response to the ultimate crime. Those who are against capital punishment are have an incredibly low value on human life, not a high value.

Life can be taken in self-defense.

If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him, but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be bloodguilt for him... Exodus 22:2–3 (ESV)

The only time murder can be carried out by someone outside of this is when it is an act of self-defense. Even in a act of self-defense, the taking of life is not always the right response. Notice, the law tells us if the sun is up and you can see the person breaking into your home and you realize they are just there to

steal a few bucks, you cannot kill them. To kill that person would be for you to not value his or her life highly.

If they break and enter in the night and you are not sure what is happening and you are fighting for your life and you take a criminal's life in the scuffle, then it is legitimate because at that point you thought you were trying to save the life of your family and yourself.

When is the taking of life wrong?

It is wrong to take life in murder.

Sometime in life, we will come across a situation where murder doesn't seem like a bad idea. Sometimes people steal vast sums of money from people; sometimes people victimize a father's children or they assault a man's spouse. In those kinds of situations, the internal desire to take justice in our hands is strong, so strong some of us many have considered murder.

God says we are to never do that. First, we already learned that it is the state's job to administer justice. The wheels of justice turn slowly but they do turn. Second, God also promises us that he will take care of vengeance for us. We don't need to take care of it for ourselves.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Romans 12:19 (ESV)

God says to trust him. He will do a better job of paying back the wrong that was done to us than we will. The problem is we live in a culture where murder is the common response against those who hurt us. In some major cities, at least one person is murdered a day. There are drive-by shootings as part of gang initiation and retaliation. There is road rage when someone cuts people off in

traffic. Sometimes parents are so mad at the Little League umpires that they threaten an umpire or even kill the umpire. The headline on almost every newspaper every week is about someone being killed. Just this past week, we had a man filled with anger in Maryland who took out his anger by killing people at the Capital Gazette newspaper office.

Why does murder seem to be the common way people express their frustration after someone hurts them? Let me be real honest. One of the reasons hatred and murder is the common response to people who hurt us is because of an entire industry, the entertainment industry that entertains us with killing on television, in movies and even in video games. Many movies and television shows are about people being hurt and the hero killing people in response to that hurt. Do you remember "Rambo"? "He drew first blood!" Do you remember "Die Hard"?

How can a God who speaks of the preciousness of human life be pleased when we entertain ourselves by watching revenge, murder and death?

One study I consulted revealed that by the time an average teenager is 18, he or she has watched 40,000 virtual murders from the couch. Some people do not believe virtual violence leads to actual violence. I did a little research on this. One study I ran across was a study that surveyed the results of 1,000 studies that examined the connection between virtual violence and actual violence. The result was 980 of those 1,000 studies all concluded that video violence increases actual violence. The conclusion of one study was that watching virtual violence has doubled our nation's murder rate.

What we role play in our mind, when put in the right stressful situations, quickly becomes the script we will use to real play in our lives.

Some of you remember April 20, 1999, when Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris attacked Columbine High School. While there were many contributing factors to their attack, one of them clearly was their video game playing. They were both avid players of a bloody video game called Doom,¹ a game licensed to the U.S. military to train soldiers to kill.² Eric and Dylan had even made a custom two-player version of the video game where they had unlimited ammunition and all other people in the game were defenseless. In their modified video game, they had uploaded a blueprint of their high school so they played out their killing spree virtually for more than a year before they carried it out in real life.³ Remember, what you role play in your mind will be what you real play in your life. We cannot expect to have a high value on life if our entertainment is the taking of life.

It is wrong to take life in abortion.

In America, we abort approximately 250,000 children a year. This commandment speaks to the preciousness of life for unborn child. Abortion is wrong because children in the womb are also created in the image of God. David pointed this out in Psalm 139. In this Psalm he was talking about where he could possibly go to get away from God's presence. At one point in the Psalm, he speculated if God knew him when he was in the womb. These were the words he wrote:

¹ <http://education-curriculum-reform-government-schools.org/2012/12/violent-video-games-promote-violence/>

² <https://m.lasvegassun.com/news/1996/may/11/computer-game-doom-simulates-military-training/>

³ <http://extras.denverpost.com/news/shot0504f.htm>

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. Psalm 139:15–16 (ESV)

In short, God knew everything there was to know about David before he was even born. That is because unborn children are also human beings created in the image of God.

Incidentally, we call a child in the womb a fetus because we make a distinction between a born and unborn child. The unborn child has no rights while a born child has full rights. The Bible never makes this distinction. The Bible doesn't have a word for fetus. In Hebrew the word *yeleth* is used to describe a baby that is in the womb and a baby that is a born and outside of the woman. It doesn't matter if a baby is in its mother's womb or in its mother's arms. The Bible uses the word child to describe born and unborn children. According to the Bible, from the moment of conception forward, the child is a person. It is never a mass of tissue. The same holds true in the New Testament. The Greek word *brephos* is the Greek word use to describe a child in the womb and a child out of the womb. According to the Bible, the only difference between a born and unborn child is the location, not a person's quality or worth.

Another way to illustrate this comes from the Old Testament law. In the Old Testament, if two men were fighting and they happened to strike a pregnant woman and she gave birth prematurely, the man who struck her was fined. If men were fighting and they struck a pregnant woman so she gave birth prematurely and the baby was killed, the man who struck her was to be killed because the life

of the child in the womb was of equal value and worth to the life of a full-grown man. A child is always a child, it is never a choice.

When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, 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. But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, Exodus 21:22–23 (ESV)

It is wrong to take life in euthanasia.

Taking the life of those society deems less valuable is called euthanasia. It is also wrong. This is what led to the genocide of millions of Jews, gypsies, homosexuals and the mentally and physically handicapped by Hitler when he sought to thin the ranks of society from those he deemed less-than-ideal citizens.

Euthanasia today is not usually seen by people taking the life of Jews and gypsies but it is usually seen in the taking of the life from the elderly. In the Netherlands this is popular. Elderly people are encouraged to set an appointment with a doctor where the doctor either kills them by lethal injection or the doctor prescribes lethal medicine so they can kill themselves on their own time. This way they won't be a burden on society or their family. This is called the right to die with dignity, which is a complete farce. As people have noticed, the right to die with dignity soon becomes the obligation to die. In the Netherlands, the majority of people who push for the death of the elderly are not the elderly but the younger family members who don't want the inconvenience of caring for their fading relatives. That is selfishness. It is treating people like animals, not as though they are of huge value and worth because they are created in the image of God. Remember we did not create our lives. We do not have the right to take

our lives. Our job is to live to the glory of God each day he gives us life. It doesn't matter if that is when we are young and we are filled with strength or when we are old when we have little strength. We are to take what strength God gives in our lives each day and use it to the honor and glory of God. We didn't give ourselves life. We don't have the right to take our lives.

It is wrong to take life in suicide.

We looked at the taking of life in its very beginning and we looked at the taking of life at its ending. Now we will look at the taking of life in the middle of life through suicide. Suicide is the third most common form of death for those who are under 24. At some point in life, all of us will face a season when we will feel that life is not worth living. If that is you, listen! Do not entertain thoughts of taking your life. God gave you life. You don't have a right to take your life. If God still has you here, it is because he has business for you to do when it comes to serving him. In addition, many times when we think there is not hope we need to understand that we serve a God who gives hope. We may face a season where life feels hopeless, but you will be shocked how God can turn a situation around over time.

In Scripture, suicide is never applauded. Saul, Zimri, Ahithophel, and Judas all committed suicide. None of their deaths are seen as good. We are never told to follow their example.

This command doesn't just apply to premeditated killing. As we saw earlier, it also refers to unintentional killing.

It is wrong to take life through carelessness.

When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it. Deuteronomy 22:8 (ESV)

In the ancient world, homes didn't have air conditioning. They were usually mud and clay. In the evening hours, the house was an oven because of the scorching sun that beat on them through the day. In those times, people would go to the roof to cool off because the roofs were flat. There they would relax in the cool evening breeze. The problem with being on a roof is that it is easy to fall from a roof. This is why the Old Testament law said you needed to install a parapet around the edge of your roof when you built a home. A parapet is a fence or a railing designed to keep people from falling. If you didn't install a safety railing on your roof, and someone fell to his or her death, you were guilty of murder. You broke the sixth commandment. You broke the sixth commandment not because you actively killed someone but because you passively killed someone by not taking the necessary steps to protect life when you built your home. That left you guilty of unlawfully taking life. Let me show you another example.

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. 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. Exodus 21:28–29 (ESV)

This is another great example of breaking the sixth commandment through carelessness. If an ox gores a man and this has never happened before, the ox was to be stoned and the owner fined. If the ox was accustomed to being

aggressive and the owner had been warned about the ox but done nothing about it, this made the owner of the ox liable if someone died from his animal. He valued his comfort and convenience over protecting human life.

This means we must behave in such a way as to protect the life of other people. This is why workers use caution tape in a work zone. They have a responsibility to protect life and not break the sixth commandment. This is why we have safety harnesses when we work on a roof. Good companies buy their workers good safety equipment. They should be more interested in protecting the life of their employees than in making money. This is why building codes insist on fire escapes, sprinkler systems, and basement egress windows. It may all be inconvenient and costly but it is to protect life and avoid breaking the sixth commandment by treating the life of others carelessly.

Sometimes in the interest of profit a drug company rushes a drug to market without finishing safety trials. If its drug ends up making someone sick or taking a life, it is guilty of breaking the sixth commandment.

It is wrong to take life my own life or the life of others through recklessness.

We can violate this commandment by not only by failing to protect others, but we can violate this commandment by being reckless with the life God gave us. Each one of us is made in the image of God. When we drink and drive we are reckless with our lives and reckless toward the lives of others. We are violating this command by wrongfully taking our lives or the lives of others.

Texting and driving breaks this command as we put our lives at risk and the lives of others at risk through our reckless behavior.

On YouTube, there are many young people who do outrageous stunts like hanging off the edge of a building or climb to the top of a bridge without safety equipment and then use a selfie stick to record themselves dancing around on a small precipice with a sheer drop on all side to the ground hundreds of feet below. They do this to get a lot of likes and to get a lot of views. This is violating the sixth commandment. It is treating life recklessly. If you think it is your life and you can take your life, remember that is not true. Your life is a gift from God. We need to steward it carefully. We didn't give ourselves life. We don't have a right to put ourselves in high risk situations to take life.

It is wrong to take life through hatred and verbal abuse.

Jesus also taught that cussing people out and tearing them up verbally is a direct violation of this command.

You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 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. Matthew 5:21–22 (ESV)

Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 1 John 3:15 (ESV)

Sometimes people are very hard to work with. It is easy to develop hatred in our hearts. When we do, we murder people in our minds when we can't murder them with our hands. This is also a violation of the sixth commandment.

When we finally get a chance to talk with someone we hate, we rip him or her up one side and down another side. We verbally murder him or her if we can't physically murder that person. According to Jesus, this is also a violation of the sixth commandment.

Jesus wants us to give life.

One final story about this commandment hits home. Jesus said that this command is not just about avoiding the taking of life. God's desire is his people should be known for giving life. Jesus told this in a story.

Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead." Luke 10:30 (ESV)

It was a terrible crime. If there was any justice in the world, the men who committed the crime would be punished for violating the sixth commandment. The robbers were not the only ones that day who broke the sixth commandment. There were two upstanding citizens who also broke the sixth commandment, not by taking life but by ignoring the man who needed someone to give him life.

Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. Luke 10:31–32 (ESV)

Priests and Levites were respected religious leaders. They both saw the man in need, but they didn't do anything to help him. Maybe they were late for worship. Maybe they didn't want to get involved. Whatever the reason, they both made deliberate choices to walk on the opposite side of the road. Sometimes all it takes to break the sixth commandment is to see someone in need and choose to do nothing. Jesus said God's desire is we would be people who give life, not just people who avoid taking life. The hero of the story did that.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back." Luke 10:33–35 (ESV)

What makes this remarkable is Samaritans and Jews were bitter enemies. The least likely person to stop and help this man in need was a Samaritan, his enemy.

You see, this is a picture of what Jesus did for us. Jesus didn't just avoid taking life. At great personal cost, the cost of his life, he came to our rescue in our time of need and he gave us life. He didn't just give us a little life. He came to our rescue and blessed us beyond our imaginations with his rescue and love.

By the way, when Jesus came to our rescue, like the Samaritan, we were God's enemies, not his friends.

This is the gospel message. Just as Jesus came to our rescue to give us life when we were his enemies and in a time of need, as God's people, Jesus calls us not just to avoid taking life but to go out of our way to give life to others, even to our enemies in time of need. In so doing, we are living out what God has given to us through Jesus, and the world around us gets a chance to taste the gospel through our lives.



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