

**Channel Marker: The 10 Commandments
and the Beatitudes**

Command # 6

“Thou Shalt Not Kill”

Exodus 20:13

When people are asked to name the Ten Commandments one of the ones that most of the people can come up with is Commandment Six, **“Thou shalt not kill.”** But that does not mean that people today all agree on its scope and its intention.

In the King James translation this reads, **“Thou shalt not kill.”** But it is better to understand the word **“kill”** means, **“You shall not murder.”** In fact the Old Testament Hebrew has eight different words for killing (Dr. J. Vernon McGee says ten) and the two translated **“don’t murder”** where carefully chosen to distinguish exactly what is meant. The Sixth Commandment is not a blanket forbidding of killing but rather a specific prohibition of murder, the intentional taking of a human life. Dr. Albert Mohler says it well when he wrote, **“When the Lord wrote these words on the tablets of stone,**

He wrote “murder!” It is murder that is the issue.”

[R. Albert Mohler. “Words from the Fire.” (Chicago: Moody, 2009) p. 116]

Murder is nothing new to the human race. The first murder is recorded in the Bible in Genesis 4 when Cain killed his brother Abel. Yet it should be recognized that 20th century holds a record of murder on a massive scale. Considering just four men; Hitler, Lenin, Stalin and Mao can be held responsible for the 175 million deaths. In fact a new word “genocide” had to be created to describe the new level of carnage that did not exist prior to the 20th century.

The Law of Moses makes distinctions for various degrees of guilt concerning the sixth commandment, just as our modern laws do!

Exodus 21:12 describes first degree murder, “He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.”

Exodus 21:14 describes premeditated murder, “But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.”

And Exodus 21:18-19 describe attempted murder. “If men contend with each other, and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist, and he does not die but is confined to his bed, (19) if he rises again and walks about outside with his staff, then he who struck him shall be acquitted. He shall

only pay for the loss of his time, and shall provide for him to be thoroughly healed.”

We must however make one sharp distinction, in our definition of murder we said it is the intentional taking of human life. Animal rights advocates go too far in applying this commandment even to the killing of cows, chickens and pigs as food. Tonight we are going to seek an understanding of what this command prohibits and does not prohibit.

First, What this Command Does Not Prohibit.

- *Hunting is not a violation of the Sixth Commandment (Genesis 9:3). The killing of animals for food or clothing or some other useful purpose is not murder. In Genesis 9:3, we read, “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.” Personally I don’t believe that God would have us kill anything just for the joy of killing it, so that we can brag about having killed so many or having killed the largest etc. I believe if you are going to kill it you ought to eat it.*

- *Accidental Death is not a violation of the Sixth Commandment (the unintentional killing of another person) God would not have us kill any person, however there are times when someones*

actions may unintentionally cause a death, but God has provided that person will not be held guilty of murder. In Numbers 35:11-12, 15 we read, “*then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there. (12) They shall be cities of refuge for you from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment. (15) These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills a person accidentally may flee there.*”

God has sent out that human life is sacred and forbids the intentional taking of human life. But knowing that someone may die of an accident, God provided the cities of refuge for the one who caused the death so that no one out of anger and revenge could take their life.

In a day when justice was in the hands of a blood avenger this command sought to curb ruthless vengeance. In the Old Testament God gave Israel regulations for the formation of “Cities of Refuge” where someone who had unintentionally caused the death of someone could flee for safety. How these “Cities of Refuge” would work was given in Deuteronomy 19:4-5, “*And this is the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having*

hated him in time past— (5) as when a man goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he shall flee to one of these cities and live;”

Even today accidents can and do happen and people die as a result and that is bad, but it is not murder.

- *Self Defense is not a violation of the Sixth Commandment. (Exodus 22:2)*

“If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed.”

God’s Word establishes that one has the right to protect themselves even to extent of taking another person’s life. Would to God that never be necessary but if it does happen it is not murder.

- *Capital Punishment is not a violation of the Sixth Commandment. (Genesis 9:6)*

“Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.”

Far from forbidding capital punishment, the Old Testament commands it. God extends to the State the right to carry out capital punishment (Romans 13:1-7). And when the State takes a life in carrying out the due process of law, it is not

murder. When men are sentenced to death it is not a case of man playing God it is a matter of man obeying God.

Significantly whereas in society today we see the killer or murderer in relation to the harm done to the victim, the victim's friends and family and their circle of acquaintances, but in Scripture murder is seen as an injury to God Himself. The killer is guilty of taking the life of one created in the "image of God."

- *Killing in War is not a violation of the Sixth Commandment. (Deut. 20)*

In Deuteronomy 20 the bible gives regulations for warfare. Would the Bible regulate what it expressly forbids? No of course not! That is not to say that war is ever good, but sometimes it is necessary. God laid upon us the duty of protecting the weak and it is obviously impossible to do that without sometimes having to fight the strong. War should be avoided whenever possible but when a soldier kills in warfare it is not murder.

Secondly, What this Command Does Prohibit.

- *Abortion is a violation of the Sixth Commandment.*

During World War II the Nazi regime killed six million Jews and we rightly called it a holo-

caust. But since abortion was legalized in the United States in 1973, according to the National Right to Life, there have been 58, 586, 256 abortions. But this is moving target given that it is estimated that there are over 3,500 abortions in this country each day. [National Right To Life.

<http://www.nrlc.org/uploads/factsheets/FS01AbortionintheUS.pdf>]

*In our day people seek to justify abortion by saying it is not a person but just a “**fetus.**” One of the arguments (as inane as it is) is over when does a fetus become a person with rights. There are various positions taken,*

Life begins at conception.

Life begins at implantation.

Life begins when it takes human form.

Life begins at animation (when it begins to move).

Life begins at viability (survive without the mother)

Life begins at birth.

Some even argue that life does not begin until sometime after birth (perhaps as much as a year).

If you wonder where America’s present policies are taking us consider what Professor Peter Singer wrote in his book “Practical Ethics”, “Killing a defective infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person, Sometimes it is not wrong at all.” (p. 191) Singer, who is considered the father of the international animal rights movement, has said that children less than one month old have no

human consciousness and do not have the same rights as others. Therefore, “the life of a newborn is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog or a chimpanzee.” (pp. 122-23) Singer rejects birth as a relevant dividing line between a person and a non-person and advocates that the parent be given an assessment period of a week or perhaps a month (he isn’t sure which) during which they can in consultation with their physician decide whether to legally kill their disabled baby if they decide it would increase the total happiness of all the interested parties. (p. 172) What makes Singer’s statements all the more alarming is that he is the professor of bioethics at Princeton. Can you believe it? Here is a man teaching our young people who apparently believes that an animal has more of a right to life than a one-month old baby with a physical handicap.” [Peter Singer. *Practical Ethics*. 1st Edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979)]

But the Word of God expresses that personhood takes place at the moment of conception. The Psalmist says in Psalm 139, “**For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. (14) I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. (15) My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of**

the earth. (16) Your eyes saw my sub-stance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.” (Psalm 139:13-16)

- Criminal Negligence is a violation of the Sixth Commandment. (Exodus 21:29)

“But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.”

The Old Testament law illustrated the principle of intent and neglect. An owner of a man-killing ox could not be held guilty if the animal had no history of aggression towards people. Yet the animal must die, and the owner was forbidden to profit from the animal or its death. But if an ox owner had an ox (or similar animal) whom he knew to be aggressive and he failed to control the animal, he was guilty of murder and punished as such.

- Suicide is a violation of the Sixth Commandment.

Most of us have been personally affected by suicide, whether by a family member or close friend or just someone we know. Thirty thousand people die of self-inflicted deaths each year in the United States. Every ninety minutes a teenager

attempts suicide in this country and every 30 minutes one succeeds.

But God would have us to realize that all human life is sacred, including your own. You don't choose the time and circumstances of your birth, neither do you have the right to choose the time and circumstances of your death. God gave you life and He alone has the right to end it! Suicide is a clear violation of the sixth commandment.

Thomas Aquinas (the thirteenth century philosopher and theologian) forbade suicide on three grounds

- 1. It is unnatural.*
 - 2. It is a crime against those you know.*
 - 3. It usurps the place of God who alone gives and terminates life.*
- *Euthanasia is a violation of the Sixth Commandment.*

Euthanasia sometime called “mercy killing.” Discussion of euthanasia often arouses images of Dr. Jack Kevorkian the retired pathologist the champion of the right to die, who was dubbed “Dr. Death” after claiming he had participated in at least 130 assisted suicides. Ultimately he served eight years in prison for second degree murder.

Oddly enough the root meaning of the word euthanasia is “good death.” It usually refers in our

day to the helping of “a terminally ill patient in insufferable pain to “die with dignity.” But the actual practice bears little resemblance to the high sounding definition. As currently practiced euthanasia often involves the withholding of food or fluids from a patient whose ultimate death is the result of starvation or dehydration rather than an underlying disease. Euthanasia is a clear violation of the sixth commandment.

“What we often don’t realize is that Holland has practiced euthanasia for 20 years. And from surveys there what they have discovered is that more requests for euthanasia came from the families than from the patients. In addition, it was discovered that families, doctors and nurses are often involved in pressuring the patients to choose the course of euthanasia because their situations were helpless.” [S. Robert Maddox. *“Ten Words.”* Refining Faith Ministries, 2015]

But what about a “living will”? A “living will” is a document that says you do not wish to be kept alive by machines. Some people have a DNR (do not resuscitate) order – which means if their heart stops they do not wish for medical personnel to try to revive them. Some people see this as suicide. But this differs in that it is not an aggressive act to end one’s life, but a wish not to be kept alive by artificial means. A living will and a DNR

are basically saying that you leave your fate with God - they are not playing God rather they are relying on God. There are no scriptural directives about a “living will” because there were no ways in Biblical days to keep someone alive or revive them by artificial means.

- *Hate is a violation of the Sixth Commandment.*

You may well think that this commandment does not speak to you because you have never physically killed anyone.

Leonard Holt was a paragon of respectability. He was a middle-aged, hard-working lab technician who had worked at the same Pennsylvania paper mill for nineteen years. Having been a Boy Scout leader, an affectionate father, a member of the local fire brigade, and a regular church attender, he was admired as a model in his community. Until that image exploded in a well-planned hour of bloodshed one brisk October morning. A proficient marksman, Leonard Holt stuffed two pistols in his coat pockets and drove to the mill. He stalked slowly into his shop and began shooting with calculated frenzy. He filled several co-workers with two or three bullets apiece, firing more than thirty shots, killing some men he had known for more than fifteen years. When the posse

found him standing defiantly in his doorway, he snarled, "Come and get me, you _____. I'm not taking any more of your _____!" Bewilderment swept the community. Puzzled policemen and friends finally found a train of logic behind his brief reign of terror. Down deep within the heart of Leonard Holt rumbled the giant of resentment. His monk-like exterior concealed the seething hatred within. The investigation yielded the following facts. Several victims had been promoted over him while he remained in the same position. More than one in Holt's carpool had quit riding with him due to his reckless driving. The man was brimming with resentment — rage that could be held no longer. Beneath his picture in *Time*, the caption told the story: "Responsible, Respectable, and Resentful."

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 5:21-22, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' (22) But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire." What we see in Jesus' words is a definite connection between physical violence and verbal

violence. Jesus says that murder begins with the arrogant and egotistic attitude that causes someone to call his brother “*Raca*” for instance. “*Raca*” means “empty-head” or “good for nothing.” It seems apparent that saying “*Raca*” (Empty Head) and “Fool” to someone comes close to writing that person off altogether. What we are really saying is, **“This person does not deserve to be alive.”**

So when we arrogantly look down at someone and call them an empty-head, blockhead, good for nothing, worthless, idiot and things like that you better check your attitude. The sixth commandment is not **just** dealing with plunging a dagger in the heart; it is fundamentally dealing with how we treat people.

The sixth commandment is a call to exercise and express love toward each other. It is not given to the Christian to retaliate or seek revenge. Hatred is the root of all murder, beloved let us love one another.

Application

Let me ask you three questions that probe at this problem very deeply.

1. Do you find it easy to lose your temper when things don't go your way?
2. Are you carrying a chip on your shoulder about something from the past?

3. Is your anger keeping you from reconciling with those who have hurt you?

Be careful what you allow to take root in your heart. Jesus not only condemned the act of murder but the attitude that allows us to carry hurt, resentment and anger around in our hearts.

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Exodus 21:18-19 describe attempted murder.

First, What this Command Does Not Prohibit.

- *Hunting is not a violation. (Genesis 9:3)*
- *Accidental Death is not a violation (the unintentional killing of another person). (Num. 35:11-12, 15, Deut.19:4-5)*
- *Self-Defense is not a violation. (Exodus 22:2)*
- *Capital Punishment is not a violation. (Genesis 9:6, Rom. 13:1-7).*
- *Killing in War is not a violation. (Deut. 20)*

Secondly, What this Command Does Prohibit

- *Abortion is a violation of the Sixth Commandment. (Psalm 139:13-16)*
- *Criminal Negligence is a violation of the Sixth Commandment . (Exodus 21:29)*
- *Suicide is a violation of the Sixth Commandment.*
- *Euthanasia is a violation of the Sixth Commandment.*
- *Hate is a violation of the Sixth Commandment. (Matt. 5:21-22)*

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First, What this Command Does Not Prohibit.

- _____ is not a violation. (Genesis 9:3)
- _____ Death is not a violation (the unintentional killing of another person). (Num. 35:11-12, 15, Deut.19:4-5)
- _____ - _____ is not a violation. (Exodus 22:2)
- _____ Punishment is not a violation. (Genesis 9:6, Rom. 13:1-7).
- Killing in _____ is not a violation. (Deut. 20)

Secondly, What this Command Does Prohibit

- _____ is a violation of the Sixth Commandment. (Psalm 139:13-16)
- Criminal _____ is a violation of the Sixth Commandment. (Exodus 21:29)
- _____ is a violation of the Sixth Commandment.
- _____ is a violation of the Sixth Commandment.
- _____ is a violation of the Sixth Commandment. (Matt. 5:21-22)