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Exodus 20

“No Murder”

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God is *very* concerned about protecting life, because human life is the only form of life that God created in his image and likeness.¹ Human beings are distinct from the plant and animal kingdoms because we are created primarily as spiritual beings, housed in bodies of flesh, with the capacity to think, reason, and feel. We have been given a spirit that we might have the ability to commune with God and to have eternal relationship with him, which is why we are the exceptional part of his creation, because only human beings were designed to have fellowship and relationship with the Creator. The fact is that God placed his seal of approval on human life as being more sacred than all other forms of life, and that’s why he gave us the 6th Commandment.

It’s important to understand the 6th Commandment is about the protection and sanctity of human life at every stage of development, from conception to natural death. In this Commandment, God condemns the deliberate, malicious, and unlawful taking of a human life.

There are many ethical questions concerning the taking of a human life. For example, have you violated this Commandment if: you accidentally kill someone while you’re driving an automobile; someone breaks into your home and you kill the person in order to protect the well being and life of your family; your elderly grandfather is suffering from a debilitating disease, and he wants you to assist him with dying; you are a law enforcement officer or a member of the armed forces, and you kill someone in the line of duty; you are a woman who doesn’t want to have a baby and the government sanctions ending the pregnancy; your government puts a convicted criminal to death for a capital crime?

¹ [Genesis 1:26](#) - “...God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...”

There are all kinds of issues that need to be examined against the 6th Commandment, including: capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia, justifiable homicide, voluntary manslaughter, involuntary manslaughter, first- and second-degree murder, and accessory to murder.

In order to figure out the answers to these and other questions, it's important to know that there is a distinction between killing and murdering. The NIV translation reads: *"You shall not murder."* The KJV translation reads: *"Thou shalt not kill."* In our English Bibles this is a four-word phrase, but the Hebrew is only two words, *Lo ratsach*, which means, no murder. The Hebrew word for kill is *nakah*, which is permissible in certain circumstances.

In this study we'll learn more about the three exceptions to the taking of human life that does not violate this Commandment, as well as the different ways God views the taking of a human life.

Three Exceptions To The 6th Commandment

1. Accidental Homicide

- a. **Numbers 35:9-12** - *"Then the Lord said to Moses: 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, select some towns to be your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee. They will be places of refuge from the avenger, so that a person accused of murder may not die before he stands trial before the assembly.' "*
- b. **Numbers 35:22-25** - *"But if without hostility someone suddenly shoves another or throws something at him unintentionally or, without seeing him, drops a stone on him that could kill him, and he dies, then since he was not his enemy and he did not intend to harm him, the assembly must judge between him and the avenger of blood according to these regulations. The assembly must protect the one accused of murder from the avenger of blood and send him back to the city of refuge to which he fled. He must stay there until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil."*

2. Justifiable Homicide

- a. Self-defense
 - i. **Exodus 22:2** - *"If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed..."*
 - ii. **Romans 13:3-4** - *"For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong,*

be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer."

3. Capital Punishment

- a. **Genesis 9:5b-6** - *"I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man."*
 - b. **Numbers 35:16-21** - *"If a man strikes someone with an iron object so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death. Or if anyone has a stone in his hand that could kill, and he strikes someone so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death. Or if anyone has a wooden object in his hand that could kill, and he hits someone so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death. If anyone with malice aforethought shoves another or throws something at him intentionally so that he dies or if in hostility he hits him with his fist so that he dies, that person shall be put to death; he is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him."*
 - c. **Matthew 26:52** - *" 'Put your sword back in its place,' Jesus said to him, 'for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.' "*
 - d. Capital punishment should not be seen as a method for revenge, but as a means for justice; where the sanctity of life and the well being of society are preserved.
 - e. **1 Peter 2:13-14** - *"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right."*
4. All other taking of human life is murder, and a violation of the 6th Commandment.

King David And The Sixth Commandment

5. David had the husband of his mistress killed to cover up his adulterous affair, which makes him an accessory to murder.
6. When Nathan the prophet confronted him, David said, *"I have sinned against the Lord."*²
7. David wrote a **Psalm 51** about his sin and God's forgiveness.

² 2 Samuel 12:13

- a. **Psalm 51:1-2** - *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”*

Anger And The Sixth Commandment

8. **Matthew 5:21-22** - *“ You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.”*
9. Not all anger is sin.
10. The Aramaic term used here means, to have contempt without cause.
11. Jesus gave two scenarios, one more severe than the other.
 - a. If you call somebody a name ³ you will be accountable to the Sanhedrin. ⁴

God Is The Author Of Life – Murder Is The Usurping Of God’s Authority

12. It is God’s exclusive right to end a life, not ours.
13. **Psalm 139:16b** - *“All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”*
14. **Job 1:21** - *“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”*

God Values Life – So Should We

15. From the strongest to the weakest; from the youngest to the oldest; from the womb to the grave and beyond, God cares about all human life and every condition of life.
16. We should particularly care for and protect the defenseless, including: the preborn, the young, the elderly, the sick, and the mentally and physically challenged.

³ Raca, means empty-head, dumb, or idiot.

⁴ The Jewish ruling council.

17. **Psalm 8:3-4** - *“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?”*

God Gives Life As A Gift - We Should Cherish, Protect, and Defend Life

18. **Job 33:4** - *“The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”*
19. The framers of the Declaration of Independence recognized three things given to us by God.
- a. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”⁵
20. **Deuteronomy 30:19** - *“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Exodus 20:13** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Spend time talking about the KJV and NIV difference between *“Thou shalt not kill”* and *“You shall not murder.”*
4. Review and discuss some of the ethical questions Pastor Gary mentioned. (See page #1)
 - a. How have your thoughts and opinions about some of these issues changed as your understanding of Scripture has increased?
5. Review and discuss the three exceptions to the Sixth Commandment: accidental homicide, justifiable homicide, and capital punishment. (See #1, #2, and #3 above)

⁵ http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html

6. Read [Psalm 51](#) and allow the people in your group to share their experiences concerning the richness of God's forgiveness for their sin.
7. Read and discuss [Matthew 5:21-22](#).
8. Read and discuss [Psalm 8:3-4](#) and [Job 33:4](#).
 - a. Allow the people in your group to share their thoughts on what is and what is not appropriate for Christians to do when it comes to protecting life.
9. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: value all human life, from conception to natural death; understand that God is the author of life and only God has the exclusive right to end a life; purpose to protect and care for the defenseless, including the preborn, the young, the elderly, the sick, and the mentally and physically challenged.

- i. You shall have no other gods before me
- ii. You shall not make for yourself an idol
- iii. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God
- iv. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy
- v. Honor your father and mother
- vi. You shall not murder
- vii. You shall not commit adultery
- viii. You shall not steal
- ix. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor
- x. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).