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Section: Commands (Law)

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**HANDOUT NOTES**

**Q50. Why does God give the sixth commandment: You shall not murder?**

So we will love others, not having sinful hate or anger towards them.

**Introduction**

This command is part of the second table of the law. The second table of the law deals primarily with relationships with other people.

This commandment instructs us to consider other people’s lives as sacred as well as doing all that we can to honor, enhance, preserve, and protect human life.

**Foundation**

1. Secular/Sacred Distinction

If we just look at the sixth commandment as a civil legal requirement, we will greatly misuse and misinterpret the commandment.

1. Obedience of the Heart

When we obey God, we must always check our motivations.

1. Goodness of the Law

You shall not murder; is that not a good commandment? Is it not wonderful that God should inscribe this in stone, protecting the sanctity of human life?

1. Situational Ethics

These are situations where we suspend what is typically rather black and white and interject a whole lot of gray area. We are tempted to bend the commands of God when the details of a situation are technical or emotional.

**What Is the Meaning of the Sixth Commandment?**

**Exodus 20:13** “You shall not murder.”

**Exodus 20:13** (KJV) “Thou shalt not kill.”

God is forbidding a certain type or kind of killing in this commandment: homicide.

**Matthew 5:21-22**

**What Kind of Killing Is Not Forbidden by the Sixth Commandment?**

1. Killing of Animals and Plants

Noah was told that he could eat every moving thing that lives, including plants.

**Genesis 3:21**

1. Self-Defense

**Exodus 22:2-3** “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. He shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.”

God’s design for mankind, even sinful men, is so important that he would institute a law that would initiate the death penalty upon a Jewish man who killed a thief in broad daylight without using other available means to safely deal with the situation.

1. Capital Punishment and Murder in War

This commandment does not forbid capital punishment.

**Genesis 9:2-6** “The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 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.”

In **Romans 13:3-4**, Paul argues that God uses the sword or various enforcement agencies of the government to encourage good behavior and to restrain evil.

**What Does This Commandment Prohibit/Forbid?**

1. Murder of the Heart

**Matthew 22:39** ”And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

**Matthew 5:21-22** "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.”

**Heidelberg Catechism:** “I am not to belittle, hate, insult, or kill my neighbor—not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds—and I am not to be party to this in others; rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge.”

1. Unintentional and Intentional Murder

What is murder Biblically? Murder is the premeditated and unlawful killing of a human being.

**Deuteronomy 22:8** “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.”

When man does not protect human life (as much as it depends on him to do so), he runs the risk of bearing the guilt of that blood.

**Exodus 21:29** “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.”

1. Abortion

**Psalm 139:13** You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

**Exodus 21:22-23** “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.”

**1 Samuel 2:6a** “The LORD kills and brings to life”

Abortion is wrong because it’s the unlawful killing of a human life that is made in the image of God.

1. Euthanasia

Euthanasia is the intentional act of ending a life in order to relieve suffering.

1. Suicide

All types of suicide are essentially self-murder.

1. Spiritual Murder

If you willfully lead people astray with heresy and false doctrine, you are an accessory to the spiritual death of an individual.

**What Does This Commandment Require?**

1. We Should Preserve Our Lives and Our Souls

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20** Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

If God entrusts us with our family and children, then we should promote their health, both spiritually and physically.

1. We Should Preserve the Lives of Others

**1 John 3:17** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

**Conclusion**

Why is murder so wrong? Here are a few points to consider:

1. It is not murder to kill anything that is not made in the image of God.

2. To harm or destroy a human being is to harm or destroy the image of God in man, and thus violate the sixth commandment.

**Genesis 1:26** Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”