

Exodus 20: 13 – The Ten Commandments, part 6, “You shall not murder.”¹



Main point: Don't be life takers; be life *givers*, literally and figuratively.

Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: The Ten Commandments are God's laws of love. God saved his people from slavery in Egypt, and then God defines the relationship: I love you, and this is how you love me back.

Exodus 20:1-11

- The first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other God before me.” God says: You're my number one, because I saved you from slavery and made you my special people. Therefore, make ME number one for you!
- The second commandment: Don't make an image of me. Don't try to create me in YOUR image, to do what YOU want. Trust me and follow me as I am.
- The third commandment: Don't use my name in vain. Wear my name well, reflecting Me.
- The fourth commandment: Remember the Sabbath day. God provides!
- The fifth commandment: Honor your mother and father: made in God's image; legacy of respect continues.

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

[Note: Do not assume that everyone in the group has never killed someone. Be sensitive to the fact that many elders served in wartime and were required to kill. This discussion takes that into account.]

1. *So: What is the sixth commandment?*
 - a. Don't murder.
2. *Who is this commandment about?*
 - a. The first four commandments are about our relationship with God; vertical.
 - b. The rest are about how we treat others.
 - i. *Starting with?* Our parents.
 - ii. *Then moving toward?* Everyone!
3. *So let's think about murder here. First: what are situations where killing might happen?*
 - a. Wartime, police action; also illegal activity, crimes, self-defense
4. *Let's be clear: The scriptures tell us to submit to governments and authorities. If you are a soldier or a police officer or security person, what is your role, your job, your commitment?*
 - i. Protect and serve the people in your community against harm.
 - ii. If you have had to kill people those kinds of circumstances, that is under the authority of your government; it is not about a personal grudge. The motivation/reason was and is important.
5. *In this country, we also have freedom to choose not to kill. What are people called who, for religious or conscience reasons, choose not to kill?*

¹ Some material gratefully borrowed from Fellowship Monrovia: <https://madeforfellowship.com/>

- i. Conscientious objectors
 - ii. Story of Desmond Doss.² Doss enlisted to fight in WW2 for justice and defeating tyranny. However, as a Seventh Day Adventist, he refused to kill or even to carry a gun. Enlisted as a combat medic. At Okinawa, Doss single-handedly rescued 75 men under intense fire. He was awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military honor for acts of valor; he is the only conscientious objector ever to receive this award.
6. *Even when justified or under orders, does killing come without cost? Who does killing affect?*
 - a. Both parties – severe trauma.
 - b. It's COSTLY, never easy or casual.
 7. *How about people who have never actually physically killed someone? Let's think a little deeper: What's happening in your mind when you're angry with someone?*
 - a. Anger tends to consume our thoughts: "I hate that person!"
 - b. Easy to focus on how justified you are, validate the other person's wrongness.
 - c. Easy to shut out the person from your life, shut them down.
 8. *Unless you've been in the military or police, most of us have not killed someone, so we think we're "safe" on this commandment. The Pharisees, religious rulers, felt like that too; they tried to make this commandment into a legal transaction. But then Jesus took the "do not murder" commandment way, way further than physically killing someone:*

[Jesus taught:] ²¹"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' ²²But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother [calls him 'Raca'] will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5: 21-24)

9. *Raca, or "fool" – When you say this to someone, what are you saying about them?*
 - a. They're an idiot, their presence doesn't matter.
10. *What does Jesus say murder is really about?*
 - a. "Taking life," considering someone's life less important, meaningless, stupid: "You are nothing to me."
11. *Have you ever been "raca'd," treated like you don't matter? Being ignored, not engaged with, passed by... What does it feel like?*
 - a. Inadequate, unworthy, embarrassed, lonely, worthless, small, want to disappear ... dead.
12. *What is that like, just speaking to someone as if they were nothing?*
 - a. It's like spiritual murder. That person is made in GOD'S IMAGE. You don't get to live as if they don't matter!
 - b. God says, "My children are precious to me. Don't treat them as if they were nothing; that's like killing them."
13. *What does Jesus instruct us to do when we come to worship, "come to the altar," and realize that "your brother has something against you"?*
 - a. Don't even finish what you're doing! Leave and go reconcile.
14. *What is God's heart?*

² <https://desmonddoss.com/bio/bio-real.php>

- a. LOVE. God says, “If you love me, you’ve got to love my children well.” *Who would that be?*
 - i. Everyone! “They are all my children; and as you love me, you need to love them.”
- b. *What’s the opposite of tearing someone down with your words?*
 - i. Building them up with your words.
- c. *Stories of reconciliation? What does reconciliation do?*
 - i. Gives back LIFE.

[If appropriate, add this:]

Key thing: Reconciliation can happen no matter what – even if you killed someone in wartime. God desires healing for anyone who has killed, for any reason, and God can reconcile that relationship, through prayer, because *God is outside time*.

This commandment, as with all the others, is about LOVE. Summary of The Ten Commandments: A love letter! An invitation to *love*, not a burden of law. It’s a beautiful invitation to relationship with another.

- Ask for any prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20: 1-17: And God spoke all these words, saying,

² “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³ “You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath ...

⁷ “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain

⁸ “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates....

¹² “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

¹³ “You shall not murder.

¹⁴ “You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ “You shall not steal.

¹⁶ “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷ “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

Matthew 5: 21-24

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