

# The Sixth Commandment

The Command is simply stated.

**'You shall not murder.'**

Exodus 20:13

What is implied by the word murder? \_\_\_\_\_

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What does this command tell you about the Law Giver? \_\_\_\_\_

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**God values life.** This is evidenced not only by this commandment, but by the punishment administered for violating it. Though there is a sense of premeditation in the English word 'murder', the original Hebrew word is not as specific. It encompasses the premeditated as well as the non-premeditated taking of life. The killing of another person is prohibited no matter the circumstances or reasons, necessitating care and caution in our interactions with one another, and underscoring God's elevated view of human life.

## Punishment for Murder

Consider the directive by God given to Noah and his family after the flood.

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

Genesis 9:6

- Underline the punishment for killing another person.
- Circle the reason for this punishment.

What is significant about the reason God demands the life of the murderer as punishment? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why does God require this punishment to be carried out 'by man'? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Cities of Refuge

Exodus 21:13

When the Israelites finally settled in the land of promise, God established 'Cities of Refuge' scattered through out the area where people, who accidentally killed someone, could escape and be protected from revenge seeking relatives of the victim. As long as the perpetrator remained in the city, he could not be harmed, unless his crime was shown to be pre meditated.



Exodus 21:12,14

## The Standard for Guilt

The severity of the punishment demanded that convictions be sure. To this end, God instituted His standard for guilt.

- 30 'If anyone kills a person,  
the murderer shall be put to death at the evidence of witnesses,  
but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.
- 31 'Moreover,  
you shall not take ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death,  
but he shall surely be put to death.

Numbers 35:30-31

- Circle upon what evidence a person is to be put to death.
- Underline what evidence is insufficient to put a person to death.
- Circle what 'you shall not take' for the life of a murderer.
- Underline what shall 'surely' happen to the murderer.

What is significant about this standard for establishing the guilt of a murderer?

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Why did God not allow the paying of a ransom, or bribe, to spare the life of a murderer? \_\_\_\_\_

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## The Exceptions to the Rule

There are times when killing is allowed by God. Solomon wrote the following in his great sermonic book, Ecclesiastes, which declared that there is ...

- 3a A time to kill ...  
8b A time for war  
Ecclesiastes 3:3a, 8b

When might these times be? \_\_\_\_\_

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Cite examples in Scripture where God allowed killing. \_\_\_\_\_

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God commended individuals in Scripture who stood up for His righteousness by destroying the irreverent and the blasphemers.

Exodus 21:30 allowed a 'ransom' in the instance where relatives of the deceased, killed by an ox, are willing to accept payment in lieu of the execution of the owner of the guilty ox.

### A Time to Kill

Death came into this world through sin. Since then, God has not hesitated to sanction the killing of individuals, as in the punishment for pre-meditated murder to the world wide destruction by His flood. But in all cases, it is to declare God's righteousness and uphold His Holiness.

There is coming a time of judgment when God will pour out His wrath and multitudes will be destroyed. The Holy God will not tolerate sin and leave it unpunished.

## The Spirit of the Law

**Most people never violate** this commandment literally, including the circumstances outlined in the exceptions. But this does not exonerate them, as Jesus explained.

- 21 "You have heard that the ancients were told,  
'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and  
'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'
- 22 "But I say to you that everyone who is **angry** with his brother  
shall be guilty before the court;  
and whoever says to his brother,  
'**You good-for-nothing,**'  
shall be guilty before the supreme court;  
and whoever says,  
'**You fool,**'  
shall be guilty *enough to go into the fiery hell.*

Matthew 5:21-22

- Circle who is 'guilty before the court'.
- Circle what exclamation makes on 'guilty before the supreme court'.
- Circle what action makes us 'guilty enough to go into the fiery hell'.

What is the significance of Jesus' teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

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In what ways and against whom might we be committing the very acts Jesus outlines?

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**It is possible to keep** the 'letter' of the law but still be guilty of breaking it in 'spirit'. In God's eyes, the Commandment extends far beyond the prohibition of a specific action, but encompasses emotions and activities that most, if not all, of us are guilty of. We may not have literally murdered someone with our hands, but perhaps we have with our hearts. Jesus says that even our thoughts and attitudes make us 'guilty enough to go into the fiery hell'!

**It is worth contemplating** the consequences of Jesus' teaching. How many times have we been angry with someone or uttered the words, 'You stupid ...' to or about someone? Would it make a difference if we knew that those actions would instantly and automatically cast us into the 'fiery hell'? Jesus says **that** is what we deserve each time we do them. Let's keep that in mind the next time we get behind behind the wheel of our cars!

## Words of Death

The old rhyme may say,  
'words will never hurt me',  
but we know it's not true.  
Words do hurt, and in  
God's eyes, even kill. They  
are as deadly as bullets  
that pierce the flesh, and  
even more so, for they tear  
into a person's soul.

How many people have  
had their self esteem  
destroyed by a careless  
word, or a dream evaporate  
by a harsh critic.

Angry words can  
destroy because they are  
propelled by the same  
emotion that lies at the  
heart of murder itself!

So be careful what  
words you say. You may  
regret them one day.

**'But I tell you that every  
careless word that people  
speak, they shall give an  
accounting for it in the day  
of judgment.'**

Matthew 12:36

## The Spiritual Root of Murder

**Murder, or to be more specific** the desire to murder, is not as unexplainable as some may think. No matter the cause, its origin is always in the dark thoughts fomented in the mind by the evil one. As Jesus explained ...

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,  
fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

Matthew 15:19

- Circle from where proceeds evil.
- Observe and contemplate each of the things fomented in the heart.

"You are of *your* father the devil,  
and you want to do the desires of your father.  
He was a murderer from the beginning,  
and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.

John 8:44

- Circle who Jesus said was the 'father' of His critics.
- Circle who the devil was from the beginning.

What is significant about Jesus' statement in Matthew 15:19? \_\_\_\_\_

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How does murder originate in the heart? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why does Jesus call the devil 'a murderer from the beginning'? \_\_\_\_\_

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How might the devil be involved in killings among people? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Knowing that murder evolves from the heart**, how much more important it is to **take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ!** Satan is ever present and willing to enter our thoughts and stir the dark brew from where springs the evil justifications. Be alert, for the original 'murderer' would love to add us to his list of adherents and share his evil deeds. And what are **the first signs** that his intrusion is elevating the temperature of our inner thoughts? The initial bubbles of **angry emotions and words** that can boil over into the physical and unthinkable act of murder.



1 John 3:8-12