

UNEDITED DRAFT

Dear friends in Christ,

We continue our look at God's 10 Commandments, originally given to God's people Israel 1500 years before Christ, and 3500 years ago from now. 3500 year later they have not lost their significance nor faded in importance. We need to know what God says here.

Jesus summarized all of God's Commandments with just two phrases: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. And love your neighbor as yourself. The first of the "love your neighbor as yourself" commandments is the 4th Commandment which we looked at last week. Love for our neighbor hinges on respecting the authorities that God has established. Where the 4th Commandment is not obeyed, we find that Commandments 5 – 10 are broken with much greater frequency.

Today we are looking at the 5th Commandment: You shall not murder. Where the 4th Commandment is not obeyed, the 5th Commandment is more frequently broken. When people have no respect for authority, they are more inclined to murder, or harm other people's lives. Look at what is currently happening in Iraq or Syria or Ukraine. Where there is not honor and respect for the existing government, people start dying. We don't have to look that far. If you've followed what's been happening in Ferguson Missouri this week, the lack of respect for police authority has resulted in looting (7th Commandment sin) and violence (5th Commandment sins.)

But let's focus on the 5th Commandment: "You shall not murder." Of all the Commandments, this one might be the one you feel most confident about. "Yes! This one I have kept! I have not murdered anyone." Since I assume the vast majority of you have not murdered, and the few who have can come and meet with me privately, we can just move on the 6th Commandment, right? Wrong. As with all of the Commandments, we see that the Bible expounds on the principle of the commandment and condemns all of us for breaking it.

What is the general principle of the 5th Commandment? God is protecting his GIFT OF LIFE. Life comes from God. He is the creator and source of all life. Therefore he wants us to love the gift, and do everything we can to protect the gift of life. So how do we break this Commandment?

Let's start with the obvious. Murder. We won't spend a lot of time on it because not too many people will push back on this one. Murder is the unlawful taking of another human life. After the fall into sin, not even a generation passed before the first murder. Cain killed his brother Abel. We heard about it in the Old Testament lesson. Human beings have gotten know less murderous since then.

God does not allow murder because life belongs to him. Plus a person's lifetime here on earth is their opportunity to get to know Jesus and be saved. We call that a person's "time of grace." After that comes the judgment. No person has the right to choose to shorten another person's time of grace.

However, please note that the commandment does not say, "Do not kill." That's how the King James translated it, and that's not a very good translation. Because God gives some

situations where killing is allowed. The “sword” (the right to kill) is given to the government. The right to kill in self-defense is also allowed when someone’s life is in danger, or you perceive it to be in danger. God does not say you have to be a pacifist and allow your family to be killed. In this case, because you love life - yours or your families – you may have to end the life of someone who is trying to take yours.

Capital punishment is allowed by God. The government and its appointed representatives may justly take the life of a criminal who has taken the life of another. In fact, a faithful Christian COULD in clear conscience serve as an executioner. They are functioning as an arm of the State and are not committing murder.

Abortion: What about other types of killing? Is it murder? Here’s a controversial one: abortion. The Bible is extraordinarily clear on this one. You can reject what the Bible says, but you cannot honestly say that the Bible is neutral when it comes to abortion. Let me give a quick overview of what the Bible says:

- Ps 51 says we are sinful from birth, from the time of conceptions. As such, from the time of conception, human beings already need a Savior.
- We are told that Isaiah and Jeremiah, two great prophets from the Old Testament, were called to their prophetic ministry from their mother’s womb. They were already set apart from that time.
- John the Baptist apparently could believe in Jesus already in his mother’s womb, because he leapt for joy when he was still in the womb when he was in the presence of Jesus... who was also still in the womb.
- Psalm 139:13 says: For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
- The fact that God became man (Jesus) not by taking on a fully grown male body, but through conception, gestation then birth, tells us that from conception, this baby in Mary was the Son of God.
- And finally we have the Old Testament law in Exodus 21:22-23 which clearly articulates what God considers the unborn baby to be: **“If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman’s husband demands and the court allows. 23 But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life.”**

The Bible is clear. You cannot say you love human life and be pro-abortion. To be pro-abortion is to be pro-murder.

We are confused as a society... in fact we are insane. In 11 states and the District of Columbia, an under-18 girl can, without parental knowledge or consent, buy an abortion pill or get an abortion. Or if they’re on Medicaid, it can be free. In other words, their school can’t give them Tylenol without parental written consent, but they can get abortion pills. Does this sound sane?

Yet, there is this case: a little over a year ago, John Weldon found out his girlfriend was pregnant. She planned to carry the baby to term. But Mr. Weldon bought abortion pills, then lied to her that they were antibiotics she needed. She took the pills and lost the baby who was only 7 weeks along. Mr. Weldon was charged with 1st degree murder. He pleaded guilty to lesser charges and was sentenced to 14 years in prison for killing the unborn baby. Yet had the mother

chosen to murder the baby in the very same way... or if a doctor had murdered the unborn baby... our society would have silently approved. This is crazy.

Since Roe v. Wade legalized abortion in 1973, an estimated 55 million abortions have taken place in just the U.S. That's 17 percent of the entire current population! If everyone in Nebraska died, and everyone in every state we share a border with died: Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas. We'd still have less than half the people who have been killed through abortion.

This is murder. There's no other way to describe it. If you love human life and keep the 5th Commandment, you will not get an abortion, you will hate abortion, and you will be compelled to speak up about it... and also to help those who will have a difficult life because they choose life.

Have you had an abortion? When I was a missionary in Russia, I would estimate that well over half of the women in my congregation and potentially all of them had had at least one abortion. Is there forgiveness? The answer is yes. The blood of Jesus covers even that sin. We'll talk more about that in just a little bit.

Suicide: What about suicide? Suicide is the murder of self. Your life does not belong to you it belongs to God. To murder self is to not love God's gift of life. Therefore it is a sin. Suicide is in the news of course with the apparent suicide of Robin Williams. What a tragedy. 50 years ago, the church taught that suicide is sin. It is final. Therefore, the person cannot go to heaven. Lately it's become more clear that the brain chemistry and functioning is very complicated. Even certain medications can bring on suicidal thoughts in a person who never had them before. Can a person commit suicide while not being in their right minds? Making a foolish choice? Could someone perhaps still have a weak faith in Christ and still kill themselves? Can a person begin the suicide process and then repent that they began it but are unable to stop it? I have seen strong evidence for this. Finally, God is the judge of the human heart, and we are not.

That said, if you have thoughts of suicide, please get help. Suicide is not a solution – ever. It hurts you. It hurts those you love in a permanent way as long as they remain on this earth. Don't do it. If you have those thoughts, I want you to know you can come talk to me. Any time, day or night, call me or come see me. I want to talk to you if you have these thoughts. There is hope. There is help.

Hating: Some of you may still not feel the weight of this commandment. It hasn't struck you yet where you've broken it. The next passage will hit you between the eyes: 1 John 3:15: "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him." That's right. Hating = murder. Jesus said something similar. If you get angry with someone, calling them names, you are committing murder in your heart. You are guilty before God.

Harming your body: And here's one more thing to think about. If you do anything that hurts or harms your body, you are not loving the life God gave you. You are not respecting his gift of life. If you don't get enough exercise, if you abuse alcohol, if you overeat, if you put substances in your body that ultimately damage it... you are not honoring God's gift of life. You are breaking this commandment.

Somewhere, this must have struck a nerve. You've broken the 5th Commandment. So now what? We confess the sin to God and plead for his mercy. And mercy is what he has given. He sent his one and only Son into our world to do what we have not: keep the 5th Commandment. Read through the Gospels and you see all the evidence that Jesus loved God's gift of life. How many people did Jesus heal? The blind, deaf, skin diseases, the paralyzed... Jesus helped them all... because he COULD. He was compelled to because he loved God's gift of life. And of course, loving life, Jesus even raised the dead. The son of the widow of Nain. Lazarus. They were dead and he brought them back to life.

Jesus loves God's gift of life, he was willing to sacrifice his own life for us sinners. The wages of sin is death, so death is what Jesus paid. And through his death, God gives us the gift of life.

And Jesus loves God's gift of life so much, he will also raise everyone back to life on the last day. Those who believe in him will live in a way they've never experienced before... without sorrow, pain, suffering. Under the eternal care of almighty God, living in happiness and bliss forever. Thank God!

Thank him by keeping the 5th Commandment. We Christians are loving life, because life is God's gift to us! Preserve and protect your own life by taking care of your body. Preserve and protect the lives of everyone you know. Preserve and protect the lives of the unborn. Love life by being a friend to others and helping them when they have bodily needs. Help the sick. Help those who can't provide for themselves. Love life by being kind and compassionate, and forgiving others just as God in Christ forgave you.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are connected to Christ who is the source of all life now and forever! And so we are... LOVING LIFE. Amen.