

COMMANDMENTS 5 & 6
The Ten Commandments
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Exodus 20. Tonight we'll be looking at verses 12 and 13. The fifth and sixth commandments. We realize of course that the Ten Commandments are given on two tables and it's likely to assume that the first table contained the first four commandments which speak of our relationship with God himself and the second speaks of our relationship to our fellow man.

I think the kind of man on the street interview where people say "what do you think is important for your life?" and a person will say, "I think it's important to keep the Ten Commandments and you'll be ok with God if you do." I always get just a little bit tickled to that kind of response. I know that the person saying that has probably never seriously looked at what the Ten Commandments require. Once you begin to look at both the aspect of the law and the inward intent of the law that Jesus speaks about in the sermon on the mount you see how very, very difficult it is to keep all the commandments. Who in here has totally honored all their days their mother and their father. Never disobeying and never irreverencing their name.

It's easy to break the commandments. When we look at the second tablet of the law, the last 6 commandments we see that these commandments are given for human society. The fifth commandment preserves the home. Proper family responsibilities and obligations. The sixth commandment preserves life itself. The seven preserves marriage and the sanctity of marriage. The eighth preserves property, the right to hold property. The ninth commandment preserves a person's reputation. The right we have to not have our reputation falsely maligned. The tenth commandment is the preservation of a person's contentedness so that someone may not covet what is yours nor disturb your life in seeking to take from you what is yours.

When we look specifically at the commandments that are before us this evening, the fifth commandment is the only commandment as Paul says with promise. There is a promise for obeying it. "Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."

I want to talk about how this commandment relates to us in the several stations of life that we may find ourselves in. Since the children have already gone to children's choir practice it would probably not be wise for me to spend all my time relating to this commandment by talking to children about how they need to obey us older folks that are their parents. They're not going to hear the message. I'd probably be speaking to the wrong audience. I would like to deal with the fifth commandment from the standpoint of what we do as adults while our parents are now more adult, older than us, and still living. It seems to me that the fifth commandment relates as much to adults with senior parents as it does to the little toddlers and adolescents and teenagers with their set of parents. What the fifth commandment is doing is preserving the right of the elderly within society to life and support.

In the days of the giving of scripture and the leading of the children of Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land there was no social security system for example. In many of the pagan societies when old people reached a certain point in their life they were simply put out to die. Within the community of God however the people of God were called to care for their elders. We misread what it means to honor your parents if we do not include that as a vital aspect of keeping the fifth

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commandment of making sure that our parents are provided for and not simply left alone without any means of support. Without any means of care.

When we see Jesus using the fifth commandment in his teaching that is exactly the application he gives to it. Remember in Matthew 7 the Pharisees, he teachers of the law come to him from Jerusalem and he is in Galilee. I've always thought if I walk 100-120 miles to ask a person a question it's going to be a fairly important question that motivates me to take that kind of trip. I hardly will drive 120 miles to ask somebody a question. This was the question burning in their heart that motivated them: why do your disciples eat with unwashed hands? That was a big question. It doesn't seem to be big to you.

Jesus was inwardly disturbed that people would ask him that kind of question. He knew that their sole purpose was to get him to commit himself to violating their tradition, to make him vulnerable to their charges that he disobeyed the law. Jesus therefore turns on them and says, Well do you violate the commandments of God for the traditions of men.

Then he referred to a practice which they had adopted called *korbin* which says by doing *korbin* you are breaking the commandment. Not just breaking tradition, scribal and pharisaical tradition. But you're breaking the commandment about honoring your father and mother.

What was happening was the Pharisees had a code word. When it came time to honor or reverence their elderly parents by providing some means of support for them there was a way out of that if a person didn't want to assume the obligation. That was to take one's assets and, we would call it a trust or an annuity of some kind. And give it to the religious system. To the temple or whatever. And say it is *korbin*. It is given to God.

While although it was technically given to God the property remained in the hands of the one who gave it to use as he or she wanted to use it. And of course that was the code word. Since it was given to God one's obligations to God assumed a greater priority than one's relationships to parents. So the parents come looking for some help, some support in their old age, and the very pious legalistic Pharisee crosses his arms and says *korbin*, it's given to God.

Jesus says you violate the commandment of God and elevate instead the traditions of men.

We know when we read in the early church we find Paul saying in 1 Timothy 5, Honor widows who are real widows. This is again the society had no means for caring for its elderly. So the family did or the synagogue did or in case of the church, the church did. If a widow has children or grandchildren let them first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some return to their parents for this is acceptable in the sight of God. If anyone does not provide for his own relatives and especially for his own family he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Strong words but it flows out of this fifth commandment principle. It is a commandment with promise. Is this a promise of long life if you obey your parents. Now I understand that what this commandment is guaranteeing us is to a society that practices this commandment it's stability in the land will be guaranteed. The "you" can be conceived not so much a personal "you" but a plural "you." The people of God will be long in the land which the Lord your God is giving to you. Where there is family stability, where there is generational passing on of the faith, where

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the generations coming from other generations learn justice, righteousness and mercy and character of God where that is happening that society has the chance of staying and staying and staying. That society is not being torn apart by the divisiveness which we see in our society today for example. It certain is true within our own family settings that we come from. As we reverence and respect our parents God does grant a continuity over the years within that family.

We might want to change the 5th commandment and say Love your father and mother and love obviously would be a New Testament perspective. But the scripture seeks more fundamentally than the emotion of love. Seeks first of all to insure that there be basic respect. When there is basic respect I think it's automatic that love can follow. But where there is no respect love will not be present.

Paul then goes past this point which Jesus made to us as adult children caring for senior parents to talk about dependant children and parents. He says in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 6 children, obey your parents for this is pleasing to the Lord.

Here we have a case where submission to authority from the scripture point of view is first learned at home. If as the child grows that child is going to be responsive to outside authority whether at school or church or in civil affairs and government. The authority must be learned somewhere. It must be learned in the home.

It is incumbent upon us as parents of children who are still growing and still with us in the home to communicate that fundamental value of respect for authority. Not because the authority is always right but because of the position that authority occupies.

And by the way Christians never produce a kind of blind obedience to authority. One of the things that we ought to be inculcating in our children as they grow is to look responsibly at what is being said to them so that they might come at a time in their own life they can decide values. If a parent encourages a child to wrong activity, immoral activity, and does that on the basis that you should do this because you ought to obey your parents and therefore do what is pleasing to the Lord by obeying me, we communicate false values to our children. There may be a case where a child has to say to their parent what Peter said to the civil magistrate we must obey God rather than man.

I encourage people who in a particular issue that could not be settled by compromise needed to make a decision between obeying parents and obeying god. It's a painful thing. I encourage people in that frame to attempt to communicate reverence and honor to parents while at the same time expressing loyalty to God. We know that Jesus taught us in Matthew 10 that the child that for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ if necessary adhere to the greater loyalty of fidelity to Christ than even fidelity to mother and father. Mathew 10:34-38. But this does not mean that a child of an unsaved parent do everything they can to provoke that parent. That is not what the scripture is calling for at all.

In fact the saved person in a family whether wife, husband or child, is a sanctifying influence in that home to seek to win the rest of the family to the Lord.

When a person gets married obviously the scriptures teach there is a change in that relationship to parents. The husband moves away from his family and cleaves to his wife. That does not take

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away the responsibility to look after the older folks in their old age. But it does say that now there is a fundamental loyalty that has taken the place of the old loyalty. Therefore although the commandment seems very simple – honor your father and your mother – when you are married you again need to interpret that commandment in light of what the scripture may be for you to be united to your spouse.

Being united to your spouse for example may mean that this Christmas you do not spend Christmas at your folks, you spend it at her folks. Part of your loyalty to one another is to work that out so that mommy and daddy does not become a partner in your marriage to a point that they become a competitor to your loyalty to one another.

The commandment reads very simply but sometimes in applying it there are ramifications we need to look at and address and be led of the Spirit as we seek to apply those principles of honoring father and mother.

I want to spend a little more length of time with the sixth commandment. The sanctity of human life. After God made the earth swarm with birds and the water swarm with fish and the earth swarm with animals and creeping things he did not create a swarm of men. But one man and one woman. Thereby teaching us that he who takes one human life destroys humanity and he who saves one life preserves mankind.

When we look at the commandment, Ye shall not murder, we need to first of all look at what this commandment meant in Moses' day,. Then we need to understand how it applies in our day. Then we need to look at how Jesus interpreted the commandment.

The phrase in the NIV more accurately translates the commandment thou shalt not kill. Actually the force of the commandment is you shall not murder or commit murder. There is a lot of difference in the Old Testament between the subject "to kill" and "to murder." There is a considerable body of legislation in the Old Testament that qualifies and explains what is meant by the commandment you shall not murder. Instances covered under the Old Testament law:

First, premeditated murder. If you commit premeditated murder you are violating the sixth commandment, Exodus 21:14 If a man willfully attacks another to kill him treacherously you shall take him away from my altar [that is if he clings to the altar of refuge and says, I'm in a safe place. I'm in free territory. You can't take me while I'm at the altar] take him away. He's committed premeditated murder and take him away that he might die."

This commandment therefore flung a fiery law around the life of every human being reserving to God who first bestowed the life the right to end the life.

Murder with a deadly weapon. Numbers 35:16-18 "If he strike him down with an instrument of iron so that he died he is murderer. The murderer shall be put to death. If he strike him down with a stone in the hand by which a man may die and he die he is a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death. Of if he struck him down with a weapon of wood in the hand he is a murderer."

Here is a case where a person in striking another person uses a dangerous instrument and is held to be guilty of a murder. It'd be like in our society that says the hands of a boxer are lethal

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weapons. He is under greater liability or culpability before the law. He has used weapon. The scriptures make that distinction.

Murder through bribery. Deuteronomy 27:25 “cursed be he who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person.”

Another kind of murder was murder through criminal neglect. Exodus 21:28-29. “When an ox gores a man or woman to death, the ox shall be stoned and its flesh not eaten but the owner of the ox shall be clear.” If you own an animal and it gets loose and gores somebody you’re not responsible as the owner for it. But the animal shall be put to death that took human life. “But if the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past and its owner has been warned and has not kept it in and it kills a man or woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be sentenced.”

That’s like saying if you have a dog and it gets out and bites people, if you don’t lock the dog up, and it gets out and bites somebody again, you’re liable. If you have a car that’s been known to get into accidents with you driving it you’re culpable, you’re responsible for not keeping that thing chained up.

Our fundamental western laws come right out of the scripture. The principles are derived right out of there.

Deuteronomy 22:8 – you cannot build things carelessly. When a person endangers life, they are responsible for it.

Accidental murder is covered under the sixth commandment. Deuteronomy 19:6 “If anyone kills his neighbor unintentionally without having been in enmity with him in the past as when a man goes into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood and his hands swings the ax to bring down a tree and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies he may flee to one of these cities to save his life.” That was a city of refuge. Before the law he was guilty of having violated the commandment but it was a case with special circumstances which would allow the preservation of his life if he would flee to a city of refuge.

There was murder through perjury. That is being a false witness. Deuteronomy 16:18-19. “If a witness is false witness and has accused his brother falsely then you shall do to him as he meant to do to his brother.” If you testify in a case that so and so did something and you know they did not and you gave false testimony the Old Testament required that when it was found out the judgement would come back upon you.

There’s also community responsibility in the event of a loss of life. I’m struck again and again for the reverence for life I see in the scripture. “If in the land which the Lord your God gives you to possess [Deuteronomy 21] anyone is found slain lying in the open country and it is not known who killed him then your elders and your judges shall come forth. They shall measure the distance to the cities that are around him who was slain and the elders of the city that is nearest to the slain man shall take a heifer which has never been worked and which has not pulled the yoke... the elders shall bring the heifer down to the valley with running water ... and shall break the heifer’s neck and the priests the sons of Levi shall come forward for the Lord your God has chosen them to minister and to bless in the name of the Lord. By their word every dispute and every assault shall be settled. And all the elders shall wash their hands over the

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heifer whose neck has been broken in the valley and they shall testify, 'Our hands did not shed this blood. Neither did our eyes see it shed. Forgive, O Lord, thy people Israel whom thou has redeemed and set not the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of thy people Israel. But let the guilt of blood be forgiven them so you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from your midst when you do what is right in the sight of the Lord.'

Here is where there is a whole community responsibility that is exercised for the shedding of blood for whom it may not know whom it is the guilty party who shed the blood. We have pretty much lost this concept in our society.

Germany lost it. That's why they had the Holocaust. The silence of the towns nearby. The furnaces were smoking with the ashes of the Jews and the towns were silent nearby.

And the American holocaust of abortion where the people are silent nearby. This lack of a sense of community responsibility for violence to human life that may be occurring within the territory. God calls us to a greater sense of accountability and responsibility because he takes life very seriously. He has given life and he reserves the right himself to take life.

There is another instance in terms of legislation dealing with ramifications of the 6th commandment. That has to do with self defense. Exodus 22:2-3. "If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies there shall be no blood guilt for him. But if the sun has risen upon him there shall be blood guilt for him." What's this saying? If a thief comes in in the middle of the night and you strike him and he dies you're not responsible for his murder. You were simply engaging in an act of self defense. But if he broke in while it was daylight and you could see him the assumption is that you could have taken legitimate steps to defend yourself without killing him so therefore you are blood guilty.

We have that same principle in our society. Somebody comes and does a deed and someone takes a gun and blows their head off. What the person was trying to do was not to endanger your life but to take something. The scripture does not equate property with life. If somebody's taking your property, from the scriptural point of view that does not necessarily give you the privilege of taking their life. It may be a legitimate act of self defense. It may be in taking your property they are coming against your life and the Old Testament allows some form of defense. But if a person walks up to you and says, Give me ten dollars! That does not give you the right to kill him from the scripture.

The sixth commandment and war is an area all by itself. Obviously war that was a war that God had called his people to for the defense of national interest in the scripture. The people of God were his holy people. They were called to purge the Canaanites from their land. The killing that occurred within those wars was not looked upon as a breaking of the 6th commandment. I think in a society of today where you do not have a theocracy but a democracy we raise legitimate questions when we talk about the loss of life in war.

For example what of the moral dilemma that you're a Christian serving in the military and the person you're facing but you do not know. He has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, he's been pressed into warfare to serve their country. A real dilemma. How do you relate back to the keeping of the 6th commandment. There's no easy answers to that ethical and moral dilemma.

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I want to talk about some of the implications for the New Testament of war, suicide, euthanasia, abortion and capital punishment as they all relate to the 6th commandment. Recognizing that each of these merits a text book of its own. Each can consume hours in an ethics class. I'm just going to toss out some hints and some courses of direction.

The attitude of the New Testament toward war runs on two tracks. First non violence. The opportunity for a person to live out their conscious as a non violent person. I can't imagine or picture Jesus taking a rifle or sword to defend himself or even defending others. At the same time that I see the New Testament teaching that non violent aspect toward life I see soldiers coming to John the Baptist saying to him, What should we do? John the Baptist does not tell them, Lay down all of your arms and object to serving in Caesar's forces. Rather he says to them, Don't take more wages than is due to you.

When Jesus meets the centurion he does not say to the centurion as a condition to ministering to you I require you to resign your military position. In fact every time the word "centurion" occurs in the New Testament in occurs in a positive context. Every time. That doesn't mean that that centurion became a believer but every time the word occurs it occurs in a positive light from the New Testament. Cornelius was a centurion. When he came to the Lord nowhere do we read that he was required to give up his military commission, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Part of his commission was serving as a leader of troops. In Romans 13 Paul makes a strong case that the government (the state) has the right to bear the sword. It has the right to protect the interest of the state and the life, limb and property of its people. That magistrate is the *leiturgos* of God. This is a word in the Old Testament that is used strictly to describe those who had a priestly servant ministry within the temple. It's the word out of which we derive the word "liturgy" which is an act of worship. Paul says that the civil magistrate – the governor or police chief or whoever it might be that has the power of the sword – is the servant of God and he does not bear that sword in vein. He is there to uphold justice in society.

I think what it all boils down to when you look at the New Testament you see the non violence of Jesus. Yet you see in a very real world of evil there are military and police that do exist. The need for them is apparent as a check to lawlessness within society. Those who checked lawlessness act on behalf of God. Paul uses a term in Romans 1 and when you link it to Romans 13 it leads to an interesting conclusion. Paul talks about the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all men. This is God's attitude towards sin. Wrath is not some teed off anger but it's a settled disposition that acts and reacts against that which is wrong. When Paul goes on to talk about the civil government he says that it executes the wrath of God. That is to say that God has delegated to the government the power and the right to administer justice which includes the punishment of the wrong doer even to the extent of taking the wrong doer's life.

I think as believers, given these parallel emphasis in scripture there needs to be some charity. I would always back the person who says to me "Because of my Christian conviction I must choose to be a conscientious objector or a person who says to me, Because I'm convinced that there is a place for the civil government to exercise justice I feel God is calling me to serve him in the military. In either case, with either person, I would feel perfectly comfortable saying there is some ambiguity within this matter and God has called us to freedom. Differing opinions but freedom on the matter.

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Suicide. How do we treat suicide? Obviously the commandment, Thou shalt not kill, applies to ourselves. God does not want us to kill ourselves. I believe in regard to suicide as a personal option we need at some point to determine in our own life that that willing to be the action we'll choose. If you contemplated suicide you may think you're the only one. I'm never in a position to say when a person has committed suicide did they therefore forfeit salvation. God has not appointed me to take his place. Only God can know the human heart. But I think it's incumbent upon us to recognize that as a personal choice for our own lives suicide does several things that you would not want to be done for us.

First of all it gives ourselves control over our life when God has reserved that privilege for himself. Therefore it does impact our trust in the Lord. No matter how despairing a situation is God is committed to life. He's committed to preserving life no matter what circumstance we may find ourselves in God wants you to go on living. The prayer "give us this day our daily bread," is a prayer which teaches us to go against the tendency towards suicide. But to ask God to give us this day, to give us life. Suicide does grievous things within family. It causes hurts. Even when we may have intended it as a blessing there's still hurt there. As a personal option suicide is something that must in our own individual lives decide never to do. Our times are in the hands of the Lord. While saying that we ought to keep away from judgment of persons who have committed suicide. Our lives are in the hands of the Lord. But I think you have to make the choice on your own. The choice is for life.

What about abortion? How does that relate to the 6th commandment? There are perhaps several questions that have to be asked when you look at the subject of abortion. First, what is right for the mother. Secondly, what should society by law impose upon a woman who is pregnant? Third, when does life begin? There are Christians who have different attitudes as to when life begins. At conception? There are many believers who feel like life begins at conception. And therefore any abortion is murder. The text for these is psalm 139:14-15 which speak of the fact that God beheld our unformed substance. I think you can go even before that to Ephesians 1 that says before the creation of the world you were in the mind and heart of God. God was planning for you.

Others believe that life begins to occur at quickening. When the mother detects movement within the womb. The problem with this point of view is it's so imprecise and the fetus is already alive before the mother feels the quickening.

Does life begin at viability? That is to say when the fetus can live outside the womb on its own. Is that therefore constituting as human life and any abortion occurring after the point of viability becomes murder.

Or is everything permissible right up to birth? The last position that life does not begin until birth, bases their views if they're arguing from scripture on Genesis 2:7. That God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living being. The assumption is that the fetus does not yet have the breath of life to breath on its own and therefore is not constituted as a living being.

You say, My mind is made up on this issue! Life begins at conception. That personally is the view that I feel most comfortable with. I recognize too that when there is a miscarriage in the first weeks of pregnancy that we as Christians do not treat that miscarriage as we would a death.

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There is no funeral service, no treating of the miscarriage as though it were in the same category and status that a baby would have had.

I believe there would be no need at all for abortion if people first of all did not break another one of God's laws. That's where the real problem comes in probably 99% of abortions if some other law of God has been broken. Fornication? Rape? An act of violence associated with a rape? Perhaps on the part of a married couple a choice to live a kind of materialistic lifestyle which does not include in their plans children at this time. All of these it seems to me are judgments which are not in line with the scriptural understanding and support and affirmation for human life. It is distressing in our society where in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters of life babies are being aborted. Thirty eight million abortions are being performed now annually on a world wide basis. Tremendous lack of sanctity of human life.

Scripture says in the last days mother will hate their own children. This is an age where this is present. Whether it is children already born or children unborn. There is a tension within society.

What about those in this audience who have gone through an abortion and you're wrestling with the guilt in your own conscious because of this? Treat that guilt like you would all guilt. Bring it to the cross of Jesus Christ and ask him for forgiveness, ask him to bring healing in your life so you can go on. Sin that is covered by the blood of Jesus Christ and forgiveness is covered. Walk in the freedom that God gives you and the forgiveness of that sin.

As Christians we always live with tension between law and grace. Between what God requires and how God forgives. And not always do we see it as an easy proposition.

Capital punishment. Again within scripture we find in Genesis 9:6 after the flood God told Noah that whoever sheds blood by man shall that person's blood be required. Romans 13 tells us very clearly that the state has the power of the sword. The power to take life. At the same time in Genesis 3 that when Cain killed Abel God did not take his life in capital punishment. But God put a mark on him and told everybody through that mark, this is Cain, don't kill him.

I'd understand then from scripture that the state may have the power to take life in the event of a first degree murder. It is not necessary that it must. But the government has that power but no individual on their own has it. That would be taking justice into my own hands and God has not given to any one person the act of retaliation. He's committed that to the government. Whether or not we always agree with how the judicial system works God has given that power to the judicial system and to the legislatures to enact the law and the administration to execute the laws. We need to respect and be a part of that system. If we don't like it we need to get involved as active citizens and change it.

One of the things I believe Christians have the responsibility before God in a democracy is to be voters. If we are going to obey the emperor in our democratic culture, if we are going to honor the government as the scriptures tell us that involves being a participant in the democracy God has allowed us to have. Participating by our voting, by our informed involvement, by our support of candidates who will uphold justice and righteousness in the name of God.

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