

The Sanctity Of Human Life

Exodus 20:13

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We're going to read Exodus 20:1-17, and we'll focus on verse 13, the sixth Commandment. Moses records, "And God spoke all these words...." What is recorded in the Bible are the very words of God. "...saying, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.'" This is Commandment number one, verse 2.

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image...." This is Commandment number two, verse 4. "...any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

This is Commandment number three, verse 7: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

Commandment number four, in verse 8, says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." So in six days God created the whole cosmos.

Commandment number five is in verse 12. "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you."

Now here is our text, Commandment number six, verse 13: "You shall not murder." The King James translation says, "kill." The Hebrew word is "murder."

Commandment number seven, in verse 14, says, "You shall not commit adultery."

Commandment number eight, verse 15, is "You shall not steal."

Commandment number nine is in verse 16 and says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

And Commandment number ten, verse 17, says, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

Now we come to the subject of the sanctity of life. The Ten Commandments is what is called "the Decalogue." These words, which God wrote on stone, were written by the very finger of God. They are immutable, unchangeable, holy and perfect, like God.

The sixth Commandment is found in verse 13. "You shall not murder." They are four, simple words in our English Bible, but in Hebrew, it's even stronger. It's two words: "no murder."

And it's interesting that we find in verse 12 that we are to "Honor your father and your mother." That's the sanctity of the family. And verse 14 says, "You shall not commit adultery." That's the sanctity of marriage.

The Decalogue or Ten Commandments were given on two tablets of stone. I believe that the first five Commandments belong on the first tablet of stone, because they involve our relationship to God. Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). That's referring to the first tablet of stone: "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall make no idols. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Keep the Sabbath day holy. Honor your father and your mother."

It's interesting that God has put parents in the home to be His representatives. He's put human beings on planet earth to be His representatives. In the home, mother and father are to mold and shape their children.

But we first must be rightly and properly related to God. Everything starts with God. If we have no God, we have utter chaos. With God we have the cosmos—utter design and perfect order. So we start with God, loving Him "with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30).

Then on the second tablet of stone, there are the second five Commandments of "You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet." They deal with our relationship to our neighbor. Jesus also said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). It certainly is not loving to your neighbor when you murder, commit adultery, steal, lie or covet what is your neighbor's. So loving God and loving our neighbor fulfills the keeping of the entire Decalogue.

When we reject God, it leads to the breakdown of the family, to the breakdown of the sanctity of the family. When we reject God, it leads to the breakdown of marriage. "You shall not commit adultery." When we reject God, it leads to the breakdown in society and leads to violence and the breaking of the sixth Commandment, "You shall not murder." It also leads to sexual immorality; "You shall not commit adultery." So we need these Ten Commandments, given by God, who is the ultimate authority, 3,500 years ago written in stone.

Now what I'm going to do is ask and answer some questions as they pertain to the sixth Commandment, "You shall not murder." The first question is, "What is this Commandment not saying?" I'm going to give you four things it doesn't say.

Number one, the sixth Commandment is not a prohibition of all forms of killing. It actually covers murder. In the Hebrew, the word translated “killing” or “kill” means “a deliberate taking of human life.”

Years ago I was at LAX and a Hare Krishna came up to me and pinned a flower on my shirt and wanted a donation. I said, “No; I’m not going to donate to your religious group.” So he took his flower back. Then I started preaching to him, telling him the Gospel.

He stuck his finger in my face and asked, “Do you eat meat?”

With a big smile on my face I said, “Yeah; I love meat!” Then he quoted this Commandment, “You shall not kill,” turned and ran off into the airport, so I couldn’t explain this Commandment to him. I can step on a cockroach if I see one in my house, which I don’t, by the way. But if they come into my house, they’re gone; I can kill one. It means, “You shall not murder.”

Number two, this Commandment does not preclude the killing of animals for food, which I just implied. It doesn’t say you can’t kill an animal and eat the meat. Genesis 9:3 says, “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you.” Brian Van Gutton used to be our youth pastor here. He was from Alaska. He returned back to Alaska. But his favorite verse was God’s word to Peter: “Rise, Peter, kill and eat” (Acts 10:13).

So it’s okay to kill an animal—to eat a steak or have a hamburger. If you want to be a vegetarian, that’s great, but “You shall not murder” does not pertain to killing animals for food. It’s interesting that even Jesus ate fish.

Number three, the Sixth Commandment, is not an indictment against capital punishment. Genesis 9:6 says, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed.” I believe that capital punishment is a deterrent at least to murder or homicide. There also is Romans 13:4, which says, “If you do evil, be afraid; for he...” meaning “the government” “...does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” Most Bible scholars believe the words “the sword” is a reference to capital punishment.

We can debate whether or not we should have capital punishment, but God’s Word is clear that “You shall not murder,” meaning “homicide.”

Number four, this Commandment is not referring to the fighting of a just war. It’s not saying that if you’re attacked by another nation that soldiers can’t defend their country. Again, I know this is controversial for some; there are some Christians who are pacifists and don’t believe we should involve ourselves in any war. “Turn the other cheek” kind of concept.

But when God sent Israel into the Promised Land, He had them utterly wipe out the Canaanites, the Hittites and the Jebusites in the land (Deuteronomy 20). These people were actually offering up their babies as sacrifices. That’s not a whole lot different than what we do today in America. They would take a statue of Baal, put it in the fire to heat it up to red hot. Its arms were outstretched and they would then lay their babies into the arms of these statues and

burn them alive. They would be sacrificed to their gods. So God actually commissioned the Israelites to go in to the land to wipe out this horrible evil.

Then what does this Commandment forbid? It forbids the deliberate taking of a human life.

My second question is, “Why is the sixth Commandment in the Bible?” Let me give you the reasons. These points are so foundational, so important. Number one, God is the source and giver of life. Without God, there is no life. Genesis 2:7 says, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.” So foundational to this Commandment—“You shall not murder.”—is that God is the source of human life. God is the source and creator of all things. And because God is, the universe and all within it exists.

Only God is the ultimate authority. If you get rid of God—atheism, materialism and hedonism are so prevalent today in our culture—you have no fixed point of final authority. You have relativism; there is no absolute truth. “There is your truth and I have my truth.” And when those truths collide, who wins out? Who decides? So we have the ultimate arbitrator, who is God, who has given us His Law. It’s so very important.

So God is the source of life and the giver of life. Someone said, “Without God we have only chaos; with God we have the cosmos.” In Psalm 19:7, it says, “The law of the Lord is perfect.” Why? The Ten Commandments are a reflection of God being holy, just, righteous, good and unchanging. His laws are universal. God’s laws answer the question, “How shall we then live?”

All the craziness in our culture today is because we’ve gotten rid of God and gotten rid of His laws. If you wonder how we’ve gotten so crazy in our culture today, it’s because men have basically believed the lie that there is no absolute truth; that there is no God, so there is no answering to God. We’re all just a product of evolution. But God has created us and is the source of life.

Number two, God is the sustainer of life. He gives life and He sustains life. When you go to bed at night and you sleep, God is sustaining you through the night. You don’t have to stay awake to keep breathing to stay alive. You go to bed, go to sleep and God sustains you as you sleep. And God sustains us through the day. In Acts 17:28, Paul, speaking to the Athenians on Mars Hill, said, “For in Him...” that is, “God” “...we live and move and have our being.”

Number three, God is the taker of life. Those are the three foundational truths: God is the source of life, God sustains life and God takes life. In Job 1:21, he says, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

If you are alive right now, your life comes from God. And if you continue, God sustains you. And when it’s your time to go—“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27)—it is God who is the taker of life.

The statistics on death are quite impressive: 10 out of every 10 people living will die. When you get old and you start getting to that point in your life where there is less in front of you than is behind you, you begin to realize the brevity of life. When you're young, you think you have a lot of time. But it goes so fast. So there is the brevity of life and the certainty of death. The Bible says that life is like "a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14).

So God gives life, sustains life and takes life. Colossians says that everything is held together by Jesus. "And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (Colossian 1:17). He is "upholding all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3).

Number four—which is the most important and foundational—God made man in His image. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him: male and female He created them." God created us in His image.

What does it mean that we are created "in the image of God"? It means we are made to know God, to fellowship with God, to think rationally and subjectively, we have will or volition, we are moral creatures knowing right from wrong and we can communicate. In Latin, it is "imago Dei," the image of God. How important that is.

I don't believe the Bible teaches evolution; I believe it teaches special creation. Evolution is one of the greatest lies fostered upon the minds of men. It says that you're an accident, there is no purpose or meaning, you're just a material being, there is no life after death, there is no God, there is no heaven or hell. This is a lie from hell itself.

So there is a God who is the giver of life, sustainer of life, and He's the one who takes life. And mankind is made in His image. And because we're made in the image of God, all human life is precious. It is precious because human life is made by God, sustained by God and taken by God.

Today we are seeing a devaluing of human life because we have forgotten God. Our culture is humanistic and materialistic. If man is not made in the image of God, nothing stands in the way of his inhumanity; there is no God-given reason why mankind should be perceived as special, so human life is cheapened and devalued. Anywhere in the world that lacks a Judeo-Christian influence, you see the devaluing of human life.

In Genesis 9:6, it says, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man his blood shall be shed. For in the image of God He made man." So we are made with reason, intellect, speech, a moral consciousness, creativity, rationality, choice and we can think and reason; we were made for God. How important that is. Thus murder, the breaking of the sixth Commandment, is sacrilege. It is a violation of what is sacred.

My third question is, "What are the ways that this Commandment is broken? How is 'You shall not murder' broken?" There are six ways. The first way is by homicide. The first person born of a woman was Cain. Adam and Eve had a son whose name was Cain. And Cain murdered his

brother, Abel. So it didn't take long for mankind to murder (Genesis 4).

There are between 24,000 to 27,000 homicides in the United States annually. Blood upon blood, people killing one another.

The second way this Commandment is broken is by suicide. There are 47,000 suicides annually in the United States. Forty-seven thousand people every year in America take their own lives. And the suicide rate is going up rapidly. When you get rid of God, there is no purpose, no meaning, no hope.

The Bible says that if you're a Christian, "Do you not know that...you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). So you don't have a right to take your own life.

I don't believe that suicide is an unforgiveable sin. And Satan is a thief, a liar and a murderer. He comes "to steal, and to kill and to destroy" (John 10:10). Sometimes people come under Satan's attack and they get discouraged and take their own life. But I believe you can still go to heaven, if you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord and are born again.

Yet that is not a license to take your own life; that's a reason to live. God gives you life, God sustains life and God wants you to bring glory to Him. You were made to know God. God loves you, He wants to forgive you and heal you, and if you are distraught and feeling suicidal, seek counsel; come to a pastor and talk to him. We are not to break the sixth Commandment by committing suicide.

In the United States, suicide is the second-leading cause of death among the 10-25 age group.

The third way this Commandment is broken is genocide or ethnic cleansing. There is the Jewish Holocaust, Rwanda, Kosovo, Uganda and Cambodia. Even in the Bible, Ester had Hayman, who was out to eliminate all the Jews.

There is all this talk today about Israel committing genocide on the Palestinian people. Israel is not trying to kill all Palestinians; Israel is trying to kill an evil force that needs to be eradicated. They are not trying to kill an ethnic group. That's not the issue. But we hear people say, "This is genocide!"

As a matter of fact, Israel is surrounded by enemies that want the annihilation of the Jews. When they say, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!" that's a chant for genocide of the Jews. Kill all the Jews. Wipe out the nation of Israel. Eliminate them. So we see this even in modern society today. Genocide is a violation of this sixth Commandment.

It's interesting, too, that David killed Uriah, in 2 Samuel 11; and Jezebel killed Naboth through proxy—others did her bidding. That was the breaking of the sixth Commandment.

Number four, the sixth Commandment is broken by feticide, which we know is abortion. It's the

murder of a human fetus. The word “fetus” is Latin for “baby.” So abortionists change the word from “baby” to “fetus” to say it’s not really a baby. So they just try to use a word game.

The worldwide statistics are that 73 million babies are aborted by induced abortion every year. The United States is only second worldwide in abortions to Communist China. That’s a sad commentary. In the U.S., 1 million babies are aborted every year; 17,000 every week; and in California, 121 babies are aborted every day. Six out of ten unwanted pregnancies end in induced abortion. Sixty-two percent of the U.S. adults want abortion legal in all and in most cases. In California, abortion rose last year to its highest level in a decade: 178,400 or up 16% from 2020.

So what a sad violation this is! The sixth Commandment is a sin against God.

Now this is not a scientific issue, nor a philosophical issue, nor a rational issue; it’s a Biblical issue. God created man in His image; they are image bearers. Even that unborn child or baby in the womb deserves to be protected.

What are some of the arguments we hear today for abortion? First of all, there are no good arguments. You might say, “Well, what about the case of the mother’s life?” That almost never happens today in our modern world. It’s very, very rare; it’s less than 1%. And even then, it’s not always the situation. We need to trust God, put it in God’s hands and for God’s will to be done.

Some say, “Well, what about rape?” Why should you punish the baby for the sin of the father? Why should the baby suffer? It doesn’t make sense.

Other arguments we often hear are, “It’s the woman’s body. My body, my choice!” We see the banners in the streets: “Keep your hands off my body!” But the human fetus or baby has its own, unique genetic code in each of its cells. The baby does not have the mother’s code or the father’s code; it has its own code.

The fetus is in the mother but not part of the mother. The mother does not have four hands. The mother doesn’t have four feet. The mother doesn’t have two hearts. The mother doesn’t have four legs. This is not the mother’s body. So it’s not just an issue of “My body, my choice!”

Then we hear people say, “Well, the fetus is not fully developed.” Neither is a two-year-old. Neither is a sixteen-year-old fully developed. Try telling an amputee that he is not fully human. “Oh, you don’t have legs? You don’t have arms? You’re not a human being!” Since when does having body parts constitute humanness?! Are you going to play God and decide who is human and who isn’t?

I believe that from the moment of conception this is a human fetus with potential, who must grow and develop. It just needs time. This is a human being.

Some say, “Well, it can’t breathe on its own.” Neither can a person on an artificial respirator.

Should we disconnect them and let them die? Neither can somebody who is on a kidney dialysis machine that they need to sustain their life.

They say, "Well, it's not outside the womb; it's not born yet." Does living outside the womb take you from being nonhuman to human? What about when you're halfway out of the birth canal? Are you half human and half nonhuman?

None of these arguments stand to reason.

There is also the theological consideration that God can use even a troubled pregnancy, even a child who is deformed and has a physical issue for the glory of God. In the Bible, there was a man who was born blind. "And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'" The Jews believed in prenatal sin. "Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned but that the works of God should be revealed in him'" (John 9:2-3).

It wasn't so long ago in America that down-syndrome babies were rejected, institutionalized or put to death. Today they want to run tests on women to make sure the baby doesn't have any issues, because you might need an abortion rather than trusting God to do what He wants to do. Even a handicapped baby can be used for the glory of God. God can be glorified even through that infirmity.

There is a story of Tim Tebow, the famous outspoken Christian athlete football player. His mother was in the Philippines as a missionary with his father. When she became pregnant with Tim, she had this horrible sickness and had to take medicine for her health. But she was unable to because she was pregnant. The doctor told her to have an abortion so she could take the medicine and save her life. She opted not to do that; she opted to let the baby come full term and be born. That baby is Tim Tebow.

Greg Laurie's mother was unwed when she became pregnant with Greg and was advised to have an abortion. She had the baby and Greg Laurie is here for us today.

The stories can go on and on.

Psalms 51:5 is another important note. David says, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." Granted, the Bible doesn't speak directly to abortion. But the implication here is that David was a sinner in the womb. He was born with a sinful, Adamic nature, which means humanness and moral responsibility.

And in Psalm 139:14-16, David says, "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame..." which is a reference to my unformed body "...was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them." So this is a picture of the baby growing and developing in the womb. God knit the child

in his mother's womb. We get the word "embroider" from that; He is knitting us in our mother's womb.

In Luke 1:44, when John the Baptist was in the womb of his mother, Elizabeth, and she was six-months pregnant, Mary, the mother of Jesus, came to visit her. Elizabeth said, "For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." And the Bible says that John "will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). That's pretty cool. He's a Spirit-filled, John the Baptist, Pentecostal. He was jumping with praise in the womb. That's a marvelous truth about the sanctity of life, the humanness of life.

And Elizabeth also referred to Mary as "the mother of my Lord" (Luke 1:43). Mary was less than six-months pregnant. So Jesus was "the Lord" in Mary's womb.

The Incarnation speaks of the sanctity of life. God left heaven and came into the world through the womb of the Virgin Mary. Jesus took on full humanity. From the moment of conception by the Holy Spirit God became a man. Humanity was fused with deity for all eternity. That's mind blowing! And when we get to heaven, we're going to see Jesus as the exalted God-man, the Savior, the Redeemer. So humankind is sanctified. And I believe that human beings are God's crowning creation.

Number five, this Commandment is violated by infanticide. This is the homicide of infants. The homicide rate for infants, from 2017-2020, was 7.11 per 1,000 births. That's sad. Child homicide rose from 2019-2020 in the United States 27.7%. I read some statistics on this that were shocking. One of the number one ways that infants die is by homicide, infanticide. They are murdered as infants.

Number five is euthanasia. It is the killing of the elderly, because they are no longer needed, they don't contribute or they're too sick, so we take life. It's assisted suicide. It all starts with the rejection of God and His Word, and it ends with abortion, infanticide and euthanasia. In 2017, the Gallup poll found that 73% of U.S. adults supported euthanasia. God is the giver, the sustainer and God is the one who takes life. But euthanasia is growing in popularity; when you get old, when you get sick, you might as well kill yourself. You might as well kill old people.

Perhaps you have never broken this Commandment, in your own mind. But God says that "Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:22). If you have hatred in your heart, you've committed murder. It's pretty hard to drive the freeways in California and not kill somebody. Hatred is the seedbed for murder.

But God forgives. Moses committed murder, but God forgave him. David committed murder, but God forgave David. Paul the Apostle, as Saul, committed murder; he consented to the death of Stephen, but God forgave Paul. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful

and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Thank God for the blood of Jesus Christ!

What should we do as Christians? Proverbs 31:8 says, “Open your mouth for the speechless.” Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Another translation says, “Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all the unfortunate.” Stand up, speak out and pray.