

“You Shall Not Murder”
Exodus 20:13

THE 6th COMMANDMENT EXPLAINED

1. The 6th Commandment prohibits the unlawful taking of life.

- Exodus 20:13 is only two words in Hebrew: *lo rasah*, or “No murder”
- The word means the unlawful killing of a human being. Same word occurs 47 times in the OT.

→ It does not say, “You shall not kill” (meaning all taking of life), it says, “You shall not murder.”

2. The *unlawful* taking of life means there are times when taking life is *lawful*.

- Capital punishment (Rom 13:4); soldiers in battle/war; hunting, killing animals
-Genesis 9:5-6: And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. ⁶“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.
- *rasah* is never used in the context of capital punishment, war, or hunting animals.

→ When is taking of life allowed? *When the goal is not the destruction of life, but its preservation.*

3. The 6th Commandment preserves the sanctity of human life.

- Human life has inherent value and is protected because we are made in the image of God.
- John Calvin: “Our neighbor bears the image of God: to use him, abuse, or misuse him is to do violence to the person of God who images himself in every human soul.”

4. The 6th Commandment acknowledges the rightful place of God as both the giver and taker of life.

- Only God has the sovereign role of taking life. Job 1:20-21

THE 6th COMMANDMENT APPLIED

1. The Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches about the 6th Commandment...

- **Q. 68.** What is required in the sixth commandment? A. The sixth commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.
- **Q. 69.** What is forbidden in the sixth commandment? A. The sixth commandment forbids the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor, unjustly, or whatsoever tends thereunto.

2. The 6th Commandment prohibits the taking of life or whatever tends toward that.

- Murder, suicide, infanticide, euthanasia.

→ NOTE: There is a difference between terminating life and allowing someone who is terminally ill to die.

3. The 6th Commandment requires the protection of life—our own and others.

- Guarding, preserving, and protecting life. E.g., Legacy Trail Crossings

4. Jesus taught that the 6th Commandment goes much deeper than murder. 1 John 3:15

- Matthew 5:21-22: “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 will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.

THE 6th COMMANDMENT FULFILLED IN JESUS CHRIST

1. The Bible says our sinful hearts choose murder over Jesus. Mark 7:21; Luke 23:18-25

- Murder comes from within a sinful heart.

2. Jesus Christ is called the “Author of life.”

- Acts 3:14-15: But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

3. Jesus Christ claimed to be “the life.” John 14:6; 11:25-26

- Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead. John 11:25-26; Luke 7:11-15
- John 1:4: In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

All that is ultimately true, wonderful and lovely, everything that gives real direction, purpose and meaning is to be found wrapped up in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Anything claiming to be true that does not somehow find its source in him is, at best, only a shadow or, at worst, a lie. For he himself is the Truth, its source and fulfillment. Human words and ideas aren’t ultimately true, only he is. Truth is not found in words, it is only to be found in him, the Word. Any plan or purpose which is not based in him is destined to frustration and failure, because he himself is the Plan and the Purpose, he is the Way. Indeed, “there is only Christ and he is everything.” (Ephesians 1:23, Phillips) To embrace his life is to find yourself being embraced by it. In contemplating his life, you discover that it is not your mind at work, but his. Anyone who comes in faith to examine this life will find themselves somehow more alive. For he is the Life.

-Michael Card