

Do not Murder



Bro. Ricky Cunningham
Exodus 20:13

Scripture:

Exodus 20:13 You shall not murder.

I want you to look at what God says, and then just turn to your neighbor and say, "You shall not murder." Now, I know every one of us just thought that was a senseless exercise because there isn't a one of you who believe when you turn to your neighbor that your neighbor was really considering murder. Most of us would never believe in the church, especially Hardin church, that any of us would ever murder. But here is what the Bible says, "you shall not murder." Now, this is God talking to Moses to talk to the children of Israel, and through the Bible, ultimately talking to us, because all scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. So, would you just say to yourself out loud, "I shall not murder."

I don't know about you, but murder's been heavy on my heart. I read the news on USA Today and I was heartbroken. A man in France drove a commercial truck full of grenades and explosives on Bastille Day (similar to our Fourth of July celebrations) on a street that was completely blocked off to vehicles and last I read at least 84 people were killed. Two Americans included- a father and son vacationing with their family and celebrating

with the French people their freedom. They were murdered. It seems like we hear that almost weekly now. Before that, an Ex-military person trained in the United States of America to serve us opened fire on police officers in Dallas, Texas, killing five police officers actually providing security for people to protest peacefully the killing of a man outside a convenient store in Louisiana and a man who was killed by police in a car in Minnesota during a traffic stop. It's almost to the point that this becomes just daily news. In another few months we aren't going to think anything about it. It's just going to be a part of our lives. We are almost numb to what is happening and yet believing it could never happen here.

You shall not murder. The King James that most of us cut our teeth on or was weaned on didn't use the word "murder." It used the word "kill." And it said in Old English, "Thou shall not kill." To bring this into a modern context, there was actually eight different words that the Hebrews had for the taking of life and through modern scholarship we now know that God wasn't just talking about killing; he was talking about murder.

See, he's getting ready to lead his people into the promise land. They had been freed from slavery to the Egyptians and they are now for the first time going to live as a free people and he wants them to make sure they have the foundations that their society should be built on and the principles that are going to reflect to the pagan nations around them who he actually is. After entering into a covenant with them, he basically summarized the law with these ten commandments. The first four have dealt with Israel and their relationship with God. Starting with the fifth one, the last six are going to deal with Israel's relationship with one another. The first one that he established for us two weeks ago in this series was honor your father and mother. See, going into the promise land that key relationship that got us started and literally shaped our view of the world and God was that home that we were reared in and our father and our mother. And God says that we are to honor our father and our mother. But the second command that deals with human relationships is a societal relationship. It is a prohibition that says you shall not kill unlawfully. In the Hebrew there are just two words- never murder. Murder is when you unlawfully take the life

of someone. There is an intent or a premeditation so to speak. This word also encompasses the negligent taking of life or the careless taking of life. So, what the Bible is saying is we should value life- the life of our fellow citizens, the life of other human beings, the lives of those people that we're going to live with as a community and not just those inside our community but those that literally encompass any relationship that we have. You shall not unlawfully take their life.

I don't know about you, but many times when I read what I read, I hear what I hear, and I see what I see, I want to blame somebody and I'd really like to start with Hollywood if that would be ok. I would like to blame movies, I would like to blame music, and I would like to blame social media today. I discovered this week that according to the American Psychological Association the average child raised in the United States of America will see on television 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence by the time they finish the 5th grade. You do know that a lot of children have trouble distinguished that, that isn't real don't you? Have you heard what many of our children are listening to when it comes to the lyrics of their music? Lieutenant Colonel David Grossman writing for Christianity Today, a man who trained our soldiers to go into war and believe it's ok to take the life of another person in war, talked about how the military actually has to desensitize soldiers and condition them or when they go into battle they can't pull the trigger. So, the army has a method to training a soldier to know in combat it's ok to take that life. Lieutenant Colonel David Grossman said that after studying the effect and the method behind the video gaming industry that if you allow your kids to play video games where there is the taking of life the same method is used in that game that is used by our American military. And we wonder why.

See, I really want to blame somebody, but I'm not evolutionary in my thinking; I'm biblical in my thinking so here is what I know. I know I can't blame the media and I can't blame music and I can't blame movies only. I can't blame the culture in which I live even though many call this the culture of death. See, when I open my Bible when God created the first man and woman, they blew it, and sin entered the world, they gave birth

to their first children who were born with a sin nature. When those children brought their offerings to the Lord on their own as adults one got mad because God accepted Abel's but rejected Cain's. And when Cain saw God accept Abel's and reject his, the Bible says he was angry and his countenance fell. That means he just dropped his head; he was angry.

God intervenes in his life and says...*hey, Cain, watch it, buddy. Sin is crouching at your heart's door. If you're not careful you are going to blow it. You're going to make a mistake that you're going to live to regret.* And Cain blew off God. If you read that story and I mean really read it, not just surface level, here is the thought you get. Cain kind of lures his brother to come out into the field where he is and the word that the Bibles uses for Cain killing Abel is the word that is used in the sacrifice of an animal to God. It's the slitting of the throat. He slit his throat. No movies. There were no number one songs. There was no radio station. No iPad or iPod. Do you know what this tells me? Humanity's problem is not external. Humanity's problem is within. We have a sin problem. A sin problem to the point that Cain would devalue the life of his brother to the point that he would wish he wasn't here and he would take him out. And he did. Society would get so bad before Hollywood, before social media, that God steps in and destroys the world with a flood and he starts over with Noah and his family. He gives Noah and his family this same command he gave to Adam and Eve and that was to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

Now, something is a little different here. He now tells Noah and his family...*hey, I am now giving you the animals to eat. You can take the life of the animals. Just don't eat the blood because that is the life element...* Then, God says... *and whatever you do, don't take the life of another man. Don't shed his blood for if you shed another man's blood you will sacrifice your life by your life being taken because man is made in my image.* Did everybody hear that? One of the foundational principles of life, one of the foundational principles of government is this principle- we hold life sacred. All life is scared. Not the life of animals, they aren't sacred, that doesn't mean we are cruel to them, but it's ok for man to go into the field and hunt and kill an animal. It's ok for man to eat meat and animals; they're not

sacred. But you don't take the life of another man because that other man or woman has been made in the image of God and they are an image bearer of God. Does everyone understand that? Are we in agreement? As society gets more and more away from the truth that man is made in the image of God and that God is creator, you do understand that will no longer be the foundation of society. See, in biblical thinking, man is made in the image of God and we are an image bearer of God, but in the educational system of our world it's evolutionary thinking and we are just a higher form of the animal kingdom. This is why many people forbid the eating of meat and forbid the taking of an animal's life because man isn't made in the image of God and the other is not.

You understand what's going to happen the further and further away we get from God, right? You understand how our thinking is going to get further and further away from the thinking of the world when we're basing our thinking on a document that we believe is the word of God. We just taught over 400 children in VBS that we believe all scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. You do get this, right? Not just man in Eden, Adam, is created in the image of God, but Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. And even after they fall they still bear the image of God even though it is marred, scarred, and distorted if I can say that. Sinful man still bears the image of God. Noah, after being rescued by God through the flood, what's the first thing he did? He went out and got drunk! So, please understand that when man bears the image of God it is distorted, marred, and scarred.

It's kind of like when I use to go to the Calloway County Fair. I'd go to the Calloway County Fair and they had a house of mirrors. Do you guys remember the house of mirrors? Do you remember walking into that? That first mirror... WHOA! What that mirror said about you wasn't real, right? You'd have these little, short legs and they'd be really wide. Then you'd go to the next mirror and you'd have a long, skinny neck and a little, bitty head. Then you'd go to the next mirror and you'd have a wide neck and a big head. Do y'all remember that? See, I know you struggle to look at me

and you struggle to look at others and really see the image of God. The lost world truly struggles to see in us the image of God because it's scarred, it's marred, and it's distorted. But even in our sinfulness we still, of all the living things, bear the image of God and we are image bearers to the world especially those of us who have seen the true image of God and that's Jesus! We've been reborn by the Spirit of God and we've been set free from being a sinner and we are being made more and more into the image of Christ. We are image bearers. So, here is what scripture says, life is so sacred that you don't take somebody else's life, but if you do take somebody else's life you forfeit your life. So, please know this, even before the giving of the law to Israel as they went into the promise land there was lawful taking of life.

Murder is killing, but not all killing is murder. Some people don't believe that. Some people believe all killing is wrong and all killing is murder. That's not what this sixth commandment teaches. This sixth commandment does not teach us to be pacifists. What this command is teaching is that you and I as human beings have such a view of life that it is so sacred that we never kill unlawfully. So, I hear somebody saying, "So Brother Ricky, are you teaching that there is killing that is lawful? Absolutely. Now, I want to show you biblically lawful killing. Turn to Exodus 21, the next chapter over. See, we've got these 10, and after the 10, we have the 613 laws. Well, the 613 laws just go into more detail about these 10. So, when you come to Exodus chapter 21, God's making sure Israel really gets the impact of the 10 because they've agreed to do everything that God says to do and they're getting ready to go into the land and be his people. So, in Exodus 21 he starts going through some of the details of the law, so to speak. When you come to verse 12 look what he says, "Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death." Now, the Bible just said you shall not murder. So if a man does kill, if a man does murder, if a man does take the life of another man, guess what happens to that man? He gets killed. Does everybody understand that? Capital punishment is biblical. Why is it biblical? Because here is what God knows-to save life you sometimes have to take life. But whose life do you take? You take the life of the person who does not value life. So, if you value your life to the point that you take the

life of another intentionally in a premeditated state, guess what? Your life gets taken from you. That's God's decision. That's God's authority.

So, everybody that went into the land knew that if I caused the death of another person intentionally, guess what? I forfeit my life. Now, what we're going to see in Romans chapter 13 is that God has ordained government. God has ordained state authority. He gives his authority to the state and when it comes to governing people, God has said that the state, based on him, can take the life of people who do certain crimes that devalue life. He basically says the Roman government has the right to bear the sword. To bear the sword meant to enforce death. It's lawful for God and it's lawful for the state to take the life of a person who devalues life. You don't have to agree with it because you don't have to agree with the Bible, but boy you sure set yourself up to be outside of God's will when you don't agree with the Bible.

Now, look what this says starting in verse 13, "but if he didn't lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee." So, if the man didn't intentionally take the man's life then what God is saying is then you know this was allowed by me to happen, but if it was allowed by me to happen, but you didn't cause it then here's what happens- you don't take your life, but you can flee to a place of refuge. Now, we know that's going to be a city of refuge that we are going to learn about in Numbers chapter 35 and Deuteronomy chapter 9. You accidentally take the life of somebody then you're probably going to prison. That is involuntary manslaughter. If you're deemed to be a cause, but you did it accidentally, you didn't mean to do it, you didn't intentionally do it, you still pay a price. So, taking the life of another is serious but in this case, you don't lose your life.

Verse 14, "But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die." So, here is what this is saying. See, back in that day, when a man went to church or the temple and he was making a sacrifice there, if he had committed a crime and they were coming to get him, he would just cling to the altar and the thought

was if a man was at the altar making things right with God we need to leave him there. Well, if a man is going to lose his life for the crime, he's never coming out of the altar; he's never letting go. So, what God says is if you know the man took the life of another man and he did it willfully, even if he is praying to me or is in church, just come in and get him because he can't use religion, Christianity, or God as a defense. He's guilty and he forfeits his life. If you take the life of another person intentionally and you're lost, I hope you get saved and you save your soul, but I still believe you lose your life. And I believe the state should take your life. Why? Because when we begin to let the people who devalue life live then pretty soon the whole society at large will devalue life. If you don't think we devalue life just look at what we entertain ourselves with. Listen to the lyrics of the number one song in the land. Go watch the number one movie in the land. See what the number one hashtag is in the social media world.

Verse 15, "Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death." You better be glad you're an American and not an Israelite or some of you would've been dead a long time ago. I eluded to this two weeks ago. Why is dishonoring your mom and dad in a physical way a capital offense? Because that is the whole foundation of society. I tried to walk you through, even those of you who had ungodly parents, how to still honor your parents.

The next verse says, "Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death." God would not allow his people to go into another land capture a man, take him out of his culture, bring him into their land sell that man, and him be a slave to make that man's life better. God said if you have a slave trader in your midst you kill him and if anybody is found in possession of a man whose been stolen and is a slave against his will then you kill him too. Church, are you listening to me? Don't you ever justify slavery! God said if you ever devalue a human being to the point that you would take them out of their culture and make them your slave then you forfeit the right to live. If he's found in your possession, you lose your life. It's the word of God.

Verse 17, "whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death." I know some of you never hit your mom or your dad, but you did curse at them, didn't you? That is a capital punishment in the life of Israel. It is punishable by death.

Let's go down to verse 22, "When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. 23 But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." God who created man out of dust, woman out of a rib, and then put them together. He so valued them being fruitful and multiplying that he ordained the womb the place where life starts that he said...*hey men, you better be careful when you're quarreling because if you quarrel in the presence of a pregnant lady it doesn't matter if you're drunk or not drunk. If one of you hit her and cause that child to be born you better be pray there is no harm to that child because if she goes into labor prematurely, that child is born, and it's healthy you're going to be brought to court, the husband is going to get to say what the fine is, and you're going to pay for what you did.* Have any of you ever heard that "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth?" Most of you thought that was a context of if somebody hurt you then you hurt them back in proportion, right? That's not the context of this. The context of the saying "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth," is what context first? An innocent child in the protection of a mother's womb and you cause that child to be injured. Long before "eye for an eye" is what? Life for life. I say this very sincerely, humbly, and respectfully because I deal with people who have taken the life of children in the womb, they didn't do it, but they allowed it to happen under prochoice beliefs. So, I say this respectfully; I don't say this condemningly. I don't say this arrogantly. I don't want any of you to amen, but I want you to hear the word of God. If you caused the death of a child in a mother's womb and you were an Israelite you'd forfeit your life. Why? Because you took a life that bore the image of God and was an image bearer. If this was just a blob of tissue, God wouldn't have been this harsh. God calls it a child.

A few years ago, Remy Lee was pregnant. She was so tickled to tell her boyfriend that she was pregnant. She told him and he wasn't tickled. She wanted the child; he didn't. She started having that sickness and he convinced her that she needed antibiotics. She thought that she was taking an antibiotic that he gave her, but he had slipped her one of those pills that causes an abortion. She started having contractions, she miscarried, and she lost the child. Prosecutors in the United States prosecuted him under the federal law of violence against the unborn. That is a life sentence. Did you know that? He pled guilty to killing his unborn baby and they sentenced him to 13 years. I personally think he should have been sentenced. For someone to disregard the life of a baby in the womb, he should have been prosecuted but I struggle philosophically of how a nation can hold the boyfriend responsible when the woman can go end the pregnancy without his say. I know we live in a country and that is the law of the land but it's wrong. I don't say this boastfully, but I have read every word of the Roe V. Wade decision that the Supreme Court rendered. I have read every word of it because I couldn't imagine how a group of men could decide what they decided. And when I read it, I understood it. They basically said this- we don't know when life starts. Did you know that they took under advice the advice of church people? And when they brought the church people by in large in, part of the church argued and believed that life didn't start until birth. The Supreme Court said to the church in their ruling not even the church itself agrees when life starts. I want to be clear. I believe this with all of my heart. If the Roe V. Wade decision could have been postponed from 1973 to 2015 with all of the modern medical technology that we now have and the medical community would show them from conception the beginning of life in the womb in 4D, there is no doubt that is not a blob of tissue, but a human being is in the light of that mother.

Do you understand what I'm saying to you? I'm saying that God so values human life he doesn't value just when we are born. He values it the moment we are conceived in our mother's womb when he goes to work knitting us together to be who we are going to be. If you read the birthing narrative of Jesus, it didn't start at his birth. It started when? At his

conception. I don't believe there is anyone else in here in the church who believes that Jesus became man at the moment of his birth. I don't believe you think Jesus was waiting in heaven until Mary gave birth and when Mary was giving birth and the body was coming out of the chamber that all of a sudden he became the Son of God. I don't believe you believe that! I believe you believe like I believe that Jesus Christ stepped out of heaven and was in the womb of his mother, Mary.

Ladies and gentlemen, you have the right to choose whether or not you have sex or not before marriage and during marriage. But once you make that choice to have sex you better be prepared that God has designed you in that union to probably give birth to a baby. See, what is capital punishment for? It's to save life, so there is lawful killing.

Now, look with me in Exodus 22:2. It says, "If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him, 3 but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be bloodguilt for him. He shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. 4 If the stolen beast is found alive in his possession, whether it is an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double." I believe this teaches that the second reason for lawful killing is this; if someone intrudes into your house and your life is threatened, you have the right to defend yourself and protect yourself. And when you do, there is no guilt associated to you. But let me be careful here. Anything you have in that house is not more valuable except the lives in that house than that other life. So, you don't have the right to take a man's life because he stole your T.V., he stole your money, or he stole your guns. That's the authority's right to handle not yours. If a man is breaking into your house, y'all quarrel, and he dies, you're not held responsible. But if he's leaving your house, he's running down the driveway, and he has grandma's possessions, you don't have the right to take his life because we value life not things that can be replaced and the Bible says they will be replaced. God does not authorize you and I to take justice into our hands. That is only reserved for God and government, and their issuance of policemen and detectives. That's their authority; not our authority.

We don't have time to go into this, but you do know God ordained that Israel fight certain wars and in the fighting of certain wars, people would lose their life, right? In the Christian church, we believe based on what God teaches that there is just war, but be careful, not all wars are just. The United States of America has made some big mistakes. We all know that, but one of the things I'm most proud of, I've never been in the military, but everything I've read in the training of our soldiers, our soldiers are taught we don't kill civilians; we only kill soldiers. And we only act proportionally. Which means what? I'm so thankful that when 911 happened we didn't do what a lot of people wanted to do and that was drop a nuke on somebody because our Christian foundation says we value all lives not just Christian lives, but all lives- not just black lives, not just Caucasian lives, not just Hispanic lives, ALL LIVES. Because what's built into the integrity of us as a people is we know that God has broken down that middle wall of partition between peoples and his plan is not for us to be divided but under the Holy Spirit and salvation for us to be a united people. Therefore, we value life.

Now, I know you're saying...Brother Ricky, but nobody in this church is ever going to murder. Jesus said in Matthew 5:21, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 But 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." Listen, the Old Testament talks about the action of murder, but the New Testament talks about the attitude of murder and the attitude of murder is anybody who has a heart that hates. See, Jesus gets to the heart of the matter. So, do you know what I know? There are some murderers in here this morning. You've never physically taken the life of someone, but you've called people fools. You've wanted to take some people out, haven't you? You've had some people do to you or your family that you really wished that they didn't live on the planet anymore. As a matter of fact, you've heard the saying "if looks could kill." How many people would be dead that you personally killed if your looks could have killed because there was hatred in your heart? John, who heard Jesus talk about this, wrote a

letter and look what he said in 1 John 3:11, "For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother..." He's writing this to the church! Continuing in verse 12, "...And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. 13 Don't be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."

See, let me tell you what Jesus says fuels somebody to take the life of another. Hatred. But the ultimate act of love, the opposite of hatred, is laying your life down for someone. Do you see that? So, in God's economy he looks into your heart. You haven't committed the act yet, but you're already a murderer because you hate. To those people you hate, are you going to lay your life down for them? No way are you going to because you hate them. You wished they weren't here. As far as you're concerned, they're on their own. You no longer value their life. I've even heard people say they wished Osama Bin Laden burned in hell forever for what he did. And you think that you have the right to say that? Would somebody tell me who was righteous that Jesus Christ died for? Would somebody tell me where our New Testament says that Christ came to die for the righteous? Who did he come to die for? Sinners. As a matter of fact, when he put them on the cross, he looked out on the crowd of people who were murdering him and what did he say? Father forgive them they know not what they do. If we had to interview those guys, every one of them would have said they knew what they were doing! They were killing Jesus because he was a blasphemer. Yet, Jesus knew they didn't know what they were doing because they were so blinded by sin and hatred. Jesus didn't just value your life because you're a Christian. Jesus valued your life even as a sinner and he died for you. God didn't give us justice. God gave us grace.

I pray that you don't just love you and people like you. I pray you love sinners and that you value them from the moment they're conceived in their momma's womb until the last breath they draw. And I pray we understand we don't ever have the right to take a life. Never. Because, when we do we devalue God. Please know if you forced your girlfriend to abort, if you got rid of that baby, or if you've contemplated, you can be forgiven. Please don't live in that bondage, but know God loves you and he died for ALL this sin even on the cross. Because as much as he loves your life, what he ultimately loves is your soul and he wants you to turn from sin and put your faith in him. You can be redeemed and recreated in the image of Christ. Don't let Satan keep causing you to believe everything that's happened to you is because of what you've done in your past. No, you can be forgiven.

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