

# An Examination of the Ten Commandments

## KEEPING THE KING'S PEACE

*"You shall not kill unlawfully."*

— Exodus 20:13

**L**ife is precious. But life has a derivative value. God is the giver of that life and so disregard for life is an attack on God. The King is sovereign over all things. We need to respect life according to God's commandments. Scripture tells us that God created all people in His own image and He uses this as rationale to prohibit the unlawful taking of human life.

His command goes even further; not only does He forbid our destruction of human life, but He requires us to love our neighbor—promoting her health and wellbeing. All of our relationships should be thus driven by the gospel. We are able to consider others as more important than ourselves because Jesus left His position of glory for our welfare. There is no one so small or insignificant as to be disregarded because each person holds dignity and worth in their person as image bearers of God. Christians then have a special role as restorative image bearers who not only carry God's imprint in our creation, but who now understand that tremendous privilege and seek reconciliation for the broken world around us.

*"I will abide by the peace, and I will not break the agreements with Philip the Macedonian, nor will I take up arms with hostile intent against any one of those who abide by the oaths either by land or by sea. . ."*

— Oath of Corinthian League 338 BC

## THE REVELATORY NATURE OF THE LAW—ABOUT GOD

God is the giver of life. As we learn from the law that God's prerogative extends to every single life, our comprehension of the vastness of God's sovereignty multiplies enormously. We truly live and die at the King's pleasure. His reign is absolute. This is what the Scripture reveals about the nature of God—there is no one like our God.

We also learn about the compassion of God. He cares for the least of these. There are no unimportant people to God. He is the One who has given everyone of us dignity and worth. But we also see that as caring as He is for all people, He is most zealous for His own glory that is attached to us through His image. Violence or neglect of an image-bearer is an assault on His majesty.

## THE REVELATORY NATURE OF THE LAW—ABOUT US

No matter how many beauty queen contestants wish for world peace, we demonstrate that we are much better at "whirled peas." We do not have peace with others because we are at war with God and ourselves. The law helps us to see that our trouble is not nearly so much with the person with whom we are so angry as it is with the King whose sovereignty we cannot stomach. We all have an anger-management problem and our resentment over God's place is its root.

Taking human life unjustly is outlawed in the Scriptures because man is made in the image of God. The law gives us a proper view of humanity. While other worldviews either denigrate mankind or improperly elevate him, we find in the Scriptures a balanced dignity. Man is at the same time immeasurably majestic as the royal image-bearer *while* simply the representative and not the divinity Himself.

## HOW DID CHRIST FULFILL THIS LAW?

**T**his command plays a central role in a salvation that requires a death. Our lives were forfeit because of our sin and yet Christ came and died in our place. He suffered the most unlawful death the world has ever known. Jesus kept the law of God by loving His neighbor, by loving His enemies enough to die for us. He refused to kill those who wrongly killed Him so that He might conquer death and rescue a people from the ravages of death and hell.

He also calls us to radical self-abandon. He calls us to keep this law, now not to secure God's favor, but to joyfully celebrate it even as we lower ourselves that others might be lifted up. We are not to be door mats, but royal image-bearers reflecting the glory of our King in our love for those He made. He fulfills this law in us as we think less of ourselves and more for His glory.

“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness.”

— James 3:9

## FLESHING IT OUT—POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE LAW

Which is the sixth commandment? (Westminster Shorter Catechism #134)

*The sixth commandment is, Thou shalt not kill.*

What are the duties **required** in the sixth commandment? (135)

*The duties required in the sixth commandment are all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defense thereof against violence, patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit; a sober use of meat, drink, medicine, sleep, labor, and recreations; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness; peaceable, mild and courteous speeches and behavior; forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil; comforting and succoring the distressed and protecting and defending the innocent.*

What are the sins **forbidden** in the sixth commandment? (136)

*The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defense; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge; all excessive passions, distracting cares; immoderate use of meat, drink, labor, and recreations; provoking words, oppression, quarreling, striking, wounding, and whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.*

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How does this command relate to care for the poor? Abortion? Capital punishment? Social justice?
2. Why do we tend to emphasize some of these and neglect others?
3. How has Christ's unlawful death changed our observance of this command?
4. How has His obedience to it freed you from hatred of others?
5. What do you need to do as a result of hearing this word from God?

## APPLICATION

**H**ow do we refrain from wrongly taking life in our daily lives? What does it mean for us to consider one another's welfare? A love for life is the necessary corollary of loving the Giver of Life. We honor Him through the way we treat His image bearers. There no way around it. Let us run to our King and beg Him to make us a community of Life—people who will bring life to the dead, care for the poor and neglected, protect the disenfranchised, and simply love our neighbors because we love our King who made them.