

The Ten Commandments

A Study in Luther's Catechism¹ - Lesson 6

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.

Life

Protect God's Gift of Life

Life certainly is important to each of us. Our own lives are valuable and important to us and to our families and friends. The lives of others are just as important to their families and friends. God protects this precious gift with the Fifth Commandment. He warns us against harming the life of another and invites us to consider how we can protect and honor life (p. 75).

Consider and discuss the following points:

- In what ways does our society express a concern for human life?
- How does our society show a misunderstanding concerning human life?

60. Why is human life so precious?

Genesis 2:7 The Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Acts 17:25, 28 He is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. "For in him we live and move and have our being." As some of your own poets have said, "We are his offspring."

Genesis 9:6 Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.

A CLOSER LOOK

Image of God The Bible clearly teaches that Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. "In the image of God" doesn't mean they looked like God in the way children often look like their parents. God is a spirit. Adam and Eve were created holy, like God, with a will that wanted exactly the same things that God wanted. See the First Article (question 127) for an in-depth study of the image of God.

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

2 Corinthians 6:2 I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

Matthew 25:1-13 (The five foolish virgins missed their opportunity to participate in the wedding celebration. Those who die without faith in Jesus don't have another opportunity to be saved.)

KEY TERM:

Time of grace: the time when we have the opportunity to learn about God's love for us and about all the blessings he has promised to those who believe.

Consider and discuss:

- What is the purpose of human life according to various philosophies or religions?
- How does Scripture's teaching regarding human life differ greatly from other philosophies or religions?

¹ This study will use *Luther's Catechism* (Northwestern Publishing House, 2017). You may purchase a copy at nph.net.

61. Who alone has the right to end a person's life?

Psalm 31:15 My times are in [God's] hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me.

Deuteronomy 32:39 See now that I myself am he! There is no god besides me. *I put to death and I bring to life.*

Romans 13:4 *The one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*

62. The explanation to this commandment shows that God means to protect our bodies as well as our lives. The explanation helps us see that there are many ways people sin by breaking this commandment. **In order to protect our bodies and lives, what does God forbid with the Fifth Commandment?**

Genesis 9:5, 6 For your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting... "Whoever *sheds human blood*, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind."

God forbids _____

Psalm 139:13 You created my inmost being; *you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

Exodus 21:22-24 If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman ... if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

God forbids _____

Leviticus 19:16 *Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the Lord.*

Exodus 21:29 (If a farmer knew his bull was dangerous but did nothing to protect others, he would be responsible if the bull killed someone.)

God forbids _____

Romans 12:19 *Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*

God forbids _____

Proverbs 23:20, 31-33 *Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights, and your mind will imagine confusing things.*

God forbids _____

Psalm 31:15 My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me.

1 Samuel 31:4; Matthew 27:5 (Saul and Judas committed suicide.)

God forbids _____

1 John 3:15 *Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer*, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

Matthew 5:21, 22 You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment." But I tell you that *anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment*. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, "Raca," is answerable to the court. And *anyone who says, "You fool!" will be in danger of the fire of hell.*

God forbids _____

Consider and discuss: A natural defense mechanism is to compare oneself to others who have done far worse. Most people haven't actually committed murder so that's an easy comparison to make—just turn on the news and sooner than later you'll find someone who has. Then we rationalize, "I know I'm not perfect, but I've never committed a heinous crime like murder or assault and battery." How does a deeper study of the Fifth Commandment reveal that this a foolish comparison to make?

63. How does God's Word serve as a mirror, showing us that we are also guilty of breaking this commandment?

Galatians 5:19-21 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; *hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.* I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Consider and discuss: Because the law is naturally written on our hearts, people should know that it's wrong to murder? Should people naturally know that it's wrong to hate?

64. When God leads us to recognize our sin, feel sorry for it, and long for forgiveness, he assures us of forgiveness. Then his forgiveness strengthens us to turn away from our sin. **How do we know that our sins against the Fifth Commandment are forgiven?**

1 Peter 2:22-24 “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

65. Jesus took our sins on his body and suffered for them on the cross. Out of gratitude for his healing our souls, we want to obey his commandments. **How does the Fifth Commandment serve as a guide to show us how to express our gratitude to God?**

Proverbs 31:8 *Speak up* for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.

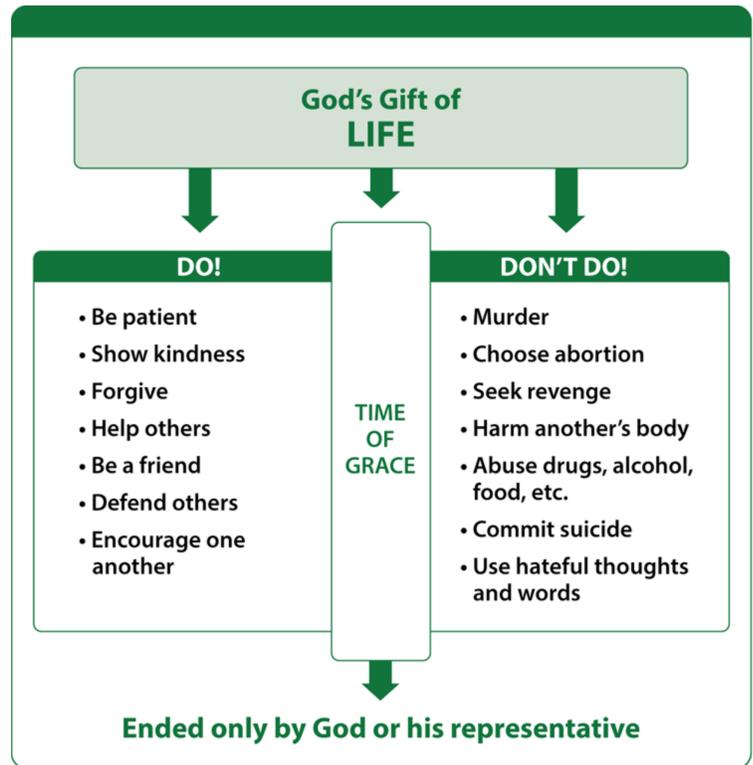
1 John 4:7, 20 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. *Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar.* For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

Ephesians 4:31, 32 *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.* Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Luke 10:33-35 (The good Samaritan)

Colossians 3:12, 13 As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with *compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.* Bear with each other and *forgive one another* if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Agree or disagree: The essence of the Fifth Commandment is that we should keep our hands off you neighbor and don’t do anything to harm him.



Connections

Genesis 4:1-16

Genesis 4 tells the account of how Cain killed his brother Abel. Cain obviously was guilty of murder. But hatred was there even before he committed the murder. Explain the image of “sin is crouching at your door” (Genesis 4:7). First John 3:15 shows us that Cain was guilty of murder even before his brother was dead. What passage or example from the Bible can help you when you are tempted to hate someone or to hurt another person?

Luther

Therefore, [here is] the entire sum of what it means *not to murder*.... In the first place, we must harm no one, either with our hand or by deed. We must not use our tongue to instigate or counsel harm. We must neither use nor agree to use any means or methods by which another person may be injured. Finally, the heart must not be ill disposed toward anyone or wish another person ill in anger and hatred.... Second, a person who does evil to his neighbor is not the only one guilty under this commandment. It also applies to anyone who can do his neighbor good, prevent or resist evil, defend, and save his neighbor so that no bodily harm or hurt happened to him—yet does not do this [James 2:15-16]. If, therefore, you send away someone who is naked when you could clothe him, you have caused him to freeze to death. If you see someone suffer hunger and do not give him food, you have caused him to starve. (Large Catechism, I, par. 188, 189)