

# Loving His Commandments

## The Sixth Commandment-B

*Exodus 20:13*  
Part Fourteen

*With Study Questions*

*Pastor Paul Viggiano*  
*Branch of Hope Church*  
*2370 W. Carson Street, #100*  
*Torrance, CA 90501*  
*(310) 212-6999*  
*pastorpaul@integrity.com*  
*[www.branchofhope.org](http://www.branchofhope.org)*  
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*Exodus 20:13*

Part Fourteen

**“You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13).**

### Review

Last week we discussed the commentary Jesus had regarding this commandment (Matthew 5:21, 22). Though we may not have actually, physically murdered anyone, our very words and thoughts make us guilty of this commandment before God.

The commandment forbids malice in all its degrees. Malice is the desire to inflict others governed by wicked or sinful passions – to just want to stick it to somebody. We are called to love even the most unlovely and unlovable people. As difficult as this is, we are to make every effort to love others over and against our fleshly inclinations. In the same way the sunrise does not discriminate, our love should seek to extend universally.

We also learned that the primary offense in the violation of this commandment is that it contains a defilement of the only aspect of creation that was made in the image of God (Genesis 9:6). When the recognition of the uniqueness of humanness is disregarded, man is reduced to that which is dispensable. Or as the Voluntary Human Extinction Movement might suggest, the only hope for our planet is the “voluntary extinction of one species: Homo sapiens... us.”

In their defense, they are not suggesting murder. But their platform/movement does suggest that humans, so far from being a blessing and God’s image-bearers, are amoral parasites which need to go away. This may be a far-leaning position, but it is not extreme to recognize that the routine violations of this commandment, find their genesis in a purposeful and self-conscious extrication of God and the things of God from our corporate moral conscience. Those who hate God, love death (Proverbs 8:36).

This commandment, similar to all the commandments, ought to drive

us to Christ. The law teaches us that we're sinners and the cross of Christ is the only sufficient answer to our dilemma before God.

This morning we will continue pursuing a fuller understanding of this commandment. We'll do this under the categories of what can be called *blatant murder*, then next time we will address *subtle murder*, the *justifiable taking of life* and finally how all of this informs our understanding of the *cross of Christ*.

## Blatant Murder

Let us here examine the outward and civil aspects of the command – things we would consider blatant murder.

### Pre-meditated Murder

The first and most obvious infraction that we see regarding the sixth commandment is *pre-meditated murder*. Our judicial system's notion of premeditation is derived from Scripture.

**...if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die (Exodus 21:14).**

There are justifiable circumstances to take a life, which we will not go into at this point. There are also other mitigating circumstances such as manslaughter, negligence or momentary anger that receive a lesser punishment. There are numerous examples we can cite. Everything from drinking and driving, leaving a dangerous animal free and unsupervised (Exodus 21:29), not properly marking or providing a safety feature for some dangerous portion of your property (Deuteronomy 22:8), etc.

All these things would still fall under the umbrella of violating this commandment. It is explicitly clear, however, that there should never be plans made to unjustifiably kill another person. Since there is at least general agreement on this, I won't labor the issue. There are other matters which are a bit more difficult to grapple that are quite prevalent in our society.

### Suicide

*Suicide* is the third leading cause of death among young people, resulting in about 4,400 deaths per year (about 45,000 total), according to the CDC and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Suicide would fall into the category of the premeditated taking of an innocent (by innocent, I don't mean sinless but innocent of a capital crime) life.

Suicide is the killing of an innocent person who was made in the image of God and it is, therefore, murder. I don't want to be insensitive here. Many of us have been touched and hurt by this. Because it has become such a common act, I think it is worthy spending a moment here.

It is often asked if this is the unforgivable sin. I don't think it is. I believe it is possible, even for a true Christian, to reach a place of such darkness and instability that they may engage in this sinful act. But let us not lose sight of the fact that it is a sinful act. And it is a sinful act that has found appeal among many young people. Why is this so? How does this happen?

Just a few years ago 29-year-old Brittany Maynard became a hot topic of discussion in all forms of media. She was an attractive young woman, heralded as intelligent, energetic, adventuresome, and an all-around delightful person. Add to that, the excitement of being newly married. The devastating news revolving around Brittany Maynard was that shortly after her wedding she was diagnosed with a terminal, malignant brain tumor.

But her horrible diagnosis and prognosis is not what brought Brittany to the fore of the public's attention. It was her highly publicized intentions of engaging in the taking of her own life (what I will refer to, for the sake of the children, as the "ultimate self-destructive behavior"). It was this decision that initiated quite a fuss in the arena of public dialogue.

In light of all of this, I would like to dial more tightly into the spiritual/sociological/psychological mechanics behind this, from which none of us are immune. Our own spiritual/ethical vulnerabilities can be unnerving. It is not as if the person immediately embraces the unthinkable – there is a path. And the impetus that opens the gate to the dark path can itself be very subtle – even attractive – like a pretty young lady describing how she intends to terminate herself as if the event were quaint or charming.

Malcolm Gladwell, as far as I know, is not a professing Christian writing Christian books. His best-selling books do make some interesting

sociological observations nonetheless. In his book *Tipping Point* he describes how trends begin. He writes of fashion trends and entertainment trends. But he makes a startling observation when it comes to the behavior under our consideration.

He writes that in the South Pacific islands of Micronesia in the early 1960s the act of ultimate self-destruction (as we have been calling it) was virtually unknown. But by the end of the 1980s they had more per capita than anywhere else in the world. The phenomenon was studied. Sociologists wanted to know how the **“unthinkable has somehow been rendered thinkable.”** How does a culture begin to engage in what was called **“a contagious epidemic of self destruction”**?

A number of the young people who had unsuccessfully attempted the action were interviewed and they said they were 8 to 10 years old when they first saw or heard about the action. They studied further and found that there was a high-profile young man that engaged in this action in 1966. The shift from non-existent to predominant was traced to that event.

They further found a strong correlation between the reporting of this action in newspapers and the action accelerating directly after the newspapers came out. To make a long story short, the sociological pioneer in this area, David Phillips from UC San Diego drew the conclusion that **“the decision by someone famous to (engage in the action)...gives other people, particularly those vulnerable to suggestion because of immaturity or mental illness, permission to engage in a deviant act as well.”** Gladwell concludes that **“people who die in highly publicized suicides (acts of self-destruction)...serve as a Tipping Point in suicide (self-destructive) epidemics.”**

Interesting how neither Phillips nor Gladwell entertained or sought to justify why they thought certain actions were deviant. I am also guessing that it never even entered their minds that they/we all might fall at some level into the category of immature or mentally ill.

The point I wish to make here is that we're all vulnerable. Cultural trends have much more force than we are willing to acknowledge. Lots daughters were raised in a Christian household but there is little doubt that the culture in which they were raised influenced their decision to engage in highly immoral actions (Genesis 19:32).

## **Abortion**

*Abortion* is the pre-meditated taking of an innocent life. This action is the greatest travesty in the history of my life. Since I was in high school, we have aborted somewhere in the neighborhood of 60 million babies. I recall teaching a Bible study a number of years ago where someone was astonished that God had not judged us for such a travesty. We talked a while about what a judgment might look like. It dawned on us...what would be a worse judgment than the death of our children? It's as if the sin has created its own judgment and we're too blind to see it.

The Scriptures make no distinction between a born baby and an unborn baby. In the following passages, the parenthesis contains the Greek word for baby. In these two well-known sections of Scripture you can see that there is no distinction between the born baby and the unborn baby.

**And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe (*brephos*) leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:41).**

**And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe (*brephos*) wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger (Luke 2:12).**

It has often been asserted that the issue of abortion is never directly addressed in Scripture. As we examine Exodus we see this statement is not entirely true.

**If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. "But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, "burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe (Exodus 21:22-25).**

The natural reading of this passage seems to indicate that the life for life refers to the harm done to either the mother or the unborn child. Next time we will address *subtle murder*, the *justifiable taking of life* and finally how all of this informs our understanding of the *cross of Christ*.

## Questions for Study and Meditation

1. What are some blatant acts of murder?
2. Why does premeditation make the act more offensive?
3. Is suicide the unforgivable sin? Explain.
4. Does the Bible make a distinction between a born and unborn baby?  
What can we deduce from this?