

LORD'S DAY 40

105. Q. What does God require in the sixth commandment?

A. I am not to dishonour, hate, injure, or kill my neighbour by thoughts, words, or gestures, and much less by deeds, whether personally or through another,¹ rather, I am to put away all desire of revenge.² Moreover, I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself.³ Therefore, also, the government bears the sword to prevent murder.⁴

1. **Genesis 9:6** Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.

Leviticus 19:17-18 You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

Matthew 5:21-22 You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

Matthew 26:52 But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword."

2. **Proverbs 25:21-22** If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; ²² for so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the LORD will reward you.

Matthew 18:35 So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

Romans 12:19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Ephesians 4:26 Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath,

3. **Matthew 4:7** Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"

Matthew 26:52 But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword."

Romans 13:11-14 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

4. **Genesis 9:6** Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.

Exodus 21:14 But 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.

Romans 13:4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

106. Q. But does this commandment speak only of killing?

A. By forbidding murder God teaches us that He hates the root of murder, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge,¹ and that He regards all these as murder.²

1. **Proverbs 14:30** A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones.

Romans 1:29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit,

evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,

Romans 12:19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

James 1:20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

1 John 2:9-11 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. ¹⁰ He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹ But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

2. **1 John 3:15** Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

107. Q. Is it enough, then, that we do not kill our neighbour in any such way?

A. No.
When God condemns envy, hatred, and anger, He commands us
to love our neighbour as ourselves,¹
to show patience, peace, gentleness,
mercy, and friendliness towards him,²
to protect him from harm as much as we can,
and to do good even to our enemies.³

1. **Matthew 7:12** Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 22:39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

2. **Matthew 5:5** Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

Luke 6:36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Galatians 6:1-2 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Ephesians 4:2 with all lowliness and gentleness,

with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;

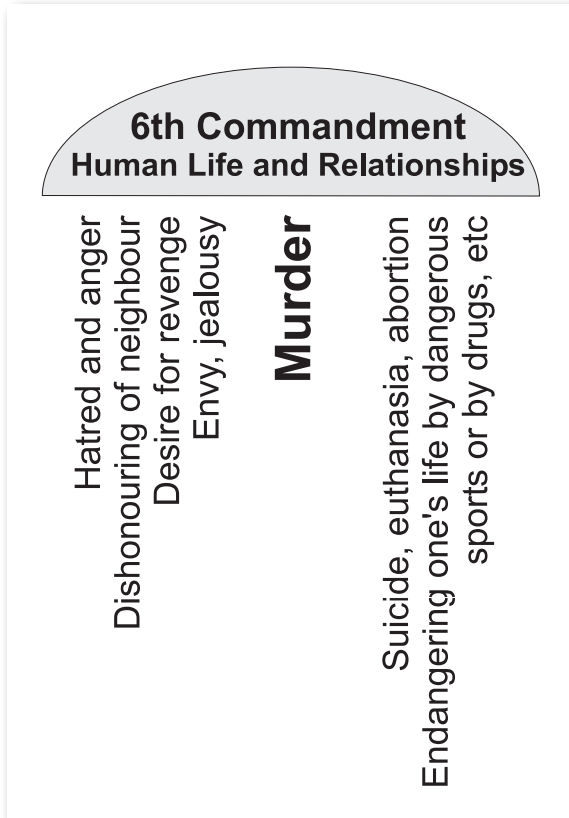
3. **Exodus 23:4-5** If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. ⁵ If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.

Matthew 5:44-45 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Romans 12:20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."



The sixth commandment deals with the sphere of *human life and relations*. As with the previous commandment, we find that much more falls under the umbrella of the sixth commandment than just the matter of murder, as the diagram illustrates.



We normally distinguish between two dimensions of life: the *physical* and the *spiritual*. The physical dimension of life refers to the life of the body (the beating of the heart, the sending of electrical impulses from the brain). The spiritual dimension of life refers to the life of the soul or spirit (a man's thoughts and desires).

With the creation of physical and spiritual dimensions of life came also the creation of *relational* dimension of life, which refers to the life that we have in relation to God and to fellowman. When God created man, He created a relationship between Himself and man. When God created Eve, He created another relationship — that of husband and wife. When God gave Adam and Eve a child, He created yet another relationship - that of parents and children. When God gave Adam and Eve a second

child, still another relationship was created — that of brotherhood. We could continue in this line for quite a while, but let this suffice to show that with the creation of *physical and spiritual* life came also the creation of *relational* life. The first two were given to enable the third.

Jesus spoke of this relational dimension of life when He described eternal life as knowing God, which means knowing God in an intimate relationship as a husband knows his wife (cf. John 17:3). Paul also spoke of this relational dimension when he described eternal death as endless exclusion from the presence of God (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:9).

In this sixth commandment, the relational dimension of life is central. God prohibits everything which threatens the relationship between God and man, and the relationship between man and fellowman.

The Sixth Commandment and Man's Relationship to God

At creation God placed man in a very special relationship with Himself. He made man His representative or ambassador on earth. Man had to rule creation on God's behalf, and in his ruling he had to display the holiness of God. Man was required to act as God would act; to think as God would think; and to speak as God would speak. To this end God created man in His own image.

From this we learn that man's life is inseparably connected to his noble office. His life is not his own. He has received life from God with a view to this office, and he must not do anything that would disenable him to fulfil this office.

He may not participate in any "sport" which involves a high risk of serious injury or death. He must also avoid the abuse of substances such as alcohol, drugs, tobacco or food which threaten life.

Neither may man take his own life at any time. At times a man may become weary of life because of the troubles and disappointments that he experiences. He loses the desire to live. He commits *suicide*. Another

contracts a disease that will ultimately kill him. Rather than suffer the pain of the disease and the indignation of becoming weak and helpless, he takes his own life or he requests another to assist him. This is called *euthanasia*.

By taking his own life he resigns from his noble office. He terminates his relationship to God as God's representative or ambassador on earth. But he has no right to terminate this relationship. He has no right to quit his office. Contrary to what he supposes, his life is not his own to do with as he wills. He is to serve faithfully in his office until God releases him from it, even though he may experience setbacks or disappointments, sickness or pain. After all, God, who appoints him to this noble office and forms this special relationship with him, also governs all aspects of his life, so that these hardships do not come by chance. These hardships become a means whereby God tests him in his office; they are not an excuse for him to abandon his office. He may and must believe that God, who lays these burdens upon him, will also provide him with the strength to bear these burdens.

There have been times in the history of the church when faithfulness to God required men to allow their lives to be taken. These are the martyrs, who permitted their bodies to be torn apart by beasts, or sawn in two by men, or burned on the stake. The martyrs understood that physical life must always be subservient to our relationship to God.

Besides taking care of his own life, every one must also take care that he does not endanger the life of his neighbour. For like himself, his neighbour has been given the same noble position as God's ambassador. He must not harm or injure his neighbour in any way, much less kill him. He must not do anything that would prevent his neighbour from fulfilling His divinely given task.

It is a serious thing to injure or kill a man. For whoever attacks man attacks God, in whose likeness man was made. We might use the example of an ambassador

who represents his country in a foreign land. Take a powerful nation such as the United States, for example, which has ambassadors in many foreign lands. It would be a very serious crime to harm one of America's ambassadors. Any attack on him would amount to an attack upon the USA. We can well imagine a punitive act would follow. In like manner, any attack upon God's ambassador is an attack upon God.

God demands that murder be punished with capital punishment, that is, with death. "*Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man*" (Genesis 9:6). This does not mean that friends or family of the victim may take vengeance upon a murderer. God has appointed rulers or governments to execute justice. He has given them the sword in order "*to execute wrath on him who practices evil*" (cf. Romans 13:3,4).

It is sadly ironic that modern man regards the death sentence as barbaric. Yet in these same nations abortion is extensively practiced, and in some nations even legalised. The innocent are slaughtered and murderers live. Surely such nations invoke upon themselves the severe wrath of God!

In the text quoted from Genesis 9:6, we learn that God demands that murder be punished with death because God created man in his image. The noble office of man demands that the highest penalty be placed upon murder.

In our modern society, this distinct character of man as God's image bearer is no longer acknowledged, for man no longer believes in creation. The theory of evolution has done much to destroy the honour of and respect for humanity. Man is placed on the same line as all other creatures. Oh, to be sure, man is the most advanced of animal life. In the terms of evolution man has developed the most. But in reality man is nothing more than a glorified ape. When the relationship between God and man is no longer recognised, the physical life of man will not be regarded highly.

We hear of *homicide* (man killing man); *genocide* (man destroying a race of people, as Adolph Hitler endeavoured with the Jews); *infanticide* (man killing babies after birth); *abortion* (killing babies prior to birth).

So far we have spoken about the sixth commandment as it pertains to man in the relationship which he has with God. But the sixth commandment also has much to say about our relations with fellowman.

The Sixth Commandment and Man's Relationship to Fellowman

We said earlier that when God created man, He created relationships with fellow man. God created these relationships so that man might have communion with each other and assist each other in the course of life. We must seek our neighbour's well-being at all times. We are our "*brother's keeper*." In this sixth commandment God forbids all that would threaten the fulfilment of this relationship.

Because of our fall into sin, our spiritual nature has become corrupt. This corruption of man's spiritual nature destroys our relational life with fellowman.

In the first place, man has become extremely self-centred. He seeks only His own good, and not his neighbour's. This sinful attitude leads to envy. ***Envy is a resentment towards, or dislike of, someone who has what we want.*** Those who envy another are not prepared to work for the well-being of his neighbour.

If that envy is permitted to grow it will lead to murder. Think of Ahab who resented the fact that Naboth possessed a beautiful vineyard which he wanted. Ahab's envy induced Jezebel to murder Naboth in order to obtain what Ahab desired (cf. 1 Kings 21). Or think of how the Jewish leaders envied the popularity of Christ, which ultimately led them to crucify Him (cf. Matthew 27:18),

Fallen man also displays an unforgiving disposition. He is inclined at all times to seek ***revenge***, to repay in equal or greater measure what he received. By nature man

is not interested in fostering his neighbour's good, but seeks to do him harm. In extreme situations, this desire for revenge leads to murder. But Paul said, "*Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.'*" (Romans 12:19,20).

The heart of fallen man has also become filled with ***hatred*** for his neighbour. ***Hatred is the desire to break off all relations with another.*** When a man hates someone, he wants nothing to do with him. He tells him to "*Get lost!*" If that hatred is strong enough he will seek to break that relationship with him in a very physical and permanent manner by murder. Thus there is the closest relationship between hatred and murder.

- Hated is the ***desire*** to break all communion, all relations with another.
- Murder is the ***act*** of breaking all communion, all relations with another.

God forbids the disruption of relations. He commands that we foster these relations, in order that we might promote our neighbour's well-being wherever we can and may. Ultimately, God commands that we love our neighbour. It is good if we define love. For love does not mean that we necessarily have very warm feelings of affection. That warm feeling is a fruit of love, but is not always present. ***Love is the desire to foster a relationship with another and thereby grant our help and assistance to him.***

Not all hatred is forbidden. Scripture speaks about a ***holy hatred*** (cf. Psalm 139:19-22). Like God we are to hate those who have heard about God, and who have tasted His goodness and grace, but who nevertheless turn against God in hatred and deliberate disobedience and who oppose God and oppress His people. These we are to hate with a holy hatred. Bear in mind, however, that our hatred must be based in their hatred of God. Our hatred must not be personal. We must not hate

others because they hate us or have hurt us. We are called to love *our* enemies, but we are called to hate those who show themselves to be enemies of *God*.

The Redeeming Work of Christ

By nature man cannot fulfil this commandment. Since his fall into sin the spiritual dimension of man's life has been destroyed. And with the destruction of the spiritual dimension of life came also the destruction of the relational dimension of life. When man's heart became corrupt, his attitude towards God and his neighbour also became corrupt. Man came to hate God and fellow-man.

If it were possible, man would seek to destroy God. Since that is not possible, man does whatever he can to destroy God's honour and reputation. He does what he can to destroy God's work. He does what he can to destroy God's people. This hatred of fallen man became most evident in those who stood before the palace of Pontius Pilate and demanded that God's incarnate Son be crucified.

The fall into sin affected man's relationship towards fellow-man. The very first child born on earth turned against his younger brother and killed him out of hatred and envy. Since that time there has been endless bloodshed.

Christ has come in order to make atonement for our sins against this commandment. We can divide Christ's three-fold work as follows:

1. Christ removes the *guilt* of our sin against this commandment. This removal of our guilt can be divided as follows:
 - a. Christ made atonement for our sins of *omission* (the obedience that we failed to render).
 - (i) As far as His relationship with God was concerned, He dedicated His whole life as a faithful ambassador of God. Though He encountered untold troubles and deep disappointments, He did not take His life, as

undoubtedly many others would have in a similar situation.

- (ii) As far as His relationship with fellow-man was concerned, He honoured the life of others. Never did He wound or kill. Rather, He healed the sick and restored life to those who died. Greater love could not have been shown, for He gave His life for His friends (cf. John 15:13).

By His obedience to this commandment, Christ has rendered what we cannot render, thereby making atonement for our sins of omission.

- b. Christ made atonement for our sins of *commission* (the disobedience which we rendered). In body and soul He bore the wrath of God and the hatred of man.
2. Christ also removes from us the *corruption* of sin. Christ works in our hearts through the Holy Spirit and renews us so that we are able to honour this commandment.

Through the Spirit we acknowledge the relationship between God and us, and honour the physical life which God has given us as His ambassadors. We desire to foster relationships with one another, even with those who wrong us, and desire to seek their well-being in any way we can.



Questions

1. With what sphere does the sixth commandment deal? List the other matters which are dealt with under the umbrella of this commandment.
2. Describe what we mean by the physical, spiritual and relational dimensions of life?
3. How did Jesus define eternal life? How did Paul describe eternal death?
4. What does God prohibit in the sixth commandment?
5. In what relationship to Himself did God place man in Paradise? What does God prohibit in the sixth commandment concerning this relationship?
6. In what ways could man harm or destroy his own physical life that would threaten his own relationship to God as God's ambassador or representative on earth?
7. What two names do we give the act of taking one's own life? Is there ever a time in life when we may take our own life? Why (not)?
8. Is there ever a time when our obedience to God might require us to give up our physical life?
9. Why is it such a serious offence to harm or injure one's neighbour?
10. How are governments to punish murder? On what Scriptural basis do you say this?
11. What has caused man to have such a low esteem for human life?
12. Define the following: a) homicide; b) genocide; c) infanticide; d) abortion.
13. Why did God create relationships between man and fellowman?
14. What is envy? How does this jeopardise our relational life with our neighbour? What can envy lead to? Give an example.
15. What is revenge? How does this jeopardise our relational life with our neighbour? What does Scripture require of us (cf. Romans 12:19,20)?
16. What is hatred? What can hatred lead to? What is the difference between these two?
17. What is love?
18. What is to be our attitude towards our enemies? What is to be our attitude towards God's enemies?
19. Describe the three aspects of Christ's atoning work concerning this commandment.