

# Life Is Precious

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Preacher: Ray Sweet

[0:00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, you can check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or you can go to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you for tuning in today. Our heart is to get into the Word of God, but most importantly, to let that Word get into us and transform these hearts into the image of Christ. Now, normally I usually start off with a little more of a lighthearted approach. I've even been known to tell a cheesy joke or two. But today we're tackling an issue that honestly is pretty serious, an issue that has affected at least a few of you in very traumatic, life-altering ways. And then others of us, probably most of us, have more felt the ripple effect a little farther away. See, we've been in this series over the Ten Commandments for seven weeks now. And today we come to commandment number six. It's actually four words in the English language. Exodus 20, 13, you shall not murder.

[1:06] But a literal translation of this verse from the original Hebrew is even simpler than that. Two words, no murder. Did you know that by the sixth grade, an average American child has witnessed 8,000 murders on TV?

The FBI reports that a murder happens every 32 minutes in our country. So let's say that you're at FCC in person on a Sunday. You're here at church for around 90 minutes between the worship service.

Maybe you talked with some friends, enjoyed a snack in the Holy Grounds area. Statistically speaking, during that time, there will have been at least three precious lives made in the image of God ended by murder.

Now, you've probably heard this command also quoted as thou shall not kill. But the word kill is actually a bad translation. This is not meant to be a blanket statement against taking life. In fact, there are seven words in the Hebrew that are very specific in the kind of killing that's done. The one used in this command is with the idea of premeditation, the intent to take another's life, what we often will call murder.

[2:17] It's the Hebrew word ratza. Ratza. Okay? So let me do a couple things here. First, from time to time, I will say to you, I'm taking off the preacher hat.

I'm putting on the teacher hat. We're going to be a little bit more meticulous in our Bible study here. And then second, I've seen people with agendas try to take this out of context. So I want to make sure you understand that there are several killings that this commandment would not speak against. They would not go against the sixth commandment. And first, this is, by the way, this is not referring to killing animals. Okay? So first, it's not referring to killing animals.

Because Genesis 9, 1 through 3 makes it clear that God has provided animals for food. We also see this reiterated in the New Testament as we are no longer under the Jewish laws that forbid eating certain things.

So if you want to be a vegetarian and you just want to miss out on the joys of life, hey, that's your prerogative. I'm just going to be over here enjoying my fried chicken and baby back ribs praising God the whole time.

[3:21] Okay? So not referring to killing animals. Second, does not refer to self-defense. Exodus 22, 2 says, If a thief is caught breaking in at night and has struck a fatal blow, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed.

So we see just two chapters after the Ten Commandments are given that self-defense, where you have no choice but to take the life of another to defend yourself or someone else, that is permitted.

While no one wants to do that, of course, that's always a last resort, it is not considered murder in God's eyes. Now, the passage does go on to make it clear that if you can stop the person without deadly force, then make sure you do that or you are guilty.

Now, I know a lot of people also ask the question, Well, what about war? You go to defend your country to make the world a better place where bad guys can't hurt anyone else. What if I have no choice but to pull the trigger, drop the bomb, throw the grenade, fire the missile, or whatever it is? This command does not refer to what is called just wars. I would not consider what Hitler and the Nazis did in World War II as a just war.

[ 4 : 34 ] I would consider what the opposition did as just. We see this throughout the Old Testament where God even sends the Israelites into battle for his purposes, and he tells them to kill these people.

We also see Jesus deal with a soldier like the centurion. We're told in Acts that Cornelius, the leader of a regiment of soldiers, was a God-fearing man, and never do we see them commanded to stop going into combat.

And let me share one more that may be a touch controversial. This command does not refer to capital punishment. I'm going to guess that we probably have people listening to this who are for the death penalty for certain crimes and others who are completely opposed to it.

But regardless of where you fall on this, and it really does not matter to me at all, but no, the sixth commandment is not evidence against capital punishment. God the Father says to Noah and his descendants in Genesis 9-6, Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed. For in the image of God has God made mankind. Even in Romans 13, we see that God puts authorities in place to punish for wrongdoing. Otherwise, we would see absolute utter chaos in our society.

[ 5 : 54 ] You know, I really like how Kevin DeYoung put this. He said, capital punishment for murder was not considered an assault on the image of God, but a defense of his image.

And then he says, human life is so precious that the taking of it was to be punished severely. So let's give a definition for murder according to the sixth commandment.

And I like how Alistair Begg puts this. He says, murder is the deliberate, malicious, and unlawful taking of life. And that leads us right into the first of our two questions for today.

What's at the heart? What's at the heart of this commandment? Why does God feel the need to make this one of the six that teach us how to love our neighbor well?

Well, guys, it's really this simple. We are made in the image of God. Life is precious. That you, listen, that's you, that's me, that's every single person who has ever walked this earth.

[ 6 : 56 ] We are made in the image of Almighty God. The most precious thing in this world to our Creator is human life. You know, there's a clear distinction in the creation story.

Where God created the heavens and the earth, created light and land and water and vegetation, the sun, moon, and stars, birds of the sky, animals of the land, fish in the sea, and it was all good. And yet when he made mankind, he said it was very good. Listen to Genesis 1 verse 27. It says, so God created mankind in his own image.

In the image of God, he created them. Male and female, he created them. So it doesn't matter if your skin color is black or white or your ethnicity is European or Hispanic or Asian or African or Middle Eastern or any other ethnicity or shade of skin color.

It doesn't matter if you're male or a female, if you live in the big city, the small town, or in the jungle. If you're a believer, if you're a non-believer, it doesn't matter if you're a newborn or you're 110 or you're somewhere in between.

[ 8 : 02 ] It doesn't matter if you're weak and feeble or you're strong and active. It doesn't matter if you're considered of no value to society or you are among the rich and famous that everyone wants to be around.

You have God's thumbprint all over you. Or as many of us maybe had learned in children's Sunday school, I'm thumbbody because I'm made in the image of Almighty God.

So let's talk about areas that do fit this commandment, that are considered murder. And I know that as we walk through a couple of these, it may fall into the political arena.

And listen, that's not my intention to be political. But when issues fall into right and wrong according to God's word, we are always going to preach the word and seek holiness in him.

And regardless of what political party mom and dad were, I hope that for you, that for me, that God's truth will always be our standard more than being a donkey or being an elephant, okay?

[ 9 : 04 ] Because it doesn't matter what flawed candidate your party puts before you. Jesus will always be the answer. So when we talk about this sixth commandment, the first one is obvious.

It's referring to homicide. Homicide. To intentionally, to willfully kill someone without just cause. That's obvious because that's naturally where your mind will go when you think of this command. You don't have the right to end someone else's life. And then next, you don't have the right to end your own. Suicide fits into this. I'll never forget August of 2010.

I had been in full-time ministry for four years. I had no idea what I was doing. I was just trying to follow the Holy Spirit wherever he led. But we had a young lady in our church that was 30 years old at the time.

Life had been tough. She had made some not-so-good decisions, especially with men. And yet, she was incredibly sweet. She had such a big heart. Bethany and I really connected with her.

[ 10 : 05 ] She'd been coming to church, growing in her faith. And then, just out of nowhere, I get the phone call that she was found after shooting herself. Bethany and I rushed to the hospital to be with friends and family.

Later, I stood at her ICU bedside next to her parents as we were told that there was no brain activity. And then she died within a few days. Talk about one of the hardest things that I have ever walked through in ministry.

One of the saddest funerals that I've ever done because she had two children whose lives have forever been altered by that wrong decision. Listen, I know life can be incredibly hard.

When we get in that pit, Satan can convince us of some things that just are not true. I realize when the pain feels so intense, it's easy to think about just ending it all.

To wonder if it would just make everyone else's life around me easier. And yet, for every person who is listening to this, who's been affected by suicide, and that's a lot of us, you know that it leaves a wake of devastation behind.

[ 11 : 14 ] And it's never the right answer. So please hear me. If life beats you up bad enough, if you are tempted to take your life, I want you to give me a call here at FCC.

812-663-8488. Go to someone who loves you if you don't want to give me a call, or someone who can help you carry this burden. Come to us as a church family, because we care about you.

Because no matter what Satan is whispering in your ear, it's going to be okay. See in John 10.10.

And I don't know if you've ever thought about Jesus' words this way, but this completely applies.

Our Savior says to us, he says, The thief, he's talking about Satan. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. Think about that when it comes to suicide.

That's Satan whispering in someone's ear, trying to steal their joy, trying to kill them, to destroy them. That's Satan trying to destroy them so they can't make an impact for the kingdom of God.

[ 12 : 17 ] But what does Jesus say at the second half of this verse? I have come that you may have life and have it to the full. When Satan says that suicide is your answer, you stand tall and you speak the name above all names.

You call out the king of kings and you watch the devil scurry away, because Jesus is your answer for everything life can ever throw your way. And this too, I don't know if you've memorized this, but it's something you've got to learn how to say.

This too shall pass. He's more than enough. He's bigger than your financial struggle, stronger than that addiction, more powerful than your relational heartbreak, more powerful even than that health concern that you have.

And you know what? Your life is valuable to the creator of the universe. So don't even entertain Satan's murmurs. Next, let's talk about abortion, because that breaks this commandment.

And I know this can be very political, but my heart, once again, is to preach God's truth. Christians must stop choosing politics over what God's word teaches.

[ 13 : 30 ] He makes it abundantly clear. As you study throughout the Bible, life is precious from conception in the womb until someone takes their last breath in old age.

Actually, let me show you one of my favorite passages from Psalm 139. And let's start here in verse 13. King David says, And you know what?

Science backs this up, because that's the study of how God's creation works. And many have simply chosen to ignore the facts, usually because they have an agenda, ignore the science, that

this is a human life precious to God from conception.

This is a clear violation of the sixth commandment. And I speak that truth boldly, while also remembering a powerful testimony I once heard from a lady named Lisa.

She had a hard life growing up. She continued that cycle with some pretty bad decisions. And probably for the first 20 plus years of her adulthood, she bounced from man to man, drug to drug, and even landed behind bars more times than we can probably count.

[15:06] She was tough because this girl knew the streets. And then she met a man who was different than all the others. A man who actually created her in her mother's womb.

A man who could see every hurt, insecurity, and desire of her heart. And he changed everything. When she waved that white flag of faith, Jesus forgave her, filled her with the Holy Spirit, and began this incredible transformation.

And one day I heard her stand up in church to share her story. And one part of her testimony was that she had multiple abortions before she came to know Christ.

And she wept as the abortion industry doesn't really talk much about the guilt and the shame that often follow. And then she lifted her head, tears streaming, and she spoke about hope.

A God of grace who had forgiven her, ministered to her heart, and set her on the solid rock. A God who daily was transforming her into his image.

[16:09] And I don't think there was a dry eye in the house that day. Now, did you know that God used three men to write a large portion of the Bible? And those three men had been murderers in the past.

Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible a lot. That's pretty thick books right there. He wrote the first five books called the Pentateuch, called the Torah, and he was guilty of killing an Egyptian man and fleeing out of Egypt.

Paul wrote over half of the New Testament, but before he came to know Christ, he was fiercely against Jesus and gave his approval when they stoned Stephen to death and was even the man persecuting the church.

David wrote a large portion of the Psalms where we see God's heart in incredible ways. But in a season of rebellion, he covered up his sin of adultery with Bathsheba by having her husband killed. See, in these moments of anger, of ignorance, or just being out of control, these guys killed. And yet, in their sincere repentance, they discovered forgiveness, restoration, and purpose in the Lord.

[17:18] And the same thing is true for us today. While we can't budge on how serious this command is, that life is precious in God's sight, valuable in his eyes, the only reason we can stand here today is because of the amazing grace of Jesus over our lives.

So let me ask you, what's at the heart of this command? The reality that we are made in the image of Almighty God and life is precious to him.

So let's take this difficult journey from the heart of the passage to your heart and mine. Here's the second question. What's in the heart?

We started off with what's at the heart. What's in the heart? And I can't answer that for you. And you know what? You can't answer that for me. But Jesus has this annoying thing that he does where he sneaks past the ritualistic checking off of boxes and he goes right for the heart to examine our motives.

I'm joking when I called it annoying. But none of us really like our motives sometimes to be tested, right? Because this is probably one of the commandments that maybe we thought we would just skim by.

[18:29] We would breeze by. Yeah, I've never murdered anyone. Next. And yet every single person listening to my voice is guilty of this after you read Jesus' words.

So grab your Bibles for me and flip real quick here to Matthew 5, verses 21 and 22. First book of the New Testament, probably about two-thirds the way through your Bible.

But Jesus in his famous Sermon on the Mount says this in Matthew 5, 21. 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, raka, is answerable to the court.

And anyone who says you fool will be in danger of the fire of hell. So let's Bible study together real quick, okay? In verse 22, Jesus says, but I tell you anyone who is angry with his brother or sister.

[ 19 : 31 ] So that word angry is not a quick blow up type of anger. This is referring to a deep seated anger that is rooted in bitterness and resentment.

There is a clear hatred that is happening here, okay? So it is stirring in the heart. And then we go to the next verse where he says, you don't call your brother or sister raka.

Barclay in his commentary defines this word raka as to despise with arrogant contempt. So now it's starting to kind of come out from not just the heart, but now it's coming out of the lips.

And then Jesus talks about calling this person a fool, which in the Greek is the word moros, which probably sounds familiar to you. We get the word moron from it.

So what started out as hurt turned into bitterness and rage, and now it's come out with behavior like gossip and slander and downright hatred.

[ 20 : 31 ] Now do me a favor, close your eyes. I don't ask you to do this very often, but close your eyes for a second. And I want you to think about a person who has hurt you deeply.

Maybe they lied about you. Maybe they slandered your name. Maybe they stabbed you in the back. Maybe it's something you consider even worse. That one person that if we're honest, we probably despise and we're okay if we never see them again.

Maybe we even have these imaginary scenes that play out in our minds where we are just letting them have it, maybe hurting them physically in some way. Let me ask you, what face pops into your head?

Okay, now that you have that, go ahead and open your eyes. You know, when I do this same little exercise, I have a face I see as well. And let's just be honest, you may be sitting here right now starting to stew over this person all over again because that face just brings up all kinds of rage and bitterness.

And you may be thinking, thanks a lot, preacher, for bringing this back up for me. And while I'm sorry they hurt you, it was just a matter of time before something triggered that memory again and you brought it back up.

[ 21 : 39 ] And Jesus makes it clear that while we maybe haven't physically taken their life, when you harbor that anger, that bitterness, you have in fact murdered them in your heart.

And this is humbling because there's not a person listening to this, minus maybe a baby, that's not guilty of harboring anger towards someone. And what does this deep-seated resentment, grudge, unforgiveness do to us?

You know, in the words of Louis B. Smedes, he says, to forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that that prisoner was you. What does it do?

It shackles us up and even leads us to places we don't really want to go. And then in Galatians chapter 5, we're shown what it looks like to walk in the flesh.

And that includes hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, which all can happen when there's unforgiveness in the camp.

[ 22 : 41 ] But listen, if you are in Christ, that old man is gone. Those chains have been broken. And here's the fruit that Galatians 5, starting in verse 22, says, when we walk as that brand new creation in Christ.

Here's what it says. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Against such things, there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Now, pardon my bad grammar here, but that hatred ain't worth it because we were meant for so much more.

Let me end by putting it this way. Dale Carnegie, the influential writer, he was once at Yellowstone National Park where he saw a grizzly bear at a distance.

The huge animal was in the center of this clearing snacking on some food left behind from a campsite. And for several minutes, he feasted alone because no other animal would dare enter his territory.

[ 23 : 53 ] I mean, this is the king here, okay? So, he was left alone until a skunk walked boldly into that clearing and took his place right next to the bear appearing unafraid.

The grizzly looked over at him but didn't even object. Why? Because it would cost too much to get even. You know what? Our hatred, our revenge may stink even more than a skunk or as my three-year-old calls it, a stunk.

So, church, let's realize today that life is precious to Almighty God and that includes yours. Let's realize today that if there is a grudge, if there is a problem we have that we need to lay that down at the feet of Christ, we need to make that right with whoever that is and we need to walk in his power. Life is precious. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for these words of hope that you have spoken over us today.

Thank you for just your amazing grace and forgiveness that you give to each one of us. And Father, you teach us in your word that if we can't forgive, then there won't be forgiveness for us as well because we are saved by grace.

[ 25 : 20 ] How can we dare not offer that to someone else? So, thank you for opening up this passage, this commandment today to teach us that life is precious and that includes us as well.

Jesus, you are awesome. We worship you in your holiness, in your majesty, in your splendor, and we thank you for the amazing grace that you show us, the new mercies that we have today.

We worship you and we adore you and we pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. God's people said, amen and amen. Hey, I want to just give you this quick invitation today.

You know, here we are today and we are talking about how life is precious. I want you to know that your soul is precious. Scripture is very clear that when we take our last breath or if Jesus comes back first, where we spend eternity will have everything to do with what we did with Jesus.

Does Jesus have your heart? Are you truly a child of God? Are you a born-again believer? If you're not even sure what I'm talking about, I would love to have that conversation with you because your soul is precious and Jesus wants a relationship with you.

[ 26 : 41 ] It's not about religion. It's not about just going to church. It's about walking with the God of the universe every day. And so, if we can walk alongside you on this journey, if you have some faith questions, will you just go ahead and reach out to us?

Our phone number is 812-663-8488. That's 812-663-8488. Or, you can just go ahead and email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com.

Hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. I pray that God blesses you in every way. Have a good week.