

Walking with Jesus Through Sinai:  
 Seeking Moral Clarity in an Age of Chaos with the 10 Commandments  
 CPC Adult Sunday Studies Spring 2025  
 20 - Sixth Commandment

### On Murder, Wrath, and Anger

**Review:** Moving from the 5th to the 6th commandment, we are now squarely in the section of “love your neighbor.” God has made clear that we worship him alone, and honor the authorities he set up, and now this is how that ought to naturally flow out to our other relationships.

*Exodus 20:13 - “You shall not murder”*

#### Preliminary Points

1. *The word for “murder”* here includes unintentional killing or manslaughter. It is *not* the same general word for “kill.” Perhaps best would be “unlawfully kill.”
  1. Some scholars argue a better translation would be “kill”, but that would be so broad as to be confusing because it would seem to include the killing that God himself does.
  2. However, it should be understood more broadly than “murder” as we think of it today, since it is not limited to premeditated acts, but includes voluntary and involuntary manslaughter.
  3. This verb only refers to humans. It is not used in reference to animals.
  4. It is also not the verb used for killing in war, which is presumably lawful under certain conditions.
2. *Unconditional command* - the verse in Hebrew is 2 words! As with the other commands, there are no conditions or qualifications.
3. *Remember the context* - the Ten Commandments were spoken by God himself to the people, who are to live in covenant with him. So God is saying, if you are to live as my people, this is how.

## **Foundations to the Command**

### **1. God is the Lord of Life**

1. God created us - Gen. 1-2, Ps. 139.13-16, Job 10.11-12
2. God is sovereign over us - *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.* (Job 1.21-22)
3. We submit our whole life and death to God
  1. This will have many implications in weeks to come when we get to ethical issues, but first we must realize the ***overarching truth of all of life for a Christian is one done in hopes of glorifying God and submitting to His will, especially when it means a cross.***
  2. In other words, we do not belong to ourselves, we belong to God.

### **2. Humans are made in the image of God**

1. Gen. 1.27 - *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them"*
2. Gen. 9.6 - *"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image"*
  1. Perhaps ironically to some, the immense value of a human is protected by this command to put to death a murderer. One could argue a kind of pacifist position that would actually diminish the value of life.
3. James 3.9-10 - *"With [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so."*

### **3. Humans are unique among the animals**

1. Christians are unanimous in their affirmation of the unique worth of humanity over any other creature. This doesn't mean we have no respect for animals or the earth - quite the opposite, since they too are created by God! - but it does mean we value humans more because they reflect God uniquely.
2. Our worth, remember, is always to be considered as derivative from God. It is not absolute, which is why avoiding death is not an ultimate good when it conflicts with a higher priority from God (i.e. the martyrs).

## **The Heart of the Command**

### Jesus on the 6th Commandment - to the heart!

*Matt. 5.21-26 - "You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment." 22 But I say to you that everyone who is **angry** with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever **insults** his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, '**You fool!**' will be liable to the hell of fire. 23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. 26 Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny."*

Note: This is not about the Lord's Supper! Jesus was speaking in terms of the Old Testament Temple, but the principle still stands that you are not to pretend forgiveness or reconciliation when you are not reconciled.

- Why is anger considered the heart of murder? If murder focuses on the destruction of the body, anger focuses on the destruction of the soul.

### ON WRATH - Holy Emotion or Hellish Passion?

From *Glittering Vices*, by Rebecca Deyoung

NOTE: Jesus is clearly condemning "anger", but we have to be careful with that translation. If anger simply means passion in the form of disagreement, then Jesus can't mean that since he exhibited it himself! It's best to think of it in terms of "wrath."

**Different from anger**, which "is a natural expression of human emotion, like sadness or fear... [whose] rightful target is injustice." (140). "Anger, when it is a **holy emotion**, has **justice** as its object and **love** as its root." (156)

- "most of our [sinful] anger looks like road rage—yelling at Jesus to get out of our way, rather than walking with him to the cross." (142)
- "In the wrathful or unselfcontrolled person, by contrast, anger overwhelms, narrowing her view of the good and turning the world she sees red." (144)
- "Psychologists call anger a 'secondary emotion' because it masks other sorts of distress" (157) - so we need to do the hard and honest work of learning what we're really mad about!

**Types of sinful anger:**

- Get angry too easily.
- Get angrier than we should.
- Stay angry too long.

"We also find ourselves well-practiced in wrath: America's new cultural trademark is **contemptuous** communication." (148)

- If healthy anger stems from justice, then sinful wrath stems from contempt

**Fighting Wrath:**

- Practice hope, which focuses us on trusting God
- Document every time we get angry
- Try physically slowing down - we will become slow to anger as our body and soul becomes slower
- Pursue gentleness - Jesus may have had times of intense anger, but he was certainly not wrathful. Gentleness allows us to control our anger.

**From the Men's "Emotions Unveiled " group material**

- Healthy anger shows us our passion, that we were made to be heard by God and others, and ought to express it
- Unprocessed anger often becomes depression, not rage, because it's our passion not being able to be expressed. Rage, on the other hand, is often out of fear, when you're acting bigger than you are.

"At its most rudimentary level, anger tells you when something is wrong or when you need something. It's like the "**check engine**" **light on the dashboard** of a car that signals that you need to pay attention because something under the hood is not OK. Anger says yes or no, leave or stay, stop or go. Anger is one of the most basic and vulnerable feelings you have because it **exposes what is important to you**. It is anger that opens the door for the other feelings to be recognized. Anger says, "This needs to be stopped. I desire for something to be different in this situation." It is this recognition that opens the door for the heart to continue to pour out what is going on inside....Anger is the feeling that moves you to take action so that bad things can change and good things can be created or cared for, preserved or protected. Anger is energy in motion to move toward what you care about or away from what will harm you."

**Main question:** how can we foster this kind of "healthy anger" without falling into the sinful anger that Jesus condemns? What's the difference?