

Murder

Thou shalt not kill. When we read these words, we are reminded of one of the world's oldest rules which in turn reflects one of the world's oldest values - the value of human life. It's an interesting rule to choose for study, though, since few of us are really tempted to commit a murder. In fact, California has well over 30 million people and well under 3,000 of those people are accused of murder in a given year. That's less than 0.01% of the population. So why study a part of the Bible that seems to affect so few people?

We'll see in this week's study that there is more to murder than simply taking another person's life. A proper understanding of God's view of human life will allow you to make better choices in how you treat people – and yourself – every day.

Monday – Life and Death

"The world is a den of murderers, subject to the devil. If we desire to live on earth, we must be content to be guests ... in an inn where the host is a rascal, [and] over the door this sign ..., 'For murder and lies.'" Martin Luther

1. Please read Exodus 20:1-13. What is the first thing that comes to mind as you look at verse 13 in it's context?
2. When you read Job 12:10 & 14:5, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and Psalm 139:13-17 in conjunction with Exodus 20:13, what do these passages tell you about situations such as suicide, euthanasia and abortion? What does it tell you about matters of life and death?

Making it Personal: Do you know anyone who is suffering from the death of someone close to them? Take time to pray for them, asking God to show you how you can help them in their grief.

Tuesday – Is Murder Always Murder?

"All killing is not murder any more than all sexual intercourse is adultery." C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

1. Please read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. What do these verses say about life and death?
2. How is it that there can be times to kill (verse 3) and for war (verse 8) without violating Exodus 20:13?
3. Read John 8:1-11. Jewish law allowed that adultery was punishable by death. What does it mean that Jesus stood in the way by preventing this woman's death sentence from being carried out?

Prayer Focus: There is great debate as to whether Christians are ever justified in killing. Pray, asking God for wisdom on this matter.

Wednesday – Cain and Abel

"I couldn't live in peace if I put the shadow of a willful sin between myself and God." George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss

1. Please read Genesis 4:1-16. What life-affirming events occur in verses 1-2?
2. What insights do you gain from Hebrews 11:4 and 1 John 3:12 regarding Cain's interactions with God?

Text Insight: In Genesis 4:16, the word "Nod" means "wandering".

3. In Genesis 4:10-14, what judgment did God pronounce on Cain? How does being a "restless wanderer" relate to being hidden from God's presence? Why do you think God did not punish Cain with death?

Making it Personal: Is your attitude toward God more like Cain's or Abel's? Pray, asking God to guide you in responding to him with pure faith.

Thursday – Treating Others Well

"Being all fashioned of the self-same dust, Let us be merciful as well as just." Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Tales of a Wayside Inn

1. Please read Matthew 5:21-24. How does Jesus explain the fuller meaning of Exodus 20:13? What kind of anger is Jesus referring to? All anger? If not, what type of anger do you think he is talking about?
2. What is Jesus condemning when he speaks of calling some a "fool"? Is there a certain attitude that Jesus has in mind when he condemns the man who name-calls?

Making it Personal: Do you have such feelings and thoughts toward another person that you are in danger of being exposed to a charge of murder? Pray for that person now, and for yourself, that God will reconcile you.

Friday – The Greatest of All

"Do not waste time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbour, act as if you did." CS Lewis

1. John, a close friend and follower of Jesus, late in life wrote 1 John 3:11-15. What insight does he give us into Jesus' teaching on murder (from Matthew 5:21-24)?
2. Love is supreme (1 Corinthians 13:13). If anything can help us understand what constitutes murder and what does not, it is love. 1 John 3:16-20 tells us what it takes to love. Summarize John's words.
3. Now read Matthew 25:31-46. How does this passage help us to understand the nature of love?

For the Weekend: Read Romans 12:14-21 and pray, asking God to show you practical ways you can bless those who make your life difficult, so that you will avoid even coming close to violating Exodus 20:13.