

“How to Make Godly Decisions, Part 6”
(Lord’s Day School, 7-8-01)

Have you ever wondered whether it was okay to fight in a war and kill the enemy? Have you ever wondered whether a professing Christian can commit suicide and still go to heaven? Are there times when euthanasia is right? Are there ever times when it might be wrong to be treated for a terminal illness? Are certain kinds of birth control wrong? These are just some of the questions that the sixth commandment answers for us. Each of God’s commandments has a special emphasis when it comes to making godly decisions. The first tells us that we must always be sure that we make the kinds of choices that will help us to love God more than anyone or anything else, and that we worship Him alone. The second tells us that we must make sure that we always worship the Lord in the way He wants us to and not in the way we might like to. The third tells us that we must always be careful to use God’s names very reverently and that we always keep our promises. The fourth tells us that we must always be careful to set the whole Lord’s Day aside to worship Him and to use the different things He has given us to strengthen and nurture our souls. The fifth tells us that we must always honor and respect the authority He has placed in this world. Now He tells us in the sixth that we must always take care to protect and preserve life, that we must always choose to do those things which will never endanger ourselves or anyone else.

- VI. What is the sixth commandment? The sixth commandment is, “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13). More literally, it could be translated, “You shall never murder at any time.”
- A. What does this commandment mean?
1. What does it mean to murder someone? It means to take away their life unjustly.
 2. Does this mean that we should never kill anyone under any circumstances? No. There are situations when it is right to kill someone. We will look in a moment at the kinds of situations in which we might do this.
 3. Does this commandment also apply to murdering ourselves? Yes. We are to protect our own lives, as much as that of our neighbors.
 4. Does this commandment apply to anything else besides murder? Yes, it also applies to those things which are harmful, but fall short of murder. There are degrees of murder, just as there are degrees of anything else.
 5. Does this commandment address anything besides our outward actions? Yes. It also prohibits any thoughts, words or intentions which tend toward murder, such as hatred.
- B. Seeing that this is the case, what are some of the things that this commandment tells us that should we should be careful to do and not to do?
1. First, what is the most obvious thing it forbids? It forbids us to take anyone’s life away unjustly.
 - a. What does it mean to take away someone’s life unjustly? It means to kill them without God’s permission.

- b. If we kill someone unjustly, what does the Lord say must be the penalty? Death. He says in Genesis 9:6, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.”
 - c. Are there any exceptions to this? Technically speaking, no. We are never to murder.
 - d. What are some of the ways that human beings are put to death in our society, but are not considered to be murdered?
 - (i) Abortion.
 - (ii) Some forms of contraception. Any method that aborts a fertilized egg still kills a human being.
 - (iii) Some forms of artificial fertilization. Any method that results in the disposal of a fertilized egg, kills human life.
 - (iv) Euthanasia. Putting people out of their misery, or “mercy-killing.” This is still murder.
 - (v) Is there a difference between euthanasia and withholding treatment for a disease? Yes. Euthanasia ends someone’s life. Withholding medical treatment may end their life, but by the means of the disease.
 - (vi) Is withholding treatment the same as killing someone? Is a person’s refusing treatment the same as committing suicide? It all depends. If the person’s illness is treatable, then it would be wrong not to treat them, that is, if the treatment will really prolong their life, if it will cure them. But if treatment will only briefly prolong their death and increase their agony, if there isn’t any hope, then it wouldn’t be wrong to withhold or to refuse treatment.
 - e. What should we do instead of taking away life? We should do what we can to protect life. How?
 - (i) We should protect the weak and defenseless from those who are more powerful and who threaten them.
 - (ii) We should take a stand for the unborn when and where we can.
 - (iii) We should avoid those contraceptives and fertilization methods which are abortive.
 - (iv) We should not support the taking away of anyone’s life unjustly.
2. Now does the sixth commandment teach us that we should never kill? No. There are certain situations in which it is the right thing to do.
- a. What are some of those situations?
 - (i) The civil magistrate has the power to execute someone for certain crimes.
 - (a) Numbers 35:31-33, “Moreover, you shall not take ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death. And you shall not take ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to live in the land before the death of the priest. So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.”
 - (b) Romans 13:3-4, “For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is

good, and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.”

- (c) Every crime doesn't deserve the death penalty, but there are many that do.
 - (ii) Lawful war is another situation in which we may righteously kill another.
 - (a) In Jeremiah 48:10, the Lord pronounces a curse upon the one who will not go out to fight the Lord's battle. “Cursed be the one who does the Lord's work negligently, and cursed be the one who restrains his sword from blood.”
 - (b) See also Deuteronomy 20.
 - (c) Is every war a lawful war? No.
 - (d) What is an unlawful war? A war that is being fought for evil reasons. Can you think of any examples? Many of Russia's wars: they swallowed up other countries as they tried to take over Asia. Hitler's war on the European nations. Saddam Hussein's war on Kuwait.
 - (e) What is a lawful war? A war that is being fought for righteous reasons, such as defending our own nation's freedom against an evil aggressor, or against tyranny, or defending another nation against a foreign invader.
 - (f) Should you fight on the side of the evil aggressor? If you were in Russia in the days when communism was stronger, could you as a Christian fight in their army? No.
 - (iii) The last situation in which we may take away the life of another is in self-defense.
 - (a) Moses writes, “If the thief is caught while breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account” (Exodus 22:2).
 - (b) If someone attacks you or someone else, you have the right to defend yourself and that other person, even to the point of killing the other person, if necessary.
3. What are some of the other ways we should protect the lives of others?
- a. If someone is in danger of dying because of lack of food or exposure, we should help them.
 - (i) Jesus will say on the day of Judgment to the goats, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me” (Matt. 25:41-43).
 - (ii) James writes, “If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body,

- what use is that?” (James 2:15-16).
- (iii) We should provide for their needs as much as we can.
- b. We should do nothing to injure them. What are some other ways we could injure our neighbor?
- (i) Through our words.
- (a) “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).
- (b) “There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Proverbs 12:18).
- (c) Paul writes, “But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another” (Galatians 5:15).
- (d) What should we do instead? We should use our words to build others up. Peter writes, “To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, ‘Let him who means to love life and see good days refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile. And let him seek peace and pursue it’” (1 Peter 3:8-11).
- (ii) If their employment is in our power, we should not overwork them.
- (a) Moses writes, “And they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all *kinds* of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them” (Exodus 1:14).
- (b) What should we do instead? Do what we can to make their load lighter.
- (iii) We should never strike our neighbor, unless in self-defense.
- (a) If we injure them unjustly in any way, we are responsible to give them whatever they might lose. I told you about the Puritan in the seventeenth century who was out hunting in the woods when he saw something move in a bush. He raised his crossbow and shot, only to find that he had killed a man, who had a wife and children. The only righteous thing the man could do was to support them for the rest of their lives, since he had taken away their only means of support.
- (b) What should we do instead? We should protect and defend them.
- c. We should not injure them in our hearts.
- (i) Through sinful anger and hatred:
- (a) Jesus said, “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell” (Matt. 5:22).
- (b) And John writes, “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John

3:15).

- (ii) Through a desire for revenge when someone has done something wrong to you. Paul writes, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of *God*, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:19).
 - (iii) What should we do instead? Paul writes, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice” (Eph. 4:31).
4. But what about ourselves? What does this commandment tell us about what we should not to do ourselves?
- a. First, we should not kill ourselves.
 - (i) If it is wrong to take away the life of someone else unjustly, it is also wrong to take away our own life. We must not murder ourselves.
 - (ii) When the Philippian jailer was about to kill himself because he thought his prisoners had escaped, Paul stopped him (Acts 16:28).
 - (iii) What about a professing Christian who commits suicide? Can they be saved? It may be hard to understand how a person who really knows Christ could fall this far away from him to kill himself, but we would have to say that if that person is truly a child of God, then even that sin will not destroy their soul. It will still be covered by the blood of Christ.
 - b. Is there anything else this commandment tells us we shouldn’t do to ourselves? We shouldn’t do anything that we know is harmful to our health.
 - (i) Don’t eat or drink too much. Solomon writes, “Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, *or* with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe *a man* with rags” (Proverbs 23:20-21). Certainly don’t eat anything you know is harmful.
 - (ii) Don’t work too much. Too much work can kill you slowly.
 - (iii) Don’t recreate too much. Too much recreation, or becoming addicted to pleasure, can also make you poor, which can threaten your life.
 - (iv) Be careful that in your recreation you don’t take too many chances. Some people like skydiving or skiing or bungy-jumping or rock climbing. But don’t take unnecessary risks with your life. Too much sun can also cause skin cancer. You need to take care of yourself.
 - (v) This commandment teaches us that we need to take care of ourselves and other people. Let’s bear that in mind as we make decisions throughout our lives.