

# COMMANDMENTS

## **Do Not Murder** (Exodus 20:13)

**Bottom Line:** God's prohibition against taking life means that we also do what we can to preserve life. Not only physically, but spiritually as well.

**In your opinion, what does it mean to be “pro-life?”**

Abortion is probably the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear that term. The tragedy of abortion, the murdering of innocent unborn children, is a direct violation of the sixth commandment. But is the term “pro-life” *only* related to the issue of abortion? A more consistent pro-life position is one that is concerned with the whole life. This means we should expand our understanding of being pro-life to matters of adoption, orphan care, widow care, the alleviation of poverty, mental illness, etc. But have you ever considered how being “pro-life” applies to how we care for our hearts? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus unpacks for us how this commandment was meant to convey something so much more than just the intentional killing of another person. God's prohibition against taking human life actually says something about what our hearts should be like.

**Read Matthew 5:21-22.**

**How does Jesus interpret the commandment not to murder? How did Jesus actually raise expectations for His followers? If anger and hatred against someone else is considered a violation of the sixth commandment, then what should our response be to those who offend and hurt us?**

**Read Romans 12:19-21.** Here the apostle Paul reminds us that vengeance belongs to the Lord, so if we harbor in our hearts a desire for someone else to experience retribution and pain (because that's what hatred is), then we are taking into our own hands a matter that is solely God's responsibility. We have been “overcome by evil.”

**Read Genesis 9:6. What is the reason given for why murder is such a severe sin? Understanding this, what does hatred toward other people do to your relationship with God?**

In addition to Jesus' teaching, the rest of the New Testament has some important things to say about anger.

**Read James 1:19-20. Does being quick to hear and slow to speak help us to be slow to anger? How?**

**Read Ephesians 4:26-27. How can we be angry in a way that isn't sin? How do we know if our anger is sinful or not?**

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**Read Mark 3:1-5. Was Jesus' anger justified? Why or why not? What can we learn from this about how to deal with our anger?**

**What role does forgiveness play in protecting our hearts from anger and hatred? How does unforgiveness feed into anger and hatred?**

So, while it's possible to be angry and not sin, we do not need to try and look for ways to justify our hatred. We need to be especially careful to protect our hearts from hatred and anger. We need to let no root of bitterness overtake us, knowing that this will make us ineffective in not only showing grace to others, but receiving grace as well (see Hebrews 12:15). If we are to be faithful to the spiritual implication of sixth commandment, to preserve the spiritual life and well-being of not only ourselves but our neighbors, then we need to fight against anger and bitterness.

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**Reflection:** Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

**If you have not repented of your sin and placed your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, then the Bible says that the anger and wrath of God rests upon you. Until you find peace with God through Jesus Christ, you will never experience true peace with your neighbor. Repent of your sin, trust in Christ, and rely upon the Spirit's power to help you overcome hatred and bitterness.**

**Who (or what) in your life are you harboring any hatred toward? Someone once said, "hatred is drinking poison and expecting the other person to die from it." Have you experienced this to be true in your life? Is your hatred helping or hindering your relationship with God? Do you trust that God is righteous in all His ways and will defend you if it is needed? If so, what can you do to release the anger and hatred that you have? Do you need to forgive someone? Do you need to forgive yourself?**

**Is there anything in your life that routinely incites you to anger and hatred? Maybe it's a political topic, maybe it's a theological debate, or perhaps it's a lifestyle and/or behavior that you disagree with. What can you do to protect yourself from these temptations to anger? What steps do you need to take to ensure that your heart remains free from the bondage of hatred?**