

# END-TIMES ISSUES



**#104** Commandment #6 – The obligations it represents.

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.


**A N D B E Y O N D I**

1

## THE 6TH COMMANDMENT

**You shall not murder.**  
Exodus 20:13 (BSB); also in Deuteronomy 5:17

- Last time:** We looked at issues related to the actual act of physical *killing* – the most visible act that represents the violation of this commandment.
- Today:** Our focus is going to be on the variety of ways that this Sixth Commandment, *as a principle*, applies to life.
  - ✓ This will include the "negative" instructions that prevent us from falling into the realm of sin and death, as well as the "positive" instructions that represent conduct in the land of the truly living (which is only possible in Christ).



2

## THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT AS A PRINCIPLE

- It covers *more than* the act of physically killing someone.
  - ✓ The Apostle John shows this, when he links hatred and murder.
 

Everyone who **hates** his brother is a **murderer**, and you know that eternal life does not reside in a murderer.  
1 John 3:15 (BSB)
  - ✓ Jesus pointed this out, when he linked anger and murder. He also linked this commandment to a "positive" obligation.
 

You have heard that it was said to the ancients, 'Do not **murder**' ... But I tell you that anyone who is **angry** with his brother will be subject to judgment.  
... go and **be reconciled** to your brother...  
**Reconcile quickly** with your adversary ...  
Matthew 5:21a, 22a, 24b, 25a (BSB)

TO BE RECONCILED MEANS TO MAKE PEACE WITH THEM.

3

- This is not just a *New Testament (New Covenant)* concept.
  - ✓ The *Old Covenant* was *just as much* opposed to the "non-physical" expressions, such as hatred. It also promoted the "positive" concepts, such as reconciliation with others.
  - ✓ We can expect different covenants to have different emphases:
    - The *New Covenant* includes *only* saved people. It has a greater emphasis on the issues of the *heart* and *mind*, which God will judge (though it does not ignore external conduct).
    - The *Old Covenant* included both saved and unsaved people. It had a greater focus on the *external* conduct, which civil government could judge (though it did not ignore the issues of the heart and mind).
  - ✓ Those who were *saved* under the Old Covenant would oppose not only *physical* killing, but also the other "negative" expressions of this command. They would also pursue the "positive" obligations that were implied by the commandment.

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## A QUICK SUMMARY OF THE "SIXTH COMMANDMENT CATEGORY."

- CAUTION:** These concepts have to be based on Scripture. The world distorts them – to the point that they often define these things *backwards* from the way they really are.
- "NEGATIVE": Anything that "tears down" a person (self or others).** Anything that leads to the destruction or diminishing of human life.
  - ✓ (The basic concept) ⇒ Unauthorized killing. Both direct and indirect harm. Hatred; sinful anger. Malice, slander, cruelty. Actions that diminish life. Cursing, doing evil, wishing harm for someone.
  - ✓ (From the Westminster Larger Catechism\*) ⇒ Killing that God has not authorized; neglecting or withdrawing the means of preserving life; attitudes, such as sinful anger, hatred, envy, and desire for revenge; harmful words and actions – provocative words, oppression, quarreling, striking, wounding; focusing on the cares and worries of life; destructive habits and lifestyles.

\* (See note at the bottom of the next page.)

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- "POSITIVE": Anything that "builds up" a person.** Actions that lead to the preservation and protection of human life.
  - ✓ (The basic concept) ⇒ Respecting life, protecting it from both direct and indirect harm. Love, even for enemies, based on *Scripture's* definition of love. Preserving and promoting life. Blessing, doing good, praying.
  - ✓ (From the W. L. C. \*) ⇒ Avoiding thoughts, actions, desires, opportunities that unjustly take away from one's life; protecting and defending the innocent; patiently bearing difficult situations, forgiving, eager to be reconciled; returning good for evil; encouraging and supporting those who are in distress; speech and behavior that is peaceable, mild and courteous; love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, and kindness; moderation and self-control in the various activities of life – food, drink, activities, etc.

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\* (Based on "The Westminster Larger Catechism in Modern English," but not an exact quote, nor in the same order.)

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### EXAMPLES OF SIXTH COMMANDMENT PRINCIPLES.

- **Today's goal:** To look at some examples of Sixth Commandment principles, as seen in the Heidelberg Catechism – like we did with the previous five commandments.
  - ✓ This catechism has two questions that focus on what is forbidden ("do not"), followed by one question that focuses on what is required ("do").
  - ✓ This will give us an idea of the *range* of issues related to the Sixth Commandment.
  - ✓ *As always, we will see what Scripture has to say, because that is our ultimate authority.*
- **Long-term goal:** Having recognized the scope of this commandment, we will be able to recognize other related concepts, as we find them in our own reading of the Bible.

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### Q. What is God's will for you in the sixth commandment?

A. I am not to belittle, hate, insult, or kill my neighbor—  
not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly  
not by actual deeds—  
and I am not to be party to this in others; ...

Two issues are involved here:

- ① The catechism recognizes the wide range of ways that this commandment can be violated.
  - Some ways are more visible than others.
  - Some ways cause more harm than others.
- ② We are not to violate this command *ourselves*, nor are we to do things that enable *others* to violate it.
  - Encouraging others to sin makes us guilty, as though we were the ones doing it.

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What does Scripture say? (① Focusing on: The wide range of ways that people commit this sin.)

- Scripture contains many passages that prohibit tearing down or destroying people by means of *word* or *deed*. Even the *desire* for such things to happen is sin.

#### EXAMPLES related to violating this commandment:

- Actual bloodshed is forbidden – Genesis 9:6; death penalty – Numbers 35:16-18, 21, 31, 33.
- Jesus includes anger, as well as belittling or insulting language – Matthew 5:21-22.
- Hatred is an expression of murder – 1 John 3:15; hatred is forbidden – Leviticus 19:17.
- Evil attitudes; evil talk – Ephesians 4:31; Galatians 5:15.
- It is also possible to *passively* violate this commandment (not mentioned here, but mentioned in a different catechism).

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#### PASSIVE VIOLATION of this commandment:

- Endangering innocent people by *not* doing what is necessary to preserve life, *even though you know the need* (or else you closed your eyes to the need) – Matthew 25:42-43; James 2:15-16; Proverbs 24:11-12.

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 take Me in, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.

Matthew 25:42-43 (BSB)

What does Scripture say? (② Focusing on: Participation with others, or encouraging others to commit this sin.)

- Do not join with others, in order to do this – Proverbs 1:10-16.
- Most Scripture passages warn us against sharing in the sins of others for *any* type of sin (general statements, not just related to this specific commandment) – 1 Timothy 5:22; Psalm 1:1; etc.

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rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge.

- No revenge. God says that this is *his* job. But even the *desire* for revenge leaves us guilty (= a sin of the heart).

What does Scripture say?

Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written: "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord."

Romans 12:19 (BSB); based on Deuteronomy 32:35.

- Don't do it – Leviticus 19:18.
- Things that often lead to a desire for revenge must be dealt with *before* it reaches that point! Anger and an unforgiving spirit are two examples – Ephesians 4:26; Matthew 18:35.

Just as God alone has the right to decide when people are to die, so also, he has the right to decide when vengeance should take place. In both cases, it is sin for us to take matters into our own hands.

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I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either.

- Here we turn our focus to *self* – ways in which we can destroy ourselves. We might immediately think of suicide; but it includes much more. As a basic principle, this would include many of the destructive practices that plague society today.
- In some matters, we cannot make categorical statements. We need to know the context... as well as the "boundaries" that Scripture might give for an activity. Some things might be acceptable in moderation, but sinful if done in excess.
- An important issue has to do with the concept of *recklessly* endangering one's self. Because of the *curse* of sin, *everything* in life can potentially involve risk and danger, loss of health, or even death. But do we deliberately take *foolish* risks?
- There is also the matter of values. *Spiritual* well-being takes precedence over *physical* well-being. Some people try to use this commandment to promote health, food or vitamin fads; but that is not the focus of this commandment!

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### What does Scripture say?

- Regarding suicide:
  - ✓ Some people may focus on verses such as the situation when Paul and Silas tell the Philippian jailer to *not* kill himself (Acts 16:28). Others (probably more often) focus on the fact that Scripture consistently depicts suicide in a negative light.
  - ✓ Ultimately, the fact that it is an *unauthorized killing* is the reason that it is sin. It is a direct violation of the Sixth Commandment in its most extreme form. God reserves for himself the right to decide when we are to die; and choosing to make that decision ourself is like "playing God."
  - ✓ At the same time, a willingness to die *in place of* someone else, or because of faithfulness to God, can be a praiseworthy act – 1 John 3:16; Romans 5:7; 9:3; Revelation 12:11.

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13 (BSB)

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- Regarding taking *foolish* (potentially fatal) risks:
  - ✓ Some risk is necessary; some is by choice – and sometimes even an expression of love. But this is different from foolish and unnecessary risk.

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who have risked their lives for me.

Romans 16:3-4a (BSB)

- ✓ Don't take foolish risks and expect God to protect you! Satan tried to get Jesus to do this – Matthew 4:5-7! Jesus' response:

Jesus replied, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Matthew 4:7 (BSB)

- A profligate lifestyle, or *any* type of excess might also fit into this category (especially when you consider the *eternal* outcome). So also the preoccupation with the cares (or even the *good* things) of this present world (especially when they take priority over a focus on God) – Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 6:31, 34; Luke 8:14; Isaiah 5:12.

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### Prevention of murder is also why government is armed with the sword.

- The difference between murder and capital punishment is the difference between unauthorized and authorized killing. God has authorized – in fact, *commanded* – that murderers (people who deliberately commit unauthorized killing) are to be put to death.

Whoever sheds the blood of man,  
by man his blood will be shed;  
for in His own image  
God has made mankind.

Genesis 9:6 (BSB)

[The ruler] is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not carry the sword in vain. He is God's servant, an agent of retribution to the wrongdoer.

Romans 13:4 (BSB)

(See also Exodus 21:14 for an Old Testament example of this principle.)

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### Q. Does this commandment refer only to murder?

A. By forbidding murder God teaches us that he hates the root of murder: envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness.

In God's sight all such are disguised forms of murder.

- Here, the catechism points out an issue that we've already looked at: a recognition that the commandment represents a *category* of instructions (commands and prohibitions) all related to the ultimate expression of "murder."

### What does Scripture say?

- (We've already looked at this issue.)
- Hatred – 1 John 2:9-11; 3:15; Leviticus 19:17; anger and belittling/insulting language – Matthew 5:21-22; revenge – Leviticus 19:18; evil attitudes and talk – Ephesians 4:31; Galatians 5:15. Many of the Bible's lists of sins include such attitudes and actions – Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 1:29-31; etc.

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### Q. Is it enough then that we do not murder our neighbor in any such way?

A. No. By condemning envy, hatred, and anger God wants us to love our neighbors as ourselves, ...

- The phrase "murder... in any such way" points to the previous question, which refers to "non-physical" forms of killing. *All* of these are expressions of "murder," though not all cause the person to become dead.
- In answering this question, our focus changes from the "negative" expressions of this command to the "positive" ones. This "do not" command is an expression of "love" – which is a "do" command!

### What does Scripture say?

- The basic command is "love your neighbor as yourself" – Matthew 22:39; follow the "golden rule" – Matthew 7:12; "be devoted to each other in brotherly love" – Romans 12:10.
- These statements also apply to many other commandments.

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In everything, then, do to others as you would have them do to you. For this is the essence of the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 7:12 (BSB)

... to be patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly toward them, ...

- The catechism's answer continues by giving examples of how this "love" is to be expressed. First, a focus on our *attitude*:

### What does Scripture say?

- The "Beatitudes" (or "blessings") in Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" describe the basic attitude that a "Jesus follower" is to have. Many of these characteristics have an impact on the way we treat others – Matthew 5:3-12.
- ✓ The attitude described here is made possible by the *grace* of God; and when it is present, it affects how we think and live.

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- Here are some other passages that point out examples of these attitudes. All of these characteristics build up people, instead of tearing them down:
  - ✓ Mercy – Luke 6:36.
  - ✓ Honor (which is the focus of the Fifth Commandment) – Romans 12:10b.
  - ✓ A desire to live at peace with others – Romans 12:18. (If it doesn't happen, don't let it be *your* fault!)
  - ✓ Carrying each other's burdens; endeavoring to restore someone who is caught in a sin – Galatians 6:1-2.
  - ✓ Humble, gentle, patient, forbearing – Ephesians 4:2.
  - ✓ Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience – Colossians 3:12.
  - ✓ Living in harmony with others; having sympathy and compassion, love and humility – 1 Peter 3:8.

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... to protect them from harm as much as we can, and to do good even to our enemies.

- Now a focus on our actions:

#### What does Scripture say?

- The basic issue that should influence our conduct:

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:21 (BSB)

- We could also consider Jesus' example – loving (and even dying for) those who hated him. *His love affected his actions.*

But God proves His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8 (BSB)

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- Here are some passages that give us examples of these types of actions. All of them build up people – including enemies – instead of tearing them down:
  - ✓ Praying for them – Matthew 5:44-45.
  - ✓ Food and drink, *when applicable* – Romans 12:20; Proverbs 25:21. (There are situations where doing this would be wrong, and would only encourage sin – 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13.)
  - ✓ The Old Testament contains instructions related to helping an enemy and protecting his possessions – such as, Exodus 23:4-5.
  - ✓ Defending those who are experiencing injustice, or even being sentenced to death unjustly – Psalm 82:3-4; Proverbs 24:11-12. (Careful!... some people today use such passages in an attempt to *thwart* justice!)
  - ✓ Applied to husbands and wives – Ephesians 5:22-33.
  - ✓ Paul and Silas spoke up to prevent the Philippian jailer from killing himself – Acts 16:28.

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#### Some final comments related to injustice and the work of God.

- We've seen what this commandment requires. But we also know that people at all levels of society tend to violate it in one way or another.
- When the government fails to fulfil its obligation to put murderers to death, or to punish other serious violations of this command, it is not our job to take the matter into our own hands. God will make things right at the Day of Justice; and neither the guilty person, nor those who promote evil in government, will escape.
- Regardless of what the world does (whether they do it as individuals or as government), our job is to follow Jesus and to do what is good and righteous in God's sight. God can use the world's *wrong* actions to accomplish *good* in us. He can use *all things* to develop Christian character and spiritual growth in his people.

And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28 (BSB)

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## OUR MISSION:

★ **Live according to the Sixth Commandment and all that it signifies!** ★

There are so many other passages (both "positive" and "negative") that illustrate the basic principle that is represented by the command, "do not murder."

What we have seen should be sufficient to teach us the types of attitudes and actions that will promote God-honoring love – a love that builds-up others and doesn't tear them down.

By doing these things, we will be doing what is meant when God tells us to "do not murder."

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## Credits

### SCRIPTURE

- Scriptures marked "BSB" – Taken from The Holy Bible, Berean Standard Bible, BSB; Public Domain (CC BY NC ND). <https://bereanbible.com/>

The CATECHISMS (in modern English, accessed 9/16/25:

- Heidelberg – <https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/HeidelbergCatechism.pdf>.
- Westminster (larger) – [https://www.cityreformed.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/wlc\\_in\\_modern\\_english.pdf](https://www.cityreformed.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/wlc_in_modern_english.pdf).

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