

# Love Life!

## THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We are digging into the Ten Commandments this summer, and today we come half-way through.

Remember God gave the Commandments right after He rescued the People of Israel out of slavery. They were nobodies! Slaves. But God chose them, and rescued them with powerful plagues. The first stop out of Egypt was a mountain where God gave them a new identity. God made them a new and different kind of people. They were to live centered around the true God, practice justice, and care for the poor, the weak, the marginalized. So, God gave the people these 10 Commandments in love to make them a new nation, with a new identity, with a new good way of living, and dedicated to God.

Not only the people back then, but the Commandments were given in love by God to us, to protect us.

Last week, we turned the corner from the first 3 Commandments that are all about loving God. The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment begins to give us God's recipe for loving other people. That love for others, we discovered last week, begins with honoring your father and your mother. We discovered that if we can learn honor and respect in the home, then that gets translated into all of our relationships with all people.

Today's Commandment, the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment, is a hard one for us to understand, because we tend to see some inconsistencies in this one.

So, imagine for a moment that you were one of the people 3500 years ago who God rescued out of Egypt. Please just go with it – imagine you were one of the People of Israel. You once were a slave. God led you and your family out of Egypt, into new freedom. And God says you're not supposed to take a life. But when you left

Egypt and came to the Red Sea, God parted the waters and you went through on dry ground. The Egyptians went into the sea bed after you, and God caused the waters to crash over them. They all died. **If God says you're not supposed to take a life, then why did God kill all the Egyptian Army?**

How about when the Amalekites attacked? God gave the command to attack them, and the Israelites killed hundreds of them. **Why did God command the killing of whole cities of people and entire nations?**

Do you see the inconsistencies? Which is it? Are we not supposed to take a life? Or is it OK to take a life? How would you answer this question?

If we really want to answer this question, we have to look at the value that God puts on life and God's attitude about life, and how we should have that same value and that same attitude about life. **There are three big truths that we can pull out of this commandment. One, all life is a gift. Two, all life is sacred. And finally, all life deserves to be protected.**

First let's begin with the fact that all life is a gift. It's God's gift to us. It's God who creates all life, and He gives life to us.

Psalm 139 does a great job of expressing this for us. Let's take a look at Psalm 139, we'll start at verse 13.

**<sup>13</sup> For you [God] formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.**

**<sup>14</sup> I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.**

**Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well.**

**<sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.**

**<sup>16</sup> Your eyes saw my unformed substance;  
in your book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them.**

**17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!**

**18 If I would count them, they are more than the sand.**

Psalm 139:13-18a

This is a prayer to God, and the writer is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, when he says, ***“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.”*** Psalm 139:13

I love the word choice and the phraseology. “You knitted me together in my mother's womb.” God intentionally, carefully put you together to be the special person that you are. God was there when you were made. That sequence of tiny amino acid molecules that form genes on a strand of DNA that makes you you, that makes you a special and unique person – GOD chose that. God did it. Modern science is just beginning in the last 10 years to map and understand the genome, but as smart as people are, we don't have a clue what causes it to happen the way it does. But the Bible, long ago, made it clear: God does it. God put you together in your mother's womb

Then God's Word for us goes on, verse 14, ***“I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”*** Psalm 139:14

For a moment would you consider with me everything that has to be happening inside of you right now, just to be present in this moment. As you breathe in the air and your lungs take the oxygen in that goes into your bloodstream. Your blood is flowing throughout your entire body. All of your major organs are working perfectly together. Your eyes are seeing what's happening. Your ears are listening. Your nose is even picking up on the smell that's in the room. And just a few moments ago you were lifting up your voices, praising.

To get all that working together – it's all coordinated, each system in your body is so very, very complex. The complexity of the human body is astounding. And God puts you together that way. How could we not say that we are ***“Fearfully and wonderfully made”***?

One more verse -- verse 16. ***“Your eyes [God's eyes] saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the***

***days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.”***

*Psalm 139:16* So as God is putting you together in your mother's womb, He's got plans for you. He can see what's in store for you, the things that are ahead of you, the things that He wants to accomplish through you before you were even formed in your mother's womb.

It's God's gift. It's the gift of life. **God made you the person that you are. That means you're the perfect version of you.**

Think about that. You're the perfect version of you. Instead of looking around at everybody else and saying, “I wish I looked like that person. I wish I had that skill. I wish I had that talent,” God created you, you. Your hair color, your skin color, your eyes, your personality, your gifts, your skills, your talents, your height, your body build all of that.

Look at the variety of God's creation just here in this room! And each one of you is the perfect version of you, just the way God wants you to be. That's His gift.

We have to start with the fact that life itself is God's gift to us. Because life itself is a gift, there's a nuance to this command that isn't part of any of the other commands. There is a finality to breaking this commandment. To state the obvious, **there is a finality to ending a life.** If you end a life there's finality in that, but that's different than all the other commands. You could make restitution if you stole something. Broken relationships can be put back together. Apologies can be offered. But once the life is taken, there's no going back.

Think of a person on the news who has lost a loved one in a tragic way. They come out of the courtroom. The verdict has just been handed down: “Guilty.” News reporters always do the same thing. They shove the camera and the microphone in front of their face and say, “So what are you feeling right now?” People in that spot say a lot of different things. Some of them say justice has been served. Others say they can now finally have closure. But they all have one thing in common. They all say, “It won't bring my loved one back. It won't bring them back.” Whether it was a drunk driver or whether it was a drive by shooting, Daddy's not walking

through the door tonight. Our daughter's not gonna be calling home. There's finality to breaking this Commandment.

So, life is God's gift. And life is also sacred. All life is sacred. God gives us this gift, He puts you together, makes you a unique person and He says we are to hold this life sacred. But I have to wonder, do we?

As a society, have we become numb? Have we become numb to death? **Have we become numb to the sanctity of life?** Go home and turn on your television set. You won't watch it for an hour without seeing death in one form or another. It's going to be on a TV show, or it's going to be in a movie. Or worse yet, it's live on the news, because now we watch wars in real time, seeing people die in front of our eyes. We've got people pulling out their cell phones and capturing it on video so they can post it on the Internet. And then it goes viral as millions and millions of people watch a person die. Have we become numb to the reality of life and death?

We have video games where the whole purpose of the game is to see how many people you can kill. Video games now are so graphic in nature and they're so realistic in how they look. Have we become numb to life and death?

Are we numb to the fact that over 3/4 of a million lives die before they take a breath? In our country, in a year over 750,000 lives die without ever taking a breath. But we're numb to it.

The sin of abortion is not new. Historical records from 3,500 years ago report methods for inducing an abortion. The reasons for abortion are probably not that much different between the Egyptians 1,500 years before Jesus or us Americans 2,000 years after. The literature from Planned Parenthood states a number of reasons why they think abortion is a good thing: women should have control over their bodies, not all can afford a child, the fetus isn't a human, and girls who conceive through rape or incest shouldn't have to carry a reminder of their terrible assault. I can't deny that the last point is a tough one. However, the babies conceived through horrific crime are still "fearfully and wonderfully" put together in the womb to be a unique person. Even these children are incredible blessings to the

mothers who recognize that the baby can't be punished for the sins of the father.

We hear in the news frequently this year that some candidates for office are called “a threat to democracy.” That phrase, “a threat to democracy” can mean a bunch of things depending on who says it. Often what the speaker means is that the candidate they want to smear is against abortion. The speaker thinks democracy is making it legal to kill children for any reason, at any time before birth. **God, however, says that abortion is wrong, regardless of the circumstances surrounding the pregnancy.** Abortion is the murder of a human being. And our **silence when confronted by this barbaric practice is also murder.**

For every abortion, there are two victims. There's the life that's lost, and there's what I call the silent victim. The silent victim is the woman. And maybe it's not true in all cases. The mother has to live with regret and remorse and depression. Study after study shows the adverse effects on women, both physically and mentally. But they have to remain silent, because in our society we've become numb to it, and we don't talk about it. The result is these hurting mothers never hear of God's love and forgiveness and grace. God's love and forgiveness and grace is for all people regardless of the nature of the sin.

We've become so numb to life and death that now we talk about quality of life. Once we reach a point where the quality isn't quite what we wanted, we'll just end it. We'll just call it quits. Don't misunderstand me: I'm not talking about when your loved one is terminally ill and you make the gut wrenching decision to pull them off of life support and let nature take its course. Let natural death come, and the person dies and goes to heaven. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about causing someone to die. Making a choice to actively kill yourself or someone else.

***“Man who is born of a woman  
is few of days and full of trouble.  
<sup>2</sup> He comes out like a flower and withers;  
he flees like a shadow and continues not.***

***<sup>5</sup> Since his days are determined,  
and the number of his months is with you,  
and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass ....”***

*Job 14:1,2,5*

We're told in Job 14 that our days and months are appointed by God. God says, while you were still in the womb. He laid out all of your days. **He decides when we live and when we die. He also promises there's not a disease we'll endure or a disability we'll receive that can separate us from Him.** God uses every condition, every illness, every death of His faithful followers for His glory and our good. **It's murder to shorten the days He's appointed for us, whether it's through drugs which hasten death, through our hand or the hand of a physician.**

Sometimes we don't understand the circumstances. Sometimes we don't like the quality of life. Sometimes we can't see a future. Yet, Life is a gift, and life is precious, sacred.

So, life is to be protected. All life is to be protected. This is where we finally get back to that starting question about inconsistency. You remember the question. It's that if all life is to be protected, then why is the Old Testament filled with all kinds of examples of capital punishment? It's filled with all kinds of wars and people dying on the battlefield at God's command. So how does that square up?

For us to get an answer, we have to dig deep into one word of this Commandment itself -- the one word that says do not "murder." Do not "murder." We have to go back to the Hebrew language which the Old Testament was written in. And in Hebrew there are actually 8 words to describe death or killing. The word that God used in this command is never used in a legal or military way. Never used in a legal way as far as a capital punishment, or in a military way as far as a soldier taking the life of the enemy. That's why the proper translation is do not murder.

The old King James version is wrong when it says "Thou shalt not kill." The word God used here has a different connotation. It **means we're not to take a life illegally.** We're not to take a life

unlawfully. And there's a difference. Because sometimes, **sometimes you have to take a life to save a life.** You have to take a life to protect a life.

The soldier who's out on the battlefield; he or she is protecting their life, protecting the lives of the fellow soldiers, and protecting our lives as they defend our country. Yes, they may be called upon to take a life, but they're taking a life to protect a life. That is not murder which this Commandment forbids.

The police officer who's out on the street may be called upon to take a life, but they do so to protect the lives of others.

You could be attacked in your home and you may be called upon to take the life of someone else, but you do so to protect yourself and to protect your family.

That's the difference. You don't take the life illegally or unlawfully. And when it comes down to capital punishment, it doesn't matter which way you fall on that. There are differing opinions for it or against it. The only thing that I need to say today is you can't use the 5th commandment if you're against it, because the Commandment is not speaking to punishment being doled out by a society for a crime.

***“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*** *Matthew 20:28*

So sometimes you have to take a life to protect a life. The greatest example of this? Is Jesus himself! Jesus gave up his life to protect your life. Listen to his very own words, Matthew Chapter 20 ***“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*** To give his life as a ransom, as the payment price. For many; not for a few, but for everyone.

Jesus gave up His life to protect your life. Without Jesus, friends, we're condemned to eternal death in hell because of our sinfulness. Because of your separation from God, you've been condemned to an eternal separation from God. But Jesus stepped into your place. He gave His life to protect your life. Jesus stepped in, and He took your sin.



So whatever you may be regretting this morning, whatever remorse you may have in your heart, whatever guilt you may be feeling, I'm here to tell you that Jesus gave His life for that. So that you could be forgiven, so that you could be given new life, a new life here in this world, but also an eternal life with Him. You have a God who loves you that much.

He is the God who's willing to lay down his life to protect your life. You see, in God's eyes. He gives us this commandment to provide and protect for us. We understand that when we know that life is a gift. Life is sacred. And life is to be protected. Amen.