

## The Sixth Commandment | Deuteronomy 5:6, 17

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery ...  
**You shall not unlawfully kill.**”

Today's Objective: to grow in understanding and delighting in what the Bible teaches regarding the sixth commandment and the opportunities we have for living out that teaching; to illustrate how we can interpret and apply any OT law to new-covenant Christians in view of Jesus's fulfillment of all OT Law

### Today's Plan:

#### 1. In its whole-Bible context, what does God prohibit and require in the sixth commandment? And why? (pp. 2–3)

We honor God, the only one with authority to give and take life:

- Prohibits (a) unlawfully killing an imager bearer and (b) unrighteous anger and envy toward an image bearer in attitude or action
- Requires self-sacrificially loving image bearers in attitude and action, including by (a) taking initiative to protect human life, (b) immediately pursuing reconciliation with a believer at odds, (c) leaving all vengeance to God, (d) blessing your enemies, and (e) extending tangible care to vulnerable believers

#### 2. In what sense does Jesus “fulfill” the sixth commandment? And, so what? (pg. 4)

- Embodiment
- Redemption
- Empowerment

#### 3. What might it look like practically for sisters of Independent Presbyterian to make progress together in living out the law of Christ relating to the sixth commandment? And what one, concrete step will you take today to this end? (pg. 5)

*We want to be women who are making progress in hearing, doing, and retelling God's Word.*

*Jesus's call that we make disciples includes that we teach those we disciple to observe everything that he commands! (Matt 28:20)*

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Commandments one–five mostly focus on conduct directly relating to loving God, whereas commandments six–ten focus on **conduct directly relating to loving one's neighbor**, though flowing from one's love of God.

**Romans 13:9–10** | Paul writes, “For the commandments, ‘*You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,*’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ Love does not wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

**In its whole-Bible context, what does God prohibit and require in the sixth commandment? And why?**

Some ethical instruction preceding the sixth commandment:

*Consequence for Cain’s murder of Abel:* hard labor and exile

*Consequence for unlawful killing of human being after the flood:* God will require reckoning from every beast and human being that unlawfully kills a human being.

Unlike some other ancient law codes, OT does not assign different consequences for unlawfully killing persons based on gender, status, ethnicity.

Gen 9:5 And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

“Whoever sheds the blood of man,  
by man shall his blood be shed,  
for God made man in his own image.”

The sixth commandment’s rationale is rooted in **God’s unique prerogatives as Creator and Redeemer.**

**1. PROHIBITS unlawfully killing an image bearer** (that is, killing a person without God’s authorization)

The word “unlawfully kill” in Deut 5:17 (Exod 20:13) is used in OT over 40 times in various forms. It is never used to describe slaying of animals or any other form of life (such as plants), only of human beings. The Law acknowledges several categories of lawful killing of human beings (that is, killing that is divinely authorized), such as in just warfare.

- **Intentional** unlawful killing of human being (that is, **voluntary manslaughter**/murder)
  - **Deut 22:26** (uses same verb as Deut 5:17) | a man who sexually assaults a betrothed woman where she could not be rescued incurs the death penalty, “For this case is like that of a man attacking and murdering his neighbor” (compare Numbers 35:16–19; Exod 21:12–14; Lev 24:17)
  - *Consequence for murder in Mosaic Law:* death penalty when guilt legally established [two/three witnesses; Num 35:30–31; Deut 19:11–12]; cursed when murder committed in secret (Deut 27:24)

- **Unintentional** unlawful killing of human being (that is, **involuntary manslaughter**—through culpable action/inaction toward someone that put their life at risk, including negligence; also through accident) [“one who unlawfully kills without intent” is one of most common uses of the word from Deut 5:17]

- **Deut 19:4–6** (uses same word as Deut 5:17) | “This is the provision for the manslayer, who by fleeing there may save his life. If anyone kills his neighbor unintentionally without having hated him in the past—<sup>s</sup>as when someone goes into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down a tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities and live, <sup>e</sup>lest the avenger of blood in hot anger pursue the manslayer and overtake him, because the way is long, and strike him fatally, though the man did not deserve to die, since he had not hated his neighbor in the past. (So, consider your neighbor’s safety as you handle and keep up your tools! This law also protects the manslayer’s life from the deceased’s family member)
- *Consequences for involuntary manslaughter in Mosaic Law:* flee to refuge city or face deceased’s family

**Deut 22:8** | When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet [a wall] for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it. (*Proactivity required!*)

**Deut 24:6** | No one shall take a mill or an upper millstone in pledge, for that would be taking a life in pledge. (*The Law prohibits debt collection in a manner that risks poor person’s life*)

**Deut 24:7** | If a man is found stealing one of his brothers of the people of Israel, and if he treats him as a slave or sells him, then that thief shall die. (*The Law’s “eye for an eye” principle implies that human-stealing and enslaving among Israel is akin to unlawful killing, in that a human life put at risk*)

**Deut 24:16** | Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin.

OT Law **REQUIRES** taking initiative to protect human life, not least for vulnerable persons

Case law (“if/when ... then”) establishes principles that are to be applied in analogous situations in the same redemptive era.

**2. PROHIBITS unrighteous anger and envy toward an image bearer in attitude or action—by denigrating, quarreling with, unlawfully judging, or hating an image bearer, especially believers**

- **Genesis 4** (Cain & Abel) illustrates close relationship of murder and rage: murder *flows from* envious anger
  - Consider that Moses unlawfully killed and tried to conceal an Egyptian taskmaster in angry defense
  - Consider the envy/greed that motivated David to take Bathsheba and then have Uriah killed (2 Samuel 11) and Ahab/Jezebel to have Naboth killed (1 Kings 21)
- **Matthew 5:21–22** | <sup>21</sup>Jesus, correcting misunderstandings of OT teaching, expounds its true teaching, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ <sup>22</sup>But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother or sister [lit. says to his brother “Raca”] will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.” (*Jesus articulates and applies the OT principle that murder is rooted in anger and anchors that principle’s authority in himself!*)
- **James 4:1–2, 11–12** | What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? <sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. ... Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. The one who speaks against a brother or sister or judges his brother or sister, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. <sup>12</sup>There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor? (*So, a requirement involves practicing self-control regarding our unrighteous passions about people.*)
- **James 3:9–10** | <sup>9</sup>With [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. <sup>10</sup>From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, these things ought not to be so. (*We have no prerogative/authority to curse image bearers whom God has made.*)

**3. REQUIRES immediate pursuit of reconciliation among believers at odds, even if it means postponing one’s participation in a worship service, and leaving all vengeance to God**

*Implication:* forgiving one another, as Christ forgave us, and trusting God’s promise to judge all iniquity

- **Matthew 5:23–26** | Jesus continues expounding the sixth commandment and Jewish tradition about it: “<sup>23</sup>So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup>Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him/her to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. <sup>26</sup>Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.”
- **Romans 12:14,19** | <sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ... <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’

**4. REQUIRES self-sacrificial love in attitude and action for image bearers, not least one’s enemies and vulnerable believers**

*For “enemies,” see Romans 12:14 immediately above.*

- **1 John 3:11–18** | <sup>11</sup>For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. <sup>12</sup>We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous. <sup>13</sup>Do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. <sup>14</sup>We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers and sisters. Whoever does not love abides in death. <sup>15</sup>Everyone who hates his brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. <sup>16</sup>By this we know love, that [Jesus] laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup>But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother or sister in need, yet closes his heart against him or her, how does God’s love abide in him or her? <sup>18</sup> Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (*Sacrificial love is illustrated in sharing one’s material provisions; opposite of greed!*)

## In what sense does Jesus “fulfill” the sixth commandment? And, so what?

Scripture testifies that Jesus fulfills OT Law and indicates that all OT Law must now be interpreted in view of his person and work.

**Matthew 5:17** | “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”<sup>1</sup>

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- **Embodiment** | Jesus embodies the sixth commandment by obeying and teaching its prohibitions/requirements to their fullest extent and by bringing to pass the kingdom to which it points.

Jesus’s authoritative teaching relating to the sixth commandment makes plain its **full meaning** along the trajectory that the sixth commandment and its applications have always moved.

Moreover, ever since God’s first utterance of the sixth commandment, the law has **pointed forward** to the person and work of Jesus Christ, along with the law’s other purposes. Christ’s work to which the sixth commandment points includes his **inaugurating the kingdom of heaven**, in which new-covenant image bearers experience *in part* Christ’s righteous reign on earth as it is in heaven and will experience *in full* when Christ ushers in the new heaven and new earth.

- **Redemption** | Jesus forgives sixth-commandment breakers who repent and believe by establishing a new covenant through his voluntarily submission to being maligned and murdered for believers’ sake, as their atoning substitute. He thus conquered death and raised to life those who believe, whom he will raise imperishable on the last day.

**Luke 23:32–38** | <sup>32</sup>Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. <sup>33</sup>And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>34</sup>And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments. <sup>35</sup>And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!” <sup>36</sup>The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine <sup>37</sup>and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” <sup>38</sup>There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.” (*See also Acts 3:15*)

**1 Corinthians 15:49** | Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust [Adam], we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven [Jesus Christ].

- **Empowerment** | By his Spirit, the exalted Christ grants resurrection power to those raised to life in him so that they will follow in his footsteps, including by obeying and teaching his law relating to the sixth commandment until he returns.

**Colossians 3:1–4** | <sup>1</sup>If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup>For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (*Resurrection life: already in part, not yet in full*)

**2 Corinthians 3:18** | And we all [i.e., every believer], with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (*Redeemed image bearers will be glorified like Christ, the Image*)

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<sup>1</sup>Scholars debate the meaning of “fulfill” in Matt 5:17. Carson writes of Matt 5:17–20 that “[h]ere Jesus presents himself as the eschatological goal of the OT and thereby its sole authoritative interpreter, the one through whom alone the OT finds its valid continuity and significance”; D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *Matthew and Mark*, vol. 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, eds. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 144.

