

“The Easiest Commandment to Keep?”

Exodus 20:13

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What kind of person are you; are you a life-giver or a life taker?

Your words and actions – do they give life or kill it?

Even your thoughts and certainly your conversations – do they enliven and revitalize or do they deplete and cause life to wither?

God is in the business of giving life.

Do you want to be part of God’s life-giving work in the world?

Do you want to participate in the redeeming, restoring work of God, in the lives of others?

When I think of the Bible’s descriptions of life, at its fullest, as it is meant to be and will be, I am skeptical but attracted.

My skepticism comes because God’s picture of the future sometime seems impossible, especially when I know how deeply flawed we all are and how far short life in the present fall.

But I am attracted when I think of what God says is possible fully in the future, but even in part now: Revelation 21:3-4 “Now (thinking of the life to come) the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

800 years earlier the same amazing future is described:

Isaiah 11:6-9 “The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.

ISA 11:7 The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

ISA 11:8 The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.

ISA 11:9 They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 66:20-23 “Never again will there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days...
(My people) will build houses and dwell in them;
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit...
They will not toil in vain
or bear children doomed to misfortune;
for they will be a people blessed by the LORD,
they and their descendants with them.”

The picture God paints is what we imagine the Garden of Eden to
have been like.

Work and relationships are as they were meant to be.

Nature and humanity live in harmony.

God is with people and we with each other in ways
that bring joy and meaning.

I don't want to leave the picture too quickly because that vision of the
future is what gives the present its meaning.

We anticipate a future when animosity, coveting, anger, cruelty
and hatred are gone.

Absent also are hunger, loneliness, pain, heartache and loss.

Now consider this, as sons and daughters of God, we have been
given the privilege of not only experiencing some of that in our own
lives, here and now, but also of being the means whereby others may
experience it now in part and later in whole.

That's why I asked if you are a life-giver or a life-taker?

I see that “life-giving” when I watch and hear one of you respond to
insult or attack by genuinely feeling and showing compassion to the
attacker.

Love in the face of hostility upsets the natural order of things.
 Kindness throws a monkey wrench into the gears of the normal.
 The whole system of attack and counter-attack grinds to a halt when someone refuses to retaliate.
 New possibilities emerge – a seed of life is planted where pieces of death seemed inevitable.

I see life planted when hostility is responded to with a sincere smile.
 I see the enemy of our souls confused and frustrated when we respond to injustice with genuine forgiveness.

God's children are called to spend their days imitating their Father, giving life.

As I said, God is in the business of life.

He is even now in the very act of redeeming his world and restoring us to the life he intended.

His goal for us is real life and for eternity.

And that life is not just mere existence (the ability to breath and move) but a life that is filled with the joy, security, significance and love found in a relationship with God and each other.

Imagine the best day of your life thus far in relationship with God and others and then multiply that experience a thousand fold.

He has called us not only to experience that life but to be the means of others experiencing it as well.

So again I ask, do you bring life to relationships or death?

That brings us to the 6th Commandment, found in Exodus 20:13, "You shall not murder."

Those words are so stark, so blunt, as to be almost crass.

They would shock most of us if we thought they were directed at us personally.

Imagine your father, or a spouse, looking at you as you walked from the house in the morning, saying seriously, "Don't kill anyone today."

We'd probably be insulted after being shocked.

But the command **is** there and it is for **God's** people, for us.

The sheer simplicity of it is notable.

It is easily remembered and it is clear.

God doesn't use convoluted language to make his point; and we can't miss the point – "You shall not murder!"

We might think of this as the easiest of all commandments to keep.

On our Commandment keeping list, we check it off so easily.

Coveting, serving other gods in my life, and even bearing false witness, those I ponder to consider if I am guilty, but murder? Nope, haven't killed anyone!"

But oh, the 6th Commandment is so much more.

I want to suggest that this commandment may be one of the most difficult to keep.

The Bible calls us to think of this commandment at three levels:

1. The **physical** act of murdering another.
2. The **"heart" act** of harboring resentment toward another.
3. The **God-enabled act** of loving our enemy.

As to the physical act of murder, the second sin recorded in the Bible is murder.

The first was turning against God's will and the second quickly ran to the ultimate conclusion of refusing God – death.

After Adam and Eve rebelled against God, their son killed his brother.

God created life and humanity immediately set out to destroy it.

Much of human history looks like humanity's attempts at killing itself.

We live in a murderous world.

People kill people.

We read or hear of it nearly every day.

It becomes so routine that unless it affects someone close to us we barely give it attention – we’ve grown to expect it.

“That’s life!” we say – what an ironic reaction!

It’s not life; it’s death; it’s murder.

Carol Kent recently wrote a book entitled When I Lay My Isaac Down. Many of us have read it.

Carol’s young, intelligent, middle-class, Christian, military academy trained son murdered his wife’s ex-husband.

We like to think, “I’d never murder anyone.”

Carol’s son thought the same.

But taking someone else’s life by our own hand is not the only way we physically murder.

Defective construction and machines,
defective drugs and automobiles,
pollution,
exploitation of the poor,
alcohol and drugs,
murder the body.

There is also murder by willful negligence or omission:

It is murderous when decisions by company leaders knowingly and willfully put workers or consumers at risk.

For example, just because the result is long after the decision doesn’t make cigarette producers and distributors any less guilty.

Even killing in the name of national security is murder when it is actually because of national pride or worse yet, greed.

I do not believe war is always wrong but oh how we must search our hearts to know our motives.

And so God commands, “You shall not murder.”

Most of us know that the well-known King James translation of this verse and the most popular expression of it is, “You shall not kill.”

There are at least three different Hebrew words translated “kill.”

Two such words are used hundreds of times in the OT but one of them, the one used here in Exodus 20 is used only a few times and means “murder.”

“*Rasah* is the specific Hebrew word for a range of what we may call “personal” killings, from manslaughter to premeditated murder.”

(Zondervan Expository Dictionary)

When referring to the 6th commandment the NT uses a **Greek** word that likewise means murder.

Why is God so opposed to murder?

The answer to that may seem so obvious to you that it is hardly worth mentioning.

Our rationale is something like Tevya’s in “Fiddler on the Roof” when he reasoned that if we continue taking an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, fairly soon the whole world will be blind and toothless.

But God’s rationale is infinitely more significant than that.

First of all, God is the sovereign Lord of life who **alone** has the authority to give it and take it away.

God created **all** life including plants and animals.

J. Douma wrote, “Plant and animal life exists first of all for the glory of God, and only then for human benefit.” (Douma 208)

We can kill plants and animals not just because we can or because we are higher up the “food chain” but because God granted the permission in Genesis 1:29-30 (plants) and Genesis 9:3 (animals).

We can take plants and animals for food not because it is just “natural” but because their Creator has allowed it.

(Douma, 207)

You can see where that takes us; if we are to respect plants and animals as created by God then much more must we respect human beings created by God.

Only with God's permission can we take life lawfully.

Genesis 9:5 says, "From each man...I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man."

To take the life of another unlawfully is **to rob God** of what is his.

Secondly God is opposed to murder because human beings are made in the image of God. (Horton, *The Law of Perfect Freedom*, 151)

Contrary to the way we talk about unborn infants or even very sick old people, humanness is not defined by viability, it is defined by the imago Dei – the image of God.

God said it so clearly in Genesis 9:5-6 "From each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man.

"Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed;
for in the image of God
has God made man.

Human beings bear the image of God.

To murder a human being is an offense against the person of God!

Imagine someone assaulting or even insulting your son or daughter and you get some idea of the offense – only infinitely more so in God's case.

The 6th Commandment is not built on a humanistic basis but a biblical one – we are created in God's image and we exist for God's glory.

(Douma, 214)

And so the prohibition is clear and concise – "You shall not murder!"

But you know that taking the physical life is not all God means.

Some time ago I was accused of something very serious of which I was not guilty.

The accusation was leveled against me by someone with much more power than I have and thus I was powerless to correct the injustice.

In my hurt and then anger I found myself thinking about how I could secretly retaliate and inflict some damage to the person's reputation. I didn't only want justice; I wanted revenge.

In that, I realize quickly my own propensity to murder.

One man wrote, "Revenge is not just driven by the desire to restore justice but reflects the disordered state of...the human heart." (Wannenwetsch in Bratten and Seitz, I am the Lord Your God, 154)

Jesus said in Matthew 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is **angry** with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca, ' is answerable to the Sanhedrin... Anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."

Jesus is not here arguing with the 6th Commandment; he arguing that our interpretation of it doesn't go far enough.

We knew we weren't supposed to murder but Jesus says it goes much deeper than that – we aren't even supposed to carry anger toward another.

Lest we misunderstand how serious Jesus is about this, he uses the same phrase to note the same consequence of both murder and anger – they are both "subject to judgment".

We don't believe that do we?

In our thinking, we have created a hierarchy of expected consequences; some sins are clearly more wrong (for example, murder) but others are not so bad (for example, anger).

But Jesus says our anger may be as murder.

But before talking about the comparison, first let **his judgment on anger** sink in!

He said, "I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment."

?Anger is subject to God's judgment?

Now **fear** can serve an important function in our lives.

It is a feeling that wells up within us when something or someone threatens us.

But **anger** usually rises when there is **a threat to my will**; something or someone is getting in the way of what I want.

It is what we DO with that anger that may become the problem.

If we indulge it, it grows.

It's like fertilizing a tomato plant.

We may not act on it immediately but we nurture it to grow within.

The word "Angry" that Jesus uses is an orgy of feeling, a temporary madness.

It is interesting that we speak of anger as being "mad" at someone.

And the word carries the idea of a continuing attitude: "is being angry" "bears anger" "carries anger" or is "nursing a grudge", a continuing anger, a prolonged, carried around anger.

Fredrick Dale Bruner wrote, "It is this attitude of 'carried anger' that Jesus confronts with judgment. This attitude must go. And this attitude is not just an attitude or an inner matter, an emotion that is not yet a deed; this 'carrying around' of anger presupposes a **decision** to carry it, and such a decision constitutes a deed, a decision for a way to live." (Bruner 175)

Anger can be almost totally hidden as in a slow-burning resentment.

Or it can be very visible in an all-out search for ways to get back, to inflict harm, at least emotional harm.

Just watch older children to see it in its rawest forms.

The only difference between them and us is that some of us have learned a sophisticated anger.

Many of us restrain ourselves from physically harming another and with self-control maybe even restrain ourselves from saying anything to harm another. **But what is within our hearts?**

We take pride in our non-retaliation and regard our hostile feelings as legitimate.

I wouldn't send them a letter-bomb (I'm not a murderer!) but I'll never speak to them again.

Oh so quickly, Jesus' interpretation of the 6th commandment cuts to the core, revealing our sinfulness.

Dallas Willard wrote: "All our mental and emotional resources are marshaled to nurture and tend the anger... Energy is dedicated to keeping it alive; we constantly remind ourselves of how wrongly we have been treated. And when it is allowed to govern our actions...its evil is quickly multiplied in heart-rending consequences and in the replication of anger and rage in the hearts and bodies of everyone it touches." (Willard, Divine Conspiracy, 150)

And Jesus goes on to drive home his point in the rest of verse 22:

Matthew 5:22b "Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."

Like most kids I was so woodenly literal in my understanding of Scripture that as a child I thought if I called my brother a "fool" I would go to hell.

I thought there was something inherent in the word "fool" itself that meant you "didn't pass go and didn't collect \$200" but went straight to eternal jail.

We aren't even certain what the word "Raca" means except that in context it is derisive.

Together with the word "fool" it indicates an insulting contempt for another person.

The problem is not so much in the word as the heart.
The words of contempt only express the boiling over
of our hearts.

Jesus' interpretation of the law goes beyond protecting physical life, it goes **to protecting the person.**

God is seriously opposed to words and even thoughts that demean a human being – demean the image of God.

John Calvin wrote, "Put on all the airs you want to. Even though your hate may be hidden and you don't show the slightest sign of ill will and you hide your own eyes against it, don't think that God consequently has his eyes closed too." (Paraphrased from Calvin, Sermons on the Ten Commandments, 159)

Does this mean that if I harbor anger toward someone – I am going to hell?

Without intervention we would!

That is how serious this sin is.

It is wholly inconsistent with a kingdom lifestyle.

Nothing but the death of Jesus is sufficient to mitigate the divine penalty against that sin.

Don't make the sins Christ died for so abstract as to say the "sins of the world" without also making it very personal – my sins, my sin of anger toward (and fill in the name).

If what Jesus said is true, then his words drive us to despair of ourselves both for our liability to judgment and our helplessness to be different.

And it is this understanding of my sin that drives me to grace.

I stand forgiven not because I deserve it but because Jesus died in my place.

I am called to a new way of treating others, by the same grace shown to me.

And Jesus' Spirit promises to empower me to want to and to, in fact, forgive.

Philippians 2:12-13 “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

And so by God’s grace working in us we choose to forgive instead of resenting.

Crying out for God’s help, we make the choice.

And we keep making the choice and act out that choice in refusing to **think** what we used to think and refusing to **say** what we used to say.

But the Commandment does not end there.

The Westminster Larger Catechism rightly says, “Where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded.” (Q99)

The 6th Commandment not only calls us to **not take** life but to **give life**.

We are **not only** spare our enemies the worst **but** we are to give them the best. (paraphrasing J. vanBrugen in Douma, 232)

The Bible says it this way: Leviticus 19:17-18

‘Do not hate your brother in your heart... Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge... but **love** your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.’

And in the NT, Romans 12:17-20 “Do not repay anyone evil for evil... Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: **"If your enemy is hungry, feed him..."** Active love!

It is not enough to say “no” to physical murder and to say “no” to verbal or attitudinal murder.

We must say “yes” to also loving our enemies.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:43-47 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you

love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?"

Martin Luther wrote, "The (6th) commandment is violated not only when we do evil but also when we have the opportunity to do good to our neighbors...but fail to do so. If you send a naked person away when you could clothe him, you have let him freeze to death. If you see anyone who is suffering from hunger and do not feed her, you have let her starve to death etc... It will be of no help for you to use the excuse that you did not assist their deaths by word or deed, for you withheld your love from them and robbed them of the kindness by means of which their lives might have been saved. Therefore God rightly calls all persons murderers who do not offer counsel or assistance to those in need and peril of body and life." (Luther in Brown, 263)

This is too much! Can this be done? Is God serious?

- Not actually kill him? That I can refrain from.
- Refuse to harbor resentment against him? That's hard but by God's grace maybe I can.
- But actively love him? You must be kidding!

John Calvin wrote: "Say that your enemy does not deserve even your least effort for **his sake**. But for the sake of the image of God, which recommends him to you, he is worthy of your giving yourself and all your possessions. Assuredly there is but one way in which to achieve what is not merely difficult but utterly against human nature: to love those who hate us, to repay their evil deeds with benefits, to return blessings for reproaches. It is that we remember not to consider men's evil intentions, but to look upon the image of God in them..." (Calvin in Horton, The Law of Perfect Freedom, 175)

It starts with a decision – Am I willing to be a life giver or will I remain, in my heart, a life-taker?

God has called us to be life givers in our hearts, in our speech and in our choices to actively love.

And he has given us his Spirit to empower us to change, to choose life, to live life in our hearts and our actions.

Will you and I let go of our so-called rights and resentments and choose to be life **givers**?

Remember the promise of God in Philippians 2:12-13 “Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

“You shall not murder.”

Other notes and quotes:

“How can I enrich and deepen the quality of life around me, not only my own, but the life of my neighbor and... even to those who have lost hope of life.” (Palmer, *Old Law, New Law*, 97)

The Hebrew word used in Exodus 20:13 means “an act of killing, premeditated or not, related to vengeance or not, that violates the standard of living Yahweh expects of those who have given themselves to him.” (Durham, *Exodus*, 293)

Another Hebrew word for killing is Harag: killing as a fact of life.

The word *harag*, though one of several used for "to kill," is significant in that it is usually used of the violent killing of people by other people. It is used of Cain's killing of Abel ([Ge 4:25](#)), of Moses' killing of an Egyptian slavemaster ([Ex 2:14](#)), of Saul's **murder** of a family of priests ([1 Sa 22:21](#)), of the killing of the false prophets of Baal at Elijah's behest ([1 Ki 19:1](#)), and of the Jews' killing of their enemies in Esther's day ([Est 9:6, 10, 12](#)). It is used of Jezebel's killing of Yahweh's prophets ([1 Ki 18:13](#)) and of God's killing of the firstborn of Egypt in the culminating judgment on that people who held Israel in slavery ([Ex 13:15](#)).

This brief survey shows that the word is used of unjustified **murder** and of what might be considered justified killings, and it is even used of divine judgments. (Zondervan Expository Dictionary)

The Hebrew word *Rasah* used in v13 is used over 40 times in the OT. Another Hebrew word meaning to “kill, slay, destroy, is used over 160 times and still another translated “cause to die, or kill” is used over 200 times. A thorough study of the usage of the word used in Exodus 20:13 indicates that it clearly means to “murder.” (Durham, 292)

Rasah: manslaughter and **murder.** In the OT, *rasah* is the only uniquely Hebrew term for killing; it alone has no cognate (similar word/concept) in contemporary societies. Thus, this is a particularly important concept to explore in developing our own attitudes and convictions.

Rasah is the specific Hebrew word for a range of what we may call "personal" killings, from manslaughter to premeditated **murder**. This word may be used of assassination ([2 Ki 6:32](#)) and revenge killings ([Nu 35:27, 30](#)), but it is not used of killing in war or of judicial executions.

Two contexts in which it is employed are critical on this point. First, the Ten Commandments. Here we read, "You shall not kill [*rasah*]" (Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17). What it means is, "You shall not murder" (or "You shall not kill a person")--more than simply killing. (Zondervan Expository Dictionary)

In the NT the distinctive word translated "murder" in the English versions is *phoneuo*. This word is used twelve times in the NT, including each occurrence of the commandment "Do not murder" ([where *rasah* is found in Hebrew] Mt 5:21; 19:18; Mk 10:19; Lk 18:20; Ro 13:9; Jas 2:11). The Greek noun for "murder," *phonos* (used 12 times in the NT), is found in every list where killing as murder is identified as a sin flowing from man's corrupt and evil nature (Mt 15:19; Mk 7:21; Ro 1:29; Gal 5:21). The related noun for "murderer" is *phoneus* (7 times in the NT), two of its uses being in connection with Jesus' death--once in Jesus' parabolic prediction of his own death (Mt 22:7) and once by Stephen in his accusation of the Jewish leaders responsible for Jesus' crucifixion (Ac 7:52). (Zondervan Expository Dictionary)

But be careful the word is not limited to what we call murder. A more careful translation might be "unlawfully kill."

What we call murder, voluntary manslaughter, involuntary manslaughter and even accidental death (ax head flies off and kills someone) are all called "unlawful killing" in the Bible.

The word is not used in the contexts of war or just punishment for crime.

"In short, the sixth commandment stakes out the claim of God over all life and serves notice to all human beings – but especially those who claim the biblical heritage as binding upon them – that God's claim upon life is to be given priority in the decisions taken by a community..." (W. Harrelson in Enns, Exodus, 422)

This command prohibits "Any act of violence against an individual out of hatred, anger, malice, deceit, or for personal gain, in whatever

circumstances and by whatever method, that might result in death (even if the killing was not intentional).” (Fretheim, Exodus, 233)

“The basis of the command is that all life belongs to God. The divine intention in creation is that no life be taken. Life is thus not for human beings to do with as they will; they are not God... Human beings are never to kill on their own authority; they are only agents of God.”

(Freitheim, Exodus, 233)

Human life is not the goal; we exist to serve God and others. “Living is not life’s greatest good.” We must not absolutize human life, as if nothing can trump life. God trumps life and sometimes for his glory life is taken. Life is sacred in that God gave it, not that it is the highest value. (Idea from Douma, Ten Commandments, 213).

Euthanasia:

When the society deems it best and intentionally kills the person.

When the person deems it best and chooses death.

The first of those is deemed wrong by most (except in cases of abortion of infanticide).

The second is deemed increasingly okay because the act is self-determined. And self-determination is considered by many to be the highest value.

First of all no one is free of influence from others so that it is nigh impossible to be self-determining.

But much more importantly for the Christian is that we live and die unto the Lord, not ourselves. We belong to him and he alone has the right to make such determinations.

But we do allow that there is a great deal of difference between terminating life and terminating treatment.

Suicide: The difference between it and euthanasia is that in suicide the person gets no help from anyone else.

Compassion for the person who struggles with such pain that they would want to take their own life, but not condoning the act.

“Suicide... is the refusal to take an interest in existence... The man who kills a man kills a man. The man who kills himself, kills all men... The thief compliments the things he steals, if not the owner of them. Bu the suicide insults everything on earth by not stealing it.”
(Muggeridge in Palmer, 98)

“If in act you perpetrate, if in endeavor you plot, if in wish and design you conceive what is adverse to another's safety, you have the guilt of murder.” Calvin, Institutes, 2-8-40)

Matthew 25:

Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

MT 25:37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

MT 25:40 “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’

MT 25:41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

MT 25:44 “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

MT 25:45 “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

MT 25:46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Heidelberg Catechism

Q. What does God require in the sixth commandment?

Answer: That neither in thoughts, nor words, nor gestures, much less in deeds, I dishonour, hate, wound, or kill my neighbour, by myself or by another: (a) but that I lay aside all desire of revenge: (b) also, that I hurt not myself, nor wilfully expose myself to any danger. (c) Wherefore also the magistrate is armed with the sword, to prevent murder. (d)

Q. But this commandment seems only to speak of murder?

Answer: In forbidding murder, God teaches us, that he abhors the causes thereof, such as envy, (a) hatred, (b) anger, (c) and desire of revenge; and that he accounts all these as murder. (d)

Q. But is it enough that we do not kill any man in the manner mentioned above?

Answer: No: for when God forbids envy, hatred, and anger, he commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves; (a) to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy,

and all kindness, towards him, (b) and prevent his hurt as much as in us lies; (c) and that we do good, even to our enemies. (d)

Westminster Shorter Catechism

#68 Q: What is required in the sixth commandment?

A: The sixth commandment requireth all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life,¹ and the life of others.²

#69 Q: What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?

A: The sixth commandment forbiddeth the taking away of our own life,¹ or the life of our neighbour unjustly,² or whatsoever tendeth thereunto.³

Calvin:

In negative precepts...the opposite affirmation is also to be understood...God not only forbids us to be murderers, but also prescribes that everyone should study faithfully to defend the life of his neighbor, and practically to declare that it is dear to him.” (Calvin in

William Brown (editor) The Ten Commandments, p262)