

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the duties required of us by the sixth commandment and the definition of murder.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Which is the sixth commandment?  
A. The sixth commandment is, Thou shalt not kill.
- Q. What is required in the sixth commandment?  
A. The sixth commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.  
S.C. 67-68, L.C. 134-135, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 93

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Numbers 35:9-28

**Support Passages:** I John 3:15; Matthew 5:21-26; John 8:44; Exodus 21:22-32; Deuteronomy 22:8; Joshua 20,21

### **BIBLE STORY**

I Kings 21: The murder of Naboth.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.” (Genesis 9:6, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

The unjust taking of human life is murder and can never be recompensed because apart from an act of God the dead cannot be brought back to life. Since murder is a particularly heinous sin we must all the more keep ourselves from hatred or anything that in fact or tends toward murder.

## SUMMARY

The Authorized Version of the Bible (King James) states, "thou shalt not kill." Many have understood, therefore, that all taking of human life is prohibited, and even further in some cases that the taking of animal life is prohibited. However, the Hebrew Bible states *lo tirtsach* or "not shall you murder." It is clear that that the commandment speaks only of manslaughter from biblical use of the verb *ratsach*.<sup>1</sup>

According to these passages which deal with the establishment of the cities of refuge, intentional manslaughter (*ratsach*) is to be recompensed with the slayer's death at the hands of the "blood avenger". If the manslaughter was unintentional the slayer was to be delivered from the hands of the blood avenger and could live in a city of refuge for his own safety until the death of the incumbent high priest. Intentional homicide or murder is clearly defined here and the sixth commandment explicitly prohibits it.

Murder can, however, take other forms.<sup>2</sup> "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer..." Thus can murder or that which is tantamount to it can be done merely through the thoughts and intents of the heart. Often we get so angry with other people that we desire to murder them. This is sin because we desire to preempt the due process of the law and dispatch the object of our hatred forthwith. Not all hatred is sinful<sup>3</sup> but because this hatred intends to issue in murder it opposes the duty required by the commandment and is therefore sin.

We can cause the death of others by negligence or carelessness and thus commit murder. It is murder to cause a woman to abort her pregnancy resulting in the death of her baby.<sup>4</sup> The case law here concerns the result of careless fighting but applies to any human agency that would cause the death of an unborn child. In addition, an ox known to be dangerous, if permitted through negligence to cause the death of a human being, implicates its owner in murder. Some leniency is permitted in this latter case. It can be deemed murder to cause the death of a human being by not placing a railing about a balcony or swimming pool.<sup>5</sup>

Life is a gift of God and therefore can be taken away only by God or at His command. "In robbing man of life, you would virtually rob him of every valuable thing which life includes. It is committing against a fellow-man every species of robbery in one."<sup>6</sup> The scriptural ground for prohibiting murder is that man was made in the image of God thus we may not shed the blood of another

human being unjustly; else justice requires that our own blood be shed.<sup>7</sup> Therefore we must give great attention to our thoughts words and actions with regard to the sanctity of human life.

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers 35, Joshua 20 and 21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John 3:15, Matthew 5:21-26.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Psalm 139:21-22.

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 21:22-32.

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 22:8

<sup>6</sup> Robert L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972, p400.

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<sup>7</sup> Genesis 9:6