

Why You May Be Walking Under the Spirit of Murder and Not Know It

Growing up, you may have heard the Golden Rule, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” What you may not know is that the Golden Rule came from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:12 says, “Therefore, everything you would like men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Later, in Matthew 22:37-40, a Pharisee asks Jesus to name the greatest commandment. Jesus replied, “‘Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

We do a weekly podcast. In the one titled, “For the Love of God,” we explore how to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” looking through the lens of the first four of the Ten Commandments. Subsequently, we did a couple podcasts on “The Golden Rule,” or loving your neighbor as yourself, through the lens of the next six of the Ten Commandments.

As I prepared for those podcasts, I was impressed of the need in society today to pay particular heed to the sixth commandment of God. In this article, I extrapolate from a chapter of a book I wrote a few years ago regarding the spirit of murder. In the sixth commandment, God says, “Thou shall not murder.” Jesus taught that murder is defined more broadly than the physical taking of life. In Matthew 5:21-22, we get his fuller definition.

“You have heard that it was said by the ancients, ‘You shall not murder,’ and ‘Whoever murders shall be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be in danger of the Sanhedrin. But whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be in danger of hell fire.”

With this teaching, Jesus effectively broadened the scope of the commandment to encompass “murderous thoughts, words, deeds, anger and insults” as well as the taking of innocent life. In Jesus’ view, calling a brother “*Raca*” (“empty head” or “nitwit”) or a fool was an insult equal to physical murder. It was understood that killing the physical body was strictly prohibited by God, but it was less well known that the prohibition also extended to murderous attacks on the character and personality of someone.

Jesus taught this spiritual principle so people might be clearly instructed in the ways of God. It is possible to walk under the influence of a “spirit of murder” and yet never physically harm someone. Even Christians murder one another with their tongues and believe there is no wrongdoing. These attacks can be subtly masked under the guise of “discernment” or “sharing information for prayer purposes.” The spirit of murder can manifest itself as slander of character, ridicule, attacking dreams or demeaning aspirations, but it is usually rooted in anger or jealousy.

In all of these instances, the tongue is the primary weapon used by Satan to launch his murderous attacks, and so it is the tongue that must be subdued. It is the heart that conceives all sorts of evil, but it’s the tongue that releases the evil to defile and damage the speaker as well as the hearer. The power of the tongue to bring destruction is not to be taken lightly. James identifies the tongue as the part of the body that can do the most damage to men and can be most perverted for the purposes of hell:

And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire of hell. ... But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God... For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing... You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel" (James 3:6, 8-9, 16; 4:2, NASB).

These excerpts from the book of James place slander, jealousy, selfish ambition and murder in the same context. While James prohibits cursing a brother because he is "made in the image of God," we see the very same reference in Genesis 9:6 prohibiting murder. You must execute anyone who murders another person, for to kill a person is to kill *a living being made in God's image*. Assaults by men against one another verbally or in writing on social media, result in the "murder" of character, hopes, dreams and visions, and such attacks destroy the image of God in man as well as the quality of life that accompanies that image. This is counter to Jesus' express desire for men: "that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10b, MEV).

You Shall Not Murder

Of all the mysteries of God's creation, the greatest is the mystery of life itself. The Bible teaches that God, Whose very essence is life, formed man from the dust of the ground and imparted life to him by His divine breath. As the author of life, God reserves the right to bestow or withhold life as He pleases. Although He is responsible for all the differing life-forms in existence today, only man is created in His image and any assault upon humans is of special concern to Him.

The foundation undergirding the sixth commandment is that the *precious gift of life* springing forth from the character and nature of God is due the respect of all humanity. The prophetic writings of the Old Testament as well as the teachings of Jesus communicate God's displeasure with those who do not reverence the sanctity of life by shedding innocent blood.

We live in some tumultuous times, where there seems to be an increase of polarization and division among many. Attitudes and animosity are displayed with a lack of civility and respect even in public discourse.

Throughout our land, roots of bitterness express themselves through racism and violence. Innocent, unborn children are sacrificed on the altar of convenience through abortion. The *attitudinal actions* of murder, like slander and hatred, are rampant on the airwaves and social media, in the political arena and all around us. The key to living life well, in regard to this commandment, is to combat the spirit of murder and death with the Holy Spirit.

During the early years of the history of mankind, God established the severest penalties for murdering another human. In Genesis 9:5-6, God tells Noah (long before He gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites): "But for your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning; from every animal will I require it; of man, too, will I require a reckoning for human life, of every man for that of his fellow man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in His own image."

Although modern men (including believers) dispute the "humaneness" of capital punishment versus rehabilitation of the perpetrator, the overall implication of the Scripture is clear. The Bible teaches us that the reason for such a harsh penalty is that man was made "in the image of God." In its most basic sense, it is a strike against the holy nature of

God Himself.

The Bible explicitly identifies Satan as the source of all murder and deception. In a scathing rebuke of the religious leaders of His day, Jesus exposed the motives of those who resisted the truth, which made them so angry they began to plot Jesus' murder.

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

Satan's hatred of God is so extreme that he desires to inflict pain, suffering and death upon all mankind because they are created in the image of God. When he is able to influence a person to take the life of another human using deception, stress, greed, lust or ignorance, he has attained his twisted goal.

Jesus shed His blood in order to wash our minds, cleanse our spirits, renew our hearts and forgive our sins. Jesus said He would never turn away anyone who comes to Him, no matter how wretched their past or how hopeless their future. Jesus presents this hope to all, for all life is precious in His sight. If we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we will be redemptive in all our actions toward others and honor the life of God in all human beings. We will encourage that which is life-giving and discourage and refrain from whatever produces death. May murder be far from the heart and actions of all who name the name of Christ! {eoa}

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