



SESSION 7

DO NOT MURDER

The 2011 movie *In Time* (20th Century Fox, 2011) gives a glimpse into a bleak future where at the age of 25, a person's biological clock begins counting down. Time becomes a form of currency that people trade for goods and services. In this story, the human body never displays any form of aging, but when a person's individual clock reaches zero, they die. They refer to murder as having someone's "clock cleaned," meaning that all their time was taken from them. The film is filled with suspense as the characters in the movie battle over time, at times taking it from others.

Although we do not treat time as currency, we do speak of it as such. Time is "spent," "stolen," "invested," and "saved." And this is fitting because your life—the sum total of your time on earth—is valuable to God. Because all human life is valuable, the taking of a life in the wrong fashion has dire consequences in Scripture.

The Sixth Commandment Helps Us To Understand...

What Murder Is

This Commandment is clear and concise, leaving little room for ambiguity. Yet there are qualifications that Scripture makes elsewhere. In this case, we must examine the difference between murder and killing. Although both end with the demise of a human being, killing is governed by God's laws and the principles laid out in His Word. Murder, however, is condemned as a sin because of the motive that lies behind it and the way it disregards the inherent value of human life as created by God.

- ▶ How would you describe the difference between murder and killing? What biblical examples help illustrate the difference between murder and killing?



Deuteronomy 5:17

Do not murder.

It's almost impossible to watch the news without seeing stories of the devaluing of human life across the world. Murders happen frequently. Sometimes for power or passion. Sometimes for trivial possessions. No matter the case, it is clear from history and our own experience that we need God to reiterate something we already instinctively know to be true: human life is valuable and people should not murder.

A Matter of Motive

The Bible has much to say about counterfeits, and the New Testament is clear that there shouldn't be any doubt as to who God's children are. Those who love are born of God and know God. Those who do not love are clearly not the children of God. This has resounding implications for all who claim to be God's children.

1. We must be people who love. Love can't merely be an emotion that we feel for each other. In fact, many times we must show love before we feel love. No matter what the case, we are commanded to love. It is the attribute that separates us from the Devil's children.
2. We must encourage others toward love. How can you love a world that hates you? It takes a lot of encouragement to love people who do not love you back. It is important that we rely on and encourage the church family to love others no matter how they may treat us.
3. We are held to a different standard. 1 John 3:15 says, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer." This is harsh language coming from John, but it proves the larger point of how important it is for us to love. Anything resembling hate is the polar opposite of how we should be treating others.

It is the responsibility of all believers, as God's children, to love.

► **Having identified what murder is not, how would you define murder according to Scripture?**



What Drives It?

If killing in the context of war, capital punishment, or self-defense is permissible in the Old Testament, what, then, distinguishes murder? Murder goes deeper than the death of a human being by the hand of another human being. Murder is the crime of unlawfully killing a person—especially with malice or forethought. Murder, therefore, is distinguished from killing by the issue of motive.

► **Why does Christ place emphasis on our motives? How has the gospel changed the motives behind your actions?**

Matthew 5:21-22

You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. And whoever says to his brother, "Fool!" will be subject to the Sanhedrin. But whoever says, "You moron!" will be subject to hellfire.

Cruel Cuts

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

Trite as this phrase may be, it's simply not true, as Amanda Todd's story shows.

Amanda's story starts in her 7th grade year. In response to compliments in a video, she flashed the camera. When the photo ended up circulating the Internet, Amanda found not support but verbal abuse and bullying, whether in person or on her Facebook account. After school changes, the abuse and hazing followed her. In desperation, she attempted suicide by ingesting bleach. Her local hospital was able to

Christ goes to the root of the behavior and sees the anger behind the action. The act of murder is still subject to the punishment that we see in Genesis 9:6, yet Christ takes an extra step by declaring that the person who feels anger toward his brother will also be subject to judgment. So murder is not just about the action of killing a human being but the motive that lies behind the action as well.

▶ **What are some ways you bring your thoughts and emotions under the authority of Christ?**

▶ **Though their struggles may not be as public as Amanda Todd, how can you reach out to those people who are “being murdered” by verbal abuse in your school, church, neighborhood, or family?**

save her, but Amanda’s story, tragically, did not brighten. She remained in emotional distress, and rather than finding support in her community, the harassment grew worse. People posted on her Facebook page that she deserved it and that they hoped she was dead.

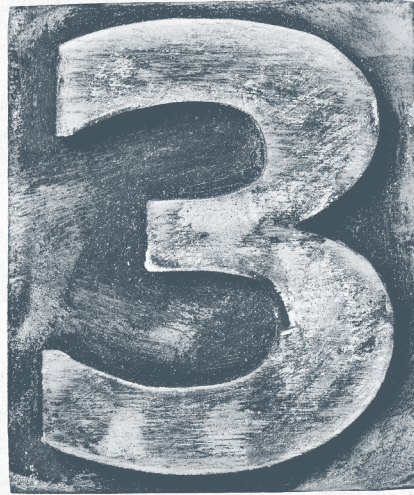
Amanda posted a video on YouTube® where she told her story via flashcards. One of her flash cards was particularly powerful and desperate: “I have nobody. I need someone.”

About a month after posting the video, Amanda Todd committed suicide. Amanda’s story is tragic on many levels. Though no one literally killed her, many people “murdered” her in the Matthew 5:21-22 sense. When she needed acceptance and love from her community, she instead found hearts full of anger and hatred; hearts full of murder. As tragic as Amanda’s death is, it reminds us of the power of a community and how all of us need to love one another as fellow image-bearers. What if one Christian had cared for Amanda Todd?

The Cure for It

Cain's works were evil. They came from an evil heart motivated by anger. We are all capable of such anger. Our sinfulness can drive us to the brink of human behavior, causing us to commit the most heinous of crimes. Just as Cain killed his brother, we are all capable of murder.

However, a murder took place years ago that resulted in the saving gift of God. Jesus was placed on a cross by His enemies. Though they intended evil, God brought about the ultimate good. We see the love of Christ in His sacrifice on the cross. He willingly laid down His life, faced His accusers as He was mocked and scorned, and endured death, only to be raised again on the third day.



1 John 3:10-15

This is how God's children—and the Devil's children—are made evident. Whoever does not do what is right is not of God, especially the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another, unlike Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's were righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. The one who does not love remains in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

- ▶ How does the attitude of Christ contrast with the attitude of Cain? How can we love others when we are tempted to become angry?

Murder on the Way to Save a Life

One recent weekday afternoon, I got a surprise call from the American Red Cross. My white blood cells were a match for a man who was critically ill in a nearby hospital, and they needed me to get to them as soon as possible. However, there was only one machine in the area that could extract my cells, and it was downtown in a nearby city.

So, I took off from work and left my desk full of tasks that would be waiting for my return. I jumped in my truck and began one of my less pleasant drives in recent memory.

Even though I left early, I still got caught in rush hour traffic. Then, things came to a standstill from a big wreck three miles ahead.

Half an hour later, I passed the wreck and continued the drive into downtown (I do not like city driving), only to miss the entrance on the first run. I had to find a place to turn around and try again. In city traffic. Not fun.

I did eventually make the appointment, but I'm afraid my heart wasn't in the best place for much of that drive. I certainly didn't make the drive with joy to help a fellow image-bearer. In fact, I had let fly a few choice words toward some other image-bearers driving (badly) alongside me.

On my way to try to save a life, I was committing spiritual murder by harboring anger and hatred toward other drivers. Jesus had worked in my heart enough that I unhesitatingly dropped everything to try to save a guy's life. But the Spirit still has work to do in my heart so that I love not just the critically ill, but the bad driver and a hundred other people who cross my path. Our love for others will show that we have indeed been given a new heart from Jesus and have passed from death to life.

The children of God are motivated and known by their love. This love can only stem from the gospel. The saving work of Christ is the only thing that can take an evil heart and cause it to be motivated by love.

► **How have your attitudes, words, or actions shown the new heart Jesus purchased?**

GOD'S STORY, YOUR STORY

This lesson points out that murder can take place within the human heart, as well as through the actual taking of a person's life. By focusing on the root issue of anger, we learn that murder is ultimately a heart issue—one capable of not only manifesting itself through the actual taking someone's life, but also through other ways intended to wound and inflict pain, such as words spoken in anger, gossip, etc.

What are various ways an angry heart manifests itself in a person's life? What do these things say about what is going on inside that person's heart?

Given that murder is ultimately a heart issue, and thus is incapable of changing through human effort, it is important that we emphasize the gospel as the only remedy that can cure the hateful heart. By focusing on the gospel, we acknowledge the sufficiency of Christ in providing for us new hearts that are now motivated by love toward God and others.

How can we use our culture's understanding that murder is wrong as a door to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with others?