

Devotional Guide Based on Themes from the Sermon

Sermon: The Sacredness of Human Life | Exodus 20:13 | October 25, 2026

Day 1: Made in His Image | Reading: Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 9:6

Before the commandment was ever given, the reason behind it was already written into creation. God did not simply make human beings and then assign them worth. He stamped his own image upon them at the moment of their making. This means that every person you encounter today carries something of the divine mark. Your worth is not measured by productivity, health, or usefulness. It is settled by the One who formed you. Rest today in the truth that your life is precious not because of what you have done, but because of who made you and whose image you bear.

Day 2: The Murder the Heart Hides | Reading: Matthew 5:21-22; 1 John 3:15

Jesus does not allow us to congratulate ourselves for keeping our hands clean. He presses the sixth commandment past the courtroom and into the hidden chambers of the heart. Anger nursed long enough becomes hatred. Hatred, Scripture says, is murder in the making. Most of us will never face a criminal charge, but all of us know what it feels like to rehearse an offense until the person who hurt us becomes something less than human in our minds. The commandment does not simply forbid the final act. It calls us to examine the roots growing quietly beneath the surface of our daily thoughts and conversations.

Day 3: Becoming a People of Life | Reading: Luke 10:30-37; James 2:14-17

The priest and the Levite did not attack the wounded man. By any legal standard, they were innocent. But Jesus does not commend their innocence. He commends the Samaritan who moved toward suffering rather than away from it. The sixth commandment has a positive dimension that is just as demanding as its prohibition. It is not enough to refrain from harming your neighbor. You are called to seek your neighbor's good. Biblical love is not passive. It crosses the road. It bandages wounds. It pays the bill. It returns to check. The commandment calls us not merely to avoid being life-takers but to become life-givers in the ordinary moments of every day.

Day 4: Justice, Mercy, and the Weight of Human Life | Reading: Romans 12:17-21; Romans 13:1-4; Ezekiel 33:11

Scripture holds two truths together without embarrassment. God authorizes governing authorities to bear the sword in the restraint and punishment of evil, and God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Justice and mercy are not enemies. They are two expressions of the same God who is both perfectly righteous and endlessly compassionate. When we think about difficult questions involving life and death, whether capital punishment, war, or the protection of the vulnerable, we must resist the temptation to choose one of these truths and discard the other. God calls us to pursue justice without hatred and to long for repentance even in the hardest cases.

Day 5: The Author of Life Who Died for the Guilty | Reading: Acts 3:14-15; Isaiah 53:4-6; Romans 12:21

The deepest irony of human sin is that creatures made in the image of God put to death the One who is himself the perfect image of God. The Author of life was murdered by the very people he came to rescue. And yet, rather than vengeance, Jesus prayed for those who crucified him. Rather than destruction, his death became the doorway to life for sinners. The cross is where we see simultaneously how seriously God takes the taking of innocent life and how relentlessly God pursues those who are guilty of it. Having received that mercy, we are called to become a people who overcome evil not with more evil, but with good.

Discussion Guide: The Sacredness of Human Life | Exodus 20:13

Key Takeaways

- 1. Human life is sacred because human beings bear the image of God.** Every person, regardless of age, ability, usefulness, or status, carries a dignity given by God at creation. This dignity is not earned and cannot be erased. The foundation for how we treat human life is not utility but the image of God stamped on every person.
- 2. The sixth commandment forbids more than the physical act of murder.** Jesus teaches that murder begins in the heart. Sinful anger, hatred, contempt, and the desire for revenge are the roots from which murder grows. The commandment reaches inward and exposes what no courtroom ever could.
- 3. The sixth commandment requires us to actively protect and preserve life.** The command is not only negative. It also carries a positive obligation to move toward others with care, compassion, and practical help. Passing by a person in need is not the same as loving them.
- 4. Scripture permits capital punishment while requiring that justice be administered carefully and impartially.** The Bible authorizes civil government to bear the sword, but the sacredness of human life must shape the entire process. Christians can affirm the principle while still demanding that it be exercised with truthfulness, due process, and humility about the possibility of human error.
- 5. Jesus perfectly fulfilled the sixth commandment and bore the violence of murder for sinners.** He gave life everywhere he went, was himself unjustly killed, and refused vengeance. His death and resurrection make it possible for people once ruled by hatred to be transformed into people who seek life, reconciliation, and mercy.

Discussion Questions

1. Before reading or hearing this sermon, how would you have summarized what the sixth commandment was about? Did anything in the sermon challenge or expand that understanding?
2. The sermon argues that human worth is not determined by intelligence, usefulness, age, or health, but by the image of God placed on every person. How does that foundation change the way we think about people who are vulnerable, dependent, or difficult to care for?
3. The sermon makes the point that life is "a gift to steward, not a gift to own." What does it practically look like to treat your own life as something that belongs to God rather than something that is entirely yours to do with as you please?
4. Jesus teaches that sinful anger puts us in the same category as murderers before God. How does that land with you? Does it feel too strong, or does it make sense given what we know about how God sees the heart?
5. The sermon mentions that we can "murder reputations with our tongues" and reduce people to categories rather than seeing them as image-bearers. Where do you see this happening most commonly in our culture? Where do you see it happening in your own life?
6. The Good Samaritan did not injure the wounded man, but the priest and Levite did not help him either. Jesus commends the one who moved toward the person in need. What is the difference between simply not harming someone and actively seeking their good? Where in your life might God be calling you from the first posture to the second?
7. The sermon addresses abortion, euthanasia, and suicide as issues that flow from the same theological foundation. How does grounding these conversations in the image of God and the sacredness of life shape the tone and content of how Christians should engage them, especially with people who disagree?
8. The sermon argues that capital punishment can be a legitimate exercise of public justice while also insisting that the sacredness of life must shape how that justice is administered. How do you hold those two convictions together? Where do you find that tension most difficult?
9. The sermon calls it "the deepest irony of human sin" that creatures made in God's image killed the one who is the perfect image of God. How does the cross reframe the way we think about guilt, justice, and mercy when it comes to the taking of human life?
10. The sermon closes by saying that having received mercy, we are to become "a people of life." What does it look like for a local church, and for this small group specifically, to be a community that reflects that description?