

“Living a Life Worthy of Your Dignity” (Exodus 20:13)

We are in the series of “The Call to Undivided Intimacy,” studying the Ten Commandments. Today we will continue to study the 6th Commandment “You shall not murder”. Last time, we studied that God is the author of life. Human lives are in God’s dominion. So to take someone’s life by force is a rebellion against God.

Today’s theme is “Living a Life Worthy of Your Dignity”. First we will look at the value of life. Then, we’ll study how our emotions cause our actions, and then how we can practice this commandment.

1. Life is priceless

Genesis 9:5-6 (NASB)

Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man’s brother I will require the life of man. ⁶ Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.

Human lives are priceless. If life is lost, it cannot be compensated for with anything else. There is nothing that is as precious as life. The only thing that has equal worth as a person’s life is a person’s life. Because of that, if a person takes the life of another, that person must be put to death. This is true for anyone’s life.

The world measures person’s worth with various criteria. Their material possessions, academic backgrounds, positions, their appearance, race, age, gender and so on. And some are treated as if they had more worth than others.

I’ve watched a movie “Saving Private Ryan.” It’s a kind of war movie. Marshall orders Ryan to be brought home in America from the war field. Miller receives orders to find Ryan and bring him back. He chooses six men and made a team. They go into the war fields to try to find him. They go through many fighting zones. They saw many people dead. Actually at the opening, in first some minutes it shows very hard fighting in very detail. Every second soldiers died. The beach was covered with dead bodies. It looks like one particular person’s life is more important than many thousands unknown people’s lives.

The world treats a particular person as if the person had more worth than others. That's how the world works. But before God, every human life has the same worth. It is priceless.

Regardless of age, race, sex, whether rich or poor, whether educated or not, and regardless of occupation, all human lives are equally priceless.

Why is human life so precious? Why does every person's life have equal value? It is because every person is made in the image of God. It is not just Christians, but all people. No matter what religion they believe, whether they are atheists or faithful Christians, every person is equally precious to God.

Every person is made in the image of God. Whether they are adults or children, men or women. It doesn't matter what kind of life they live. Whether they are in the palace, sitting on the throne, or they are in prison. Whether they are passengers of a luxury liner, drinking very expensive champagne at the gorgeous poolside, or they are drunkards on the dusty roadside, their lives have the same value. Every person is made in the image of God.

Think about two cases: A) a poor street person kills a son of a CEO of a big company, and B) a son of a CEO of a big company kills a poor street person. How would they be treated respectively? What kind of judgment would they receive? How would the world see each case? The world may treat them differently. But what does the Bible say?

Leviticus 24:17; 24

If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death.

²⁴ You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the Lord your God.

There is only one law before God. Shall foreigners be treated differently? Shall native-born enjoy special privileges? The law of God applies the same way to everyone. Why? It is because every person is made in the image of God.

All human beings are made in the image of God, and they have dignity. But the dignity was destroyed by sin. And because of sin, they no longer know they were made in the image of God. They no longer know they have dignity.

And because of sin, they can no longer recognize that other people are made in the image of God. They can no longer tell that it is wrong to destroy other person's dignity. But this doesn't change the value of human life before God. "God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son" (John3:16). So God commands us "You shall not murder."

This commandment is God's call for us to stop living in fear of each other, in hatred of each other, in anger of each other, and to start loving one another, caring for one another.

2. Emotions cause actions

What kind of emotions are aroused when we are attacked or when our belonging is taken away? What kind of emotions are aroused when we see or hear other person's dignity is attacked? We feel anger, or maybe fear.

Anger is a defense system. You're saying "No!" Anger itself is a natural feeling. God also becomes angry. I have spoken about "anger" in detail in the series "[Being Set Free](#)", so today I will not repeat about it. For details you can look at it on the Church homepage.¹

Today, I will talk about the other aspect of anger.

Anger may open a door in your soul for the devil to contact you, and you listen to him, and believe his lies.

What kind of his words we often listen to and believe when we are angry? You are not loved. No one cares about you. You are not important. You're such a miserable person. All good things will be taken away from you. No hope, no future. Look, what's going on in front of you! What's happening to you? Then, you believe his lie. And your anger is fueled more and more. You hate them, want to destroy them.

You hate a person who wronged you. You have grudges against this person, wish revenge, and wish bad things would happen to him or her. You might feel good for a while. But these are the ugly parts of your heart. By holding on to these feelings, you can only embolden and multiply these ugly parts of yours. By holding on to these feelings, you can't change what you suffered from

¹ <http://www.yangoninternationalchurch.org/being-set-free.html>

the original experience of being wronged. Instead, you will become more and more like an uglier self which you don't want to be.

We also know anger doesn't bring good effect medically either. The medical facts are that holding on to bitterness causes irritability, increases anxiety, depresses the immune system, and inflames the joints. These are medical facts.²

Then why do we still hate, hold grudges, desire revenge, or wish bad things would happen to those who wronged us? Why is it so difficult to stop this? It is because by doing this, we are filling a cavity in our heart.

Often we are upset with just a small thing, surprisingly. "I said hello to him in the morning, but he looked like ignored me. I will ignore him the next time I see him." "With special effort, I gave him a gift, but he just sent me one very short SMS for this. I will not do this again." "I gave up doing what I wanted to do and worked so hard in order to help him. He should have praised me more. I'm sure he doesn't care for me. How disgusting!" "I wish he disappeared. How good it was if he didn't exist."

By thinking like this, by imagining you are doing like this, you are filling a cavity in your heart. These thoughts degrade and deprive the worth of the person's life. Basically you are killing him slowly, silently and secretly.

"It's more convenient for me if he didn't exist." In the Bible, we see someone who actually translated this idea into action.

In 2 Samuel 11, we see this incident. One evening, King David was walking around on the roof of the palace, and from there he saw a beautiful lady. He sent someone to get her. He slept with her and she became pregnant. She had a husband. Her husband Uriah was a very faithful soldier. David thought if he had Uriah return from the battle field and let him spend night with his wife, then people don't think it strange that she is pregnant. "What a good idea!" King David had Uriah return. When he came to him, he let him eat and drink with him, and made him drunk.

But Uriah didn't go home, and slept at the entrance to the palace with other soldiers. So King David thought of another idea. If Uriah died, his wife is a widow. King redeems a poor widow of a faithful soldier. The society will see David

² Christina Hergenrader, "Love Rules: A Study of the Ten Commandments," Kindle, 2016, Page 87

as a compassionate king. And it's no wonder if she gets pregnant. All right, let's kill Uriah. If he's gone, everything will work out fine.

So David sent Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. David used his position as king and killed Uriah as he wanted.

Another example is Herod and Herodias. John the Baptist was chained in prison. It was because he pointed out Herod's wrongdoing. Herod had married Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. John pointed out that it was not lawful. Herodias got so angry against John and wanted to kill him.

One day, the opportune came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet. When the daughter of Herodias danced, she received ovation. Herod said to her, "Ask me for anything you want and I will give it to you." Herodias urged her daughter to ask for the head of John the Baptist. Herod was troubled, but for the sake of appearance before his dinner guests, he had John beheaded and gave his head to the girl. Herodias hold her grudge and took John's life. And Herod took John's life in order to save his face. (Mark 6:17-28)

We don't have that kind of authority. But what if we have? How many people could we have killed so far? How many times have you had this kind of thought? "Only if he were not here, then things would work out much better." "Oh he is so nagging. I wish he were gone."

This commandment throws light on things deep in our hearts.

3. To maintain dignity

I want to introduce one poem.

I do my thing and you do your thing.
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations,
And you are not in this world to live up to mine.
You are you, and I am I,
and if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful.
If not, it can't be helped.

"Gestalt Prayer" by Fritz Perls³

³ <http://www.gestalt.lv/gestalt-prayer/>

If we can practice what this poem is talking, there will be no troubles, we don't have to be angry, or grow timid or get sulky. We respect each other's dignity, and establish healthy boundaries.

But in reality, it doesn't go as well. So I made a new version of this poem according to our reality.

I do my thing and you do my thing.
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations,
yet you are in this world to live up to mine.
I am I, and you are for me,
and if by tomorrow you can meet my expectation, it's beautiful.
If not, it can't be forgiven.
I'll get so angry with you.

As soon as we have the idea that the other person is there to live up to our expectations, we feel annoyed against the person. As soon as we cannot acknowledge the other person's dignity, we feel angry.

One husband expected his wife to welcome him gently when he gets home after his long day. But, his wife doesn't really say anything, so he also doesn't say anything. His wife also has her say. She had a bad day. So she couldn't say anything to her husband cheerfully. But if her husband gently speaks to her showing his concern, she was going to try her best to give him her smile. But her husband doesn't say anything. She wants him to listen to what happened to her that day. But the husband is just watching TV without speaking. So she cooked meal silently. During dinner no words, no smile.

If the relationship is based on expectations and duties, there will be troubles without exception. "I want to be accepted." This is one of fundamental needs for human. And we expect something from others. This is the starting point of everything. We mark the other person and take off points and reject him or her. But we still want to be accepted and want the other person to live up to our expectations. As long as we have this kind of expectations with one another, problems will always happen. I am doing this much for you. So what's wrong if I expect you to do for me this much?

We cannot break this chain of expectations and duties until we realize that we are truly accepted, and evaluated highly, and loved with unchanging love.

It is not until we recover our dignity originally given by God that we can relate to one another as ones with dignity, not based on expectations and duties.

As we are humans, as each of us is made in the image of God, so we have dignity and worth, and we are to be respected.

That's not questionable. The question we need to think and answer every day, every moment is: How are we living our life with our dignity, worth and honor? Which is more valuable way of life: we recognize worth in people and treat them as worthy, in the way God's been doing for us? Or, we ignore the image of God in them and destroy their dignity?

"You shall not murder" means much more than the negative, keeping ourselves from physical violence. It also means that we look after the physical and spiritual well-being of our neighbor, a person who may even be an enemy.⁴

Our calling as Christians in the world is not to make sure people get the punishment they deserve, but to bring the good news, hope, and healing in the name of Jesus.⁵

We must ask this question every day. "Do my attitude and actions reflect the truth that life is sacred and precious to God and thus must be protected, encouraged, and enhanced?" In other words, "Am I a life-giver?" "Am I respecting others' dignity?" "Am I living a life worthy of my dignity?"⁶

4. To see Jesus in other people

How can we practice this commandment? There may be many things to think about, but I will talk about just one.

That is to see Jesus in others. We consciously try to look at him, find him in others. If we just see the person as usual, we can't see Jesus or notice him. But with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can see the image of God in every person. We must try to find him intentionally.

Everybody who comes into your life has worth and honor. Because every person is made in the image of God. If we try to see, we can see Jesus in others.

⁴ Michael Horton, "The Law of Perfect Freedom," Moody Publishers (Kindle version) 2004, Location 2517

⁵ Mark Mitchell, "Ten: How the Commandments Set Us Free," Kindle, 2016, Location 741

⁶ Mark, 7:47

If we can feel Jesus in the person, naturally we will relate to him as if we related to Jesus.

This doesn't mean we will become close to everyone, talk about everything with everyone, and share everything with everyone, and do everything together. It doesn't mean that. But we will see Jesus in the person, and we will relate to him in a manner worthy of his dignity. That's how we can live a life worthy of our dignity.

Mother Teresa said this, "Hungry not only for bread - but hungry for love. Naked not only for clothing - but naked of human dignity and respect. Homeless not only for want of a home of bricks - but homeless because of rejection."⁷

When do you feel the other person has acknowledged your worth? When we are recognized as being there. Then, what can we do for others? We can greet. We can give a word of appreciation. We can listen to the person. We can tell the truth honestly. Let's start from little things.

"I never look at the masses as my responsibility. I look at the individual. I can love only one person at a time. I can feed only one person at a time. Just one, one, one."⁸

Wherever we are placed, every day we live as ones made in the image of God. That is to relate to the person in front of us in a manner worthy of the person's dignity whether at home, at work, at school or at a street corner. Then the kingdom of God will be recognized in our midst (Luke 17:21). We can make new culture, overflowing love, joy, justice, hope, healing, peace. This is the life you are living, the life worthy of your dignity.

Today we studied the 6th commandment, "You shall not murder."

This commandment is God's call for every one of us to stop living in fear of each other, in hatred of each other, in anger of each other, and to start loving one another, caring for one another. This is the life we are living, the life worthy of our dignity.

It's the call to undivided intimacy.

For LifeNet groups and Personal Reflection

⁷ <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/557106>

⁸ <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/556529>

1. Think about two cases: A) a poor street person kills a son of a CEO of a big company, and B) a son of a CEO of a big company kills a poor street person. How would they be treated respectively? What kind of judgment would they receive? How would the world see each case?
2. How dose sin affect our relationships, and social systems?
3. What kind of words do you often listen to and believe when you are angry? Where do these words come from? Where are these words taking you to? Are you coming near to God or going your own way?
4. How will you live your life with your dignity, worth and honor? What kind of attitude and actions may reflect the truth that life is sacred and precious to God?