



Date: _____

Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

God's Top Ten Series, Lesson 38

Lesson Title: Never Murder

Take Home Point: Never murder.

Warm-Up:

To the Great Plains tribes of the 18th and 19th centuries, personal and tribal honor were supreme. If a wrong was committed by another, or even perceived to be committed, the usual consequence was to plan and perform an act of revenge. Of course, each act was yet one more in a cycle of violence. In the 21st century, we have a tendency to look at these historical tribes, or people groups in undeveloped parts of the world, with the perspective that "civilized" people are above that. Perhaps. But what is civilized? Today's Muslims and Hindus of India, murdering each other daily in acts of retribution? The modern cultures of the Croats and Serbians still attacking the other? The Israelis and Palestinians? Gangs in American cities? The veneer of civilization peels away quickly when hatred and vengeance are allowed to run unchecked.

Read: Exodus 20:13; Ephesians 4:32

Observation (What happened?):

What is the command of God in Exodus 20:13?

What has God done for us through Christ Jesus?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

What is murder? Why are we commanded not to do it?

What limits does Paul put on us regarding who is to receive our kindness and compassion?

Insight:

Although the law he gave to the Israelites seems harsh to our modern sensibilities, God included in it many specifics that demonstrate justice far beyond the societies of the time. For example, God understands our desire for revenge, how strong and long-lasting hatred can be. So, in Numbers 35, he outlines the requirement for cities of refuge, where those who kill another by accident can escape retribution. He did not want further bloodshed caused by reprisal for an unintentional act. God also defines the need for at least two witnesses to inflict capital punishment. Numbers 35:30 states, "Anyone who kills a person is to be put to death as a murderer only on the testimony of witnesses. But no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness." (NIV) If back then God was serious about ensuring that human emotions were kept in check by application of his holy law, how much more so now, when Christians are to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them?

Application (What does it mean to me?):

How do you show kindness and compassion to those who hate, despise, abuse, or otherwise reject you?

What power do you have to be kind and compassionate to all?