

Biblical Topics

Ten Commandments - Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

What does God forbid in the Fifth Commandment?

God forbids us to take the life of a fellow man or our own life. He is guilty of murder who wilfully exposes anyone to mortal danger, who hires a thug, accuses an innocent person of a crime for which he is put to death. We are guilty of murder when by carelessness, neglect, or bad workmanship we cause fatal accidents. We are guilty of murder when a person loses his life, because we purposely did not warn him of impending danger and did not help him to escape.

- Genesis 9:6: Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.
- Matthew 26:52: ...or all who draw the sword will die by the sword.
- Romans 13:4: For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

God forbids us to hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, that is, to do or say anything which may destroy, shorten, or embitter his life. We must not harm our neighbor in his body by hurting his feelings, causing him grief, worry, sorrow, and distress, and therefore embitter his life. Grief and worry undermines physical health.

- Romans 12:19: Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

God forbids us to bear anger and hatred in our hearts against our neighbor. Murder starts in the heart. Even the thought of killing someone, or the wish he might get hurt or harmed is a sin. That includes harboring grudges.

- Matthew 5:22: But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' (Aramiac word for "empty" and mean "empty headed.") is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.
- 1 John 3:15: Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.
- Matthew 15:19: For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.
- Ephesians 4:26: In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,
- Acts 7:54: The Jews showed anger against Stephen and this led to stoning him.

- Genesis 4:5-7: God warned Cain about his anger.

What does God require of us in the Third Commandment?

There are two things to know before going into this part of each commandment:

First, one of the best ways to move away from wrong behavior or habits is to do the very opposite actions. Each of the commandments asks the question: What does this mean? Following that question and near the end of the explanation, Luther offers positive behaviors that would aid in doing a better task of following God's direction in this commandment. Work at practicing these.

Second, right after the question comes the statement, "we should fear and love God." In the commandments to "fear God" means to "stand in awe of Him," to revere, respect, esteem, and honor Him. We are NOT to shake in our boots from fright.

God requires that we should help and befriend our neighbor in every bodily need. That means to give him what he needs or do for him what we can, as did the Good Samaritan. It means that we are a true friend, even to those who might be our enemies.

- Romans 12:20: If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.

God requires that we should be merciful, kind, and forgiving towards our neighbor. We should be kind in our words and dealings with others. We should practice patience, gentleness and not easily provoked and angered. All this we should do even though others may be gruff and insulting.

- Matthew 5:5,7,9: ⁵Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.
- Ephesians 4:32: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
- Proverbs 15:1: A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

The above information is taken from: "Luther's Small Catechism" annotated by Edward W. A. Koehler.