

## DO NOT MURDER!

Scripture used: Exodus 20:13 (KJV & NIV)

### OVERVIEW

God's Commandments to the Israelites thousands of years ago are still relevant to our daily lives. The Commandments were intended to be blessings to those who followed them. This powerful truth applies to the Commandment, "Do not murder." To understand this command, we must understand the nature of our relationship to God. We can only avoid murdering others -- in body, mind, and spirit -- by acknowledging and embracing the love that God showers on us.

### KEY POINTS

- 1) *Our journey to come to know God goes through stages.* Pastor Dan grew up in an evangelical community where he attended church four times a week. Despite this strong community, he struggled with his faith. Pastor Dan progressed through a series of attitudes in his early life that led him to embrace Jesus.
  - a. *Being afraid.* Pastor Dan's mom was very strict. Her discipline taught him the power of fear-based relationships. This was how we thought about God, whose punishments would be even worse than his mother's!
  - b. *Being confused.* The Commandments weren't the only rules he was expected to follow. The church also came up with dozens of restrictions for speech, clothes, and actions. But these seemed to be applied on a sliding scale and were not actually rooted in scripture.
  - c. *Being impressed.* The Sermon on the Mount reminded Pastor Dan that Jesus cared about more than just behavior. He wanted us to be changed on the inside.
  - d. *Being depressed.* There was no way that Pastor Dan could live up to the standards set by Jesus. He was constantly sinning and could see no way out of this trap.
  - e. *Being disillusioned.* Not only was Pastor Dan unable to avoid sin, everyone else in church seemed to be sinning too! He saw a lot of hypocrisy in the way people behaved, and started to doubt the value of church and even Christianity.
  - f. *Being renewed.* God was not going to let Pastor Dan go, though. Rereading the New Testament, he realized that Jesus was the Way-Shower. He could have a relationship with God through Jesus that was based on love, not fear.
- 2) *The attitude and the heart are what matter, not the act.* We are constantly murdering ourselves and others. In Deuteronomy 19:4 (NIV), we see how God views anger and malice as the same as the physical act of killing. It's our attitude that defines murder, which is reinforced in Matthew 5:21-22 (NIV) and 1 John 3:15 (NIV). Murdering can happen in terms of a body, a soul, and even a spirit. In fact, other people may not even be aware that we're murdering them!
- 3) *God's love is a challenge to us.* Pastor Dan never wanted to disappoint his father. He would rather have his dad yelling at him than simply shaking his head and looking sad. Pastor Dan knew at those moments that he failed to live up to the standard that his father set for him based on love, not on fear.
  - a. When we accept this love and are grateful for it, then our God can transform us as we are told in 1 John 4:10 (NIV). This love can then be used to bless those around us.
  - b. We become disciples on the day when we stand firm and secure on the rock of God's love. On that day we stop holding back and be a blessing to everyone around us as described in John 13:34 (NIV). On that day we can shout "I will love!" and mean it.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** Each of us has to personally accept Jesus in our hearts as the intercessor. He saves us from our sin through His perfect love. Where are you in the stages of the faith journey that Pastor Dan described?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** Without love, we are nothing. And yet many of us do not truly believe in our hearts that we are worthy of love. What is your answer to the all-important question, "Do I feel loved by God?"
- 3) **DO** If we are confident in the saving grace of Jesus, then we can start to extend selfless love toward others. Does that characterize your behavior? What difficult situation are you dealing with right now that is actually an opportunity to love others the same way that God is loving you?