

The Fifth Commandment: You shall not murder.

Read Matthew 5:21-26.

This commandment isn't merely about us restraining ourselves from killing people. It is more about our attitudes than just our actions. We are called to live as if no one's life is without value and no one is expendable.

Perhaps you believe that homelessness is mainly because of a person's unwillingness to put their lives together. But even then, people shouldn't be left to die from hunger or from exposure to the elements just because they are homeless.

Perhaps you believe that drug addictions and alcoholism are mainly a result of lack of will power and lack of moral integrity. But even then, we don't ignore people's suffering from addictions and we don't ignore the reality of the suffering of their loved ones because of their addictions.

We are to care for one another's wellbeing even when we don't like them, or know them personally, or even if we consider them our enemies. And being angry at someone doesn't give you license to hurt them or encourage others to hurt them. Caring for people's wellbeing is often a first step in forgiving them and being reconciled to them.

The Sixth Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.

Read Matthew 5:27-30.

Again, this commandment isn't just about refraining from having illicit sexual affairs with others. This commandment is about having a loving and helpful attitude toward other people's relationships, as well as having respect for their sexuality.

Believing someone's relationship is either sinful or immoral doesn't give you the right to try to break up their relationships or to try to convince someone else to treat that relationship with disrespect. We are to forgive their sin and help and encourage them to have more healthy relationships. For instance, you may not agree that people should live together before they are married. But instead of simply condemning them, support them in having a long-term relationship that may convince them to become legally married some day and respect them as a couple nevertheless. Or you may not agree that gay marriage is appropriate especially for Christians. But instead of simply condemning them, help them to grow in their friendship and other aspects of their relationship and not dwell on just their sexuality. Encourage them to not engage in promiscuous behavior, but to be in a committed loving and growing relationship.

Showing loving support for relationships that you don't approve of is often the first step to forgiving them. Simply judging people doesn't change their behavior, but it often drives them further away; and this is not an act of Christian love.

And this commandment is also about not allowing someone's sexuality hinder you from treating them as a gifted human being. When Jesus commands us not to lust in our hearts for our neighbor's spouse, he is not talking just about sexual feelings or desires. He is referring to a condescending attitude toward someone's sexuality that gives you permission to disrespect them and treat them as 'sub-human' or as a 'second class citizen'. You can disagree with someone's sexuality and still value the gifts of their humanity and all that they have to offer our community.

The Ten Commandments really are guidelines for us to love and forgive one another all the more.

Close with this prayer:

God of life and love, we pray for you to help us to love and fear you so may not hurt our neighbors in any way. Grant them physical well-being and give us the courage to help them in their physical need. And we pray that you may help us to love and fear you so that in matters of sex our words and conduct are pure and honorable. Help all who are married or any other important relationship grow in mutual love and respect for each other. Amen.