

Could God Convict ME of Murder?



Exodus 20:13: (NASB) *You shall not murder.*

The first four of the Ten Commandments all have to do with humanity's relationship to God. These directives came first because our relationship with God should always be the driving factor in our lives. The fifth Commandment focuses on our relationship with our parents and is fashioned after the first four, with honor and respect being paramount. *You shall not murder* is the sixth Commandment. It is the first of the Ten Commandments to focus us on our relationship with all other human beings. It is a simply-stated, emphatic directive that teaches us of the sacredness of human life and sets the stage for the rest of the Ten Commandments. This Commandment is not as simple as it sounds and its importance cannot be overstated! Further, Jesus not only taught its importance, he also dramatically expanded its meaning for his disciples. We will find *You shall not murder* to be a life-governing principle for every corner of our experiences.





How to thrive in relation to spirituality and to who God is

Exodus 20:3-8: (NASB) Selected verses:

 EPISODE 1147  *You shall have no other gods before Me*
THE LESSON:
GOD IS SOVEREIGN

 EPISODE 1147  *You shall not make for yourself an idol*
THE LESSON:
THE HONOR DUE GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IS NEVER TO BE SHARED OR DIMINISHED

 EPISODE 1136  *You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain*
THE LESSON:
WE SHOULD NEVER REPRESENT THE HOLINESS OF GOD'S NAME CARELESSLY, FOOLISHLY OR WITH ANY HINT OF IRREVERENCE

 EPISODE 1127  *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy*
THE LESSON:
WE MUST REGULARLY SET TIME ASIDE TO REVERE GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

The fifth Commandment is the first step in establishing how to thrive as a physical nation in relation to one another.



Now comes the sixth Commandment, the first and most fundamental command regarding our relationship with our entire human family:

Exodus 20:13: (NASB) ¹³You shall not **murder** <7523>.

We went from the first four Commandments dealing with our relationship with God, to the relationship with our parents as a kind of bridge to our relationship with other people, and now we proceed with how to treat the rest of the world around us.

Murder: Strong's #7523 *ratsach*; a primitive root; properly, to dash in pieces, i.e. kill (a human being), especially to murder

There are several words for kill or slay in the Old Testament. This one describes a person who takes the life of another outside the limitations of the Law and implies passion and rage behind the deed.

The Law did have exceptions for killing such as in legitimate warfare, executions for serious crimes (1 Kings 2:31-33) and killing an intruder in your home at night (Exodus 22:2-3). Curiously, killing an intruder after sunrise was illegal. Why would God allow any killing? He allows sin to run its course, and killing, unfortunately, is part of our sinful world.

Interestingly, this *You shall not murder* Commandment is the only one repeated in some form in all books of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible.

The first expression of this Commandment is after Noah and his family leave the Ark:

- 1** Genesis 9:6: (NASB) *Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.*
- 2** Exodus 20:13: (NASB) *You shall not murder.*
- 3** Leviticus 24:17: (NASB) *If a man takes the life of any human being, he shall surely be put to death.*
- 4** Numbers 35:30: (NASB) *If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death at the evidence of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.*
- 5** Deuteronomy 5:17: (NASB) *You shall not murder.*

Why is this important? It testifies to the sacredness of human life as a direct creation of God. It warns against acting upon one's own passion, rage and sense of personal retribution.

The Old Testament gives us a sense of justice, but it should not be serving our personal retribution.



SUPPORTING LIFE PRINCIPLE

The Old Testament was emphatic that human life was and is the highest of all earthly creation.

Its sanctity, therefore, needs protecting from dark, passionate and personal attacks.

God's message in the Old Testament is pretty plain: Do not mess with those who were created in His image!

**What we have seen so far seems pretty straightforward.
What did Jesus teach to deepen it?**

We might think about the standard of the Old Testament regarding murder as a definitive line in the sand. This is something you simply do not do. Once appropriately judged to be guilty of murder, the Law called for the death of the perpetrator. Along came Jesus. His teachings for his followers move that line in the sand to a more challenging position.

After the Beatitudes, Jesus clearly states the context of his next teaching. He is telling his followers: You are different; you are what the world needs to preserve godliness and to light the way back to God. This will set the context for where he is going next.

We are to be salt and light:

Matthew 5:13-16: (NASB) ¹³You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.



To be *the salt of the earth* is to be a person of exceptional character – godly character – a person who witnesses as a living sermon. That kind of character has a preserving effect, keeping things intact. It is stable and selfless. **Be the salt!**



To be *the light of the world* is to be a source of light and truth. Being a light means not only revealing what is in dark places, but also being a beacon of hope and direction. Rise above to be the example! **Be the light!**

Anger blows out the lamp of the mind. –Robert G. Ingersoll

Anger clouds our godliness.



The United States has the largest Christian population in the world with nearly 205 million Christians. If we could have 205 million people REALLY acting as *salt* and *light*, we would have less anger and violence, and fewer morality issues. It would make a real difference if all of us, regardless of country, would live up to the commitment we made to serve God through His son Jesus.



How different are we? Jesus next gives not just a comparison, but serious practical examples of what standards of godliness would look like for his disciples. Matthew 5:21-22,27-28,38-39,43-44 and other Scriptures all carry the same theme - BUILDING UPON, CORRECTING AND LIFTING the requirements of the Old Testament Law. Jesus applies these requirements with the phrase, *But I say to you.*

"But I say to you..."

- Corrected misunderstandings and misuses of the Law
- Elevated the Law to a higher standard

The Jewish leadership of the time looked for loopholes around the Law. Jesus emphasized the full expression of the Law. He magnified it. He did not challenge what the Law taught; he challenged the oral traditions of the Law that were perverting it - refuting what the scribes and Pharisees SAID the Law taught.

We have a good example of this:

Matthew 5:43,44: (NASB) ⁴³You have heard that it was said, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

The Jewish Law said to love your neighbor but it did NOT say to hate your enemy. This distortion came from the oral traditions. To paraphrase Jesus: You heard it this way, but I am telling you, that is not what it means. In fact, Christianity is going to elevate and expand upon this by having you love even your enemies.

Matthew 5:20: (NASB) ²⁰For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

You, my disciples, will need to be MORE godly than your own spiritual leaders. This is a big challenge.

After explaining what *You shall not murder* really means to the Christian, Jesus goes on to discuss adultery. These two points are consecutive in the Ten Commandments.



We will look at this as an overview and then examine the pieces more deeply:

Matthew 5:21-22: (NASB) ²¹You have heard that the ancients were told, **YOU SHALL NOT MURDER**, and Whoever commits murder shall be answerable to the court. ²²But I say to you that everyone who is **angry <3710>** with his brother shall be answerable to the court; and whoever says to his brother, You good-for-nothing, shall be answerable to the supreme court; and whoever says, You fool, shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. (Gehenna)

Angry: Strongs #3710, *orgizō*, to provoke or enrage, i.e. (passively) become exasperated:—be angry (wroth)

How did we get from, “Do not kill anybody” to now just getting angry is a sin?

Jesus takes the simple phrase from the Ten Commandments that his Jewish audience would be familiar with and explains there is more to it. Murder is not just the act of snuffing out another’s life; it includes the thoughts and judgments that can lead to the physical act. Controlling our thoughts is paramount.



What if someone really betrays me or is so horribly abusive to me that I am filled with rage and hurt? Is this sinning?

We can have justifiable anger. What is that anger pointed at? What is it looking for? What part of the experience are we focusing on?



I have been angry enough to the point where I wanted someone to get hurt. The circumstance was difficult. Several years ago, when my youngest daughter was only 15 years old, she was raped. I wanted the guy to get hurt. I did. I am a dad. I am not justifying it, but this is how I felt. I had an experience where two days after we found out, we were sitting around the kitchen table with my son, Tim. He gets a phone call and I can hear the deep voice on the line that says, “I understand you have a problem that needs fixing.” “Who is this?” The voice repeated, “I understand you have a problem that needs fixing.” I have a choice to make. I can decide to be quiet and let this unfold. Not that I wasn’t conflicted, but I looked at Tim and my words were. “Tim, call off the dogs right now. We are not going down that road. We are doing this the right way.” Tim hung up the phone. My choice did not make me less angry, but by God’s grace, it made me redirect my anger at the circumstance. It is okay to be angry but we cannot wish physical harm on another. It is not our place. Years later, my two daughters and wife talked about it on Episode 829. My daughter came through this experience as an overcomer, not just a survivor, and is a stronger person as a result.





But here anger is not a sin:

Ephesians 4:26: (NASB) Be **angry** <3710>, and yet do not sin...

This is the exact word for *anger* we just read in Matthew 5:22: *Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be answerable to the court.* How can I be angry without sinning in one circumstance, yet in another case I am angry and guilty?

It all depends on where our anger is focused. Are we focused on injury or the wrong circumstance? We can be angry at the situation hurting us, but we cannot take it out on the person.

Let's re-read and dig deeper on what Jesus said about murder:

Matthew 5:21-22: (NASB) ²¹You have heard that the ancients were told, you shall not commit murder and whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.

You have heard that the ancients were told - the people were not studying the Law for themselves. They relied on their religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees, to tell them what the Law said.

(Source: Bible Commentary by Albert Barnes) The judgment (the court): This was the tribunal that had cognizance of cases of murder, etc. It was a court that sat in each city or town, and consisted commonly of seven members. It was the lowest court among the Jews...



Deuteronomy 16:18: (NASB) You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.



"But I say to you..." ²²*But I say to you that everyone who is angry (provoked, enraged) with his brother shall be guilty before the court;... (the local, lowest court)*

We do not need to physically take the life from someone to be guilty of breaking this commandment. Just having a murderous intent in your heart will be judged. The Pharisees applied the Law to actions and not to the heart.

Matthew 15:19: (NIV) *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*

Thoughts can quickly lead to actions and need to be interrupted as soon as possible.

Did Jesus mean that every angry Christian would go before their local court? No. He meant there is a judgment involved. He used the Jewish system of courts so they could understand that those courts were set up by God. We are liable to God's judgment. God had a system for the Jewish nation and has one for us as well. If we are angry, we could be liable before "the court" of God.

Jesus identifies strong negative emotions towards someone based on a bad experience.



But when I am furious with someone, I do not want to physically kill them, I just passionately want them to see how wrong they were. If I am being honest, when I or especially my family members have been wronged I certainly am not hoping that *good* things come their way. Am I off the hook if literal murder is not in my thoughts?

Jesus used the Jewish court system to symbolically indicate the level of liability for each successively more damaging reaction.



No. This is not what Jesus is saying. We are on the hook if we are being potentially slanderous in our thoughts and words. This Commandment starts in our heads.

Matthew 5:22 (continued): (NASB) *...and whoever says to his brother, You good-for-nothing, shall be guilty before the supreme court;...*

Matthew 5:22 (continued): (KJV) *...and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council:...*

(Source: Bible Commentary by Alfred Barnes) Raca - this is a Syriac word, expressive of great contempt. It comes from a verb signifying to be empty, vain; and hence, as a word of contempt, denotes senseless, stupid, shallow-brains...

It denotes an arrogant contempt and is a degrading and disrespectful name. This word is only found once in the Bible here in Matthew 5:22. It is derived from a root word meaning “to spit.”

Spitting on someone is a disgrace. Do not be disgraceful in your words towards others.

The *council* or *supreme court* was the Great Sanhedrin that met at the Temple in Jerusalem. They would hear appeals decided in the lesser courts. Jesus went before the Sanhedrin during his trials before he was crucified. See Matthew 26:57-68.

Being angry with our brother puts us in the position of being judged by God. Being disrespectful with this spitting-type of judgment is even more serious. Jesus used the systems of the day to make his point to his audience. He quantified the seriousness of anger against our brother in terms of their own legal system. Jesus is telling us that God is watching, hearing and absorbing our thoughts and words. They mean something and we have to be careful.

Jesus was talking to the Jewish society of his day, using systems they understood to make his point. Jesus quantified the seriousness of anger and rage against your brother in terms of their legal system.

Did Jesus ever get angry? Yes, under two circumstances:

1. When he drove out the moneychangers from the Temple in Matthew 21:12,13 who **disrespected God’s house**.
2. At the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23 who **disrespected God’s word**.

His anger was focused on preserving righteousness. Jesus never expressed anger at the people who treated him poorly.





“Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple,”
by Cecco del Caravaggio,
(1589-1620)
Gemäldegalerie, Berlin

Matthew 5:22 (continued): (NASB) *...and whoever says, You fool, shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. (Gehenna)*

(Source: Bible Commentary by Albert Barnes) *Thou fool* - this term expressed more than want of wisdom. It was expressive of the highest guilt. It had been commonly used to denote those who were idolaters as in [Deuteronomy 22:21](#) and those who are guilty of great crimes as in [Joshua 7:15](#) and [Psalm 14:1](#).

We have to watch what we say, do and think because we can be guilty before God in an unholy way. Judgment belongs to God.

Gehenna was the Valley of Hinnom, a valley outside of Jerusalem where in long past generations children were sacrificed to an idolatrous god. The hideousness of these actions made the valley become a garbage dump where the dead (never live) bodies of particularly heinous criminals were thrown instead of being buried. They were guilty enough to be disgraced in both life and death. Everything thrown in was completely consumed.



For Jesus' disciples, belittling and slandering your brother is as though you ruthlessly murdered them.

(Source: Bible Commentary by David Guzik) We should emphasize that Jesus is not saying that anger is as bad as murder. It is profoundly morally confused to think that someone who shouts at another person in anger has sinned as badly as someone who murders another person in anger. Jesus emphasized that the Law condemns both, without saying that the Law says they are the same things. The laws of the people could only deal with the outward act of murder, but Jesus declared that his followers understood that God's morality addressed not only the end but also the beginning of murder.

Murder is not just the split-second act; it is the process that begins with anger. Nip that in the bud and we avoid more sin and heartache.



Here is a practical example of how to stop and regroup:

Matthew 5:23,24: (NASB) *Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.*

A paraphrase: Therefore, do NOT be content with outwardly serving God while you are not in harmony with your brother. Instead, approach him. Work to make things right, and you will be living your dedication to God instead of just making a presentation to God that looks good. It is a matter of living it, not just saying it. Our righteousness has to be better than that of the scribes and Pharisees.



SUPPORTING LIFE PRINCIPLE

Jesus' teaching was to avoid murder by living the principles of godliness in all ways at all times. Unchecked, disrespect for our brother can and will escalate. The results are disastrous as we may end up murdering their reputation in front of others.

Jesus is really teaching us to take giant steps. Do not even mentally mess with those created in God's image!

What does Jesus' teaching regarding you shall not murder mean for us in a practical sense?

It is one thing to read and think about what Jesus taught and another thing entirely to do the work. The bottom line of his teaching on murder is this: If we let a murderous attitude *begin* in our hearts and minds, we are giving ourselves permission to engage in that murder. Destroying someone's character with conclusions and words is a *serious sin*. It is murdering someone else's character.

The murder of other's characters - where does it start? It always begins with how we feel.

Anger is never without reason, but seldom with a good one. —Benjamin Franklin

Our hurt or angry feelings develop judgments that support those emotions but are often untrue or skewed. Jesus addresses this later in the Sermon on the Mount. We are going to jump down to Matthew 7. Note, this is still the Sermon on the Mount, so all of Matthew 5 and 6 come before this.

Looking at the context of the three or four verses just before Matthew 7, we find the following two points:

- Do not store up earthly treasures. We need to be focused on spiritual things.
- Do not spend your life in worry and anxiety. Let God handle things.

The next piece of context is do not judge:

Matthew 7:1-4: (NASB) *¹Do not **judge** <2919> so that you will not be **judged** <2919>.*

Judged: Strongs #2919 *krino*; properly, to distinguish, i.e. decide (mentally or judicially); by implication, to try, condemn, punish

The implication in this text is that Jesus is addressing our emotion-based judgment of others as being unfair. He is following a pattern here. Previously in Matthew 6, Jesus talked about how our worry and anxiety has skewed our judgement of earthly versus spiritual things. We tend to lead with emotion, so our judgments of one another are also skewed.

²*For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.*

The equation is simple:



We are determining how God is going to look at us by how we judge others!

Jesus now reveals that the kind of judgment we make is based on what we are looking for:

³*Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?* ⁴*Or how can you say to your brother, Let me take the speck out of your eye, and behold, the log is in your own eye?*

This sums up the origin of slander - evil judgments from a contaminated heart. We cannot really see the *speck* in someone else's eye unless we are looking for it.



Long ago I worked in a cabinet and countertop shop. There was a lot of sawdust, so inevitably someone would get something in their eye. It's a tiny speck, but it's painful and you can't work because your eye is hurting and tearing. I became the guy who took the specks out of people's eyes. The bottom of one of those tear-out cardboard matches works pretty well in removing specks from eyes! I would sit the person under a light and then try to find the speck, wash the eye out and go back to work. It was a project to find the speck - if we are looking for the speck in our brother's eye, we are really searching for it.

The principle of this speck-and-log story is that we are setting ourselves up for our own judgment. Knowing that God will use the same standard on us as we use for our brother, will we still call him *Raca*? Will we still be careless, irreverent and disrespectful? Think about social media. When we troll people and leave anonymous comments, they are not anonymous to God Almighty!

Jesus is not only asking for us to have self-control so we do not physically or verbally lash out and do something stupid, but we even have to control our thoughts. This is an exceptionally high standard! The Law was already so impossible to keep that only Jesus himself could do it. Now it seems Jesus is making it harder! Why is this?



Remember, the Old Testament *you shall not murder* is being elevated to the higher status of what it means to be Jesus' disciple. He is talking to *us*. This means we represent JESUS. Therefore we, as his disciples, need to act like HIM. This is why the standard is so high - he is telling us we are his representatives to the world around us. This is sobering. We are representing the son of God. Our careless words can be murderous.

Instead of owing others nitpicking and harsh judgment, we should focus on giving them something else:

Romans 13:8,10: (NASB) ⁸*Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.* ¹⁰*Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

Who is my neighbor? Everyone. Even the people I do not like, even those I am angry at. Love does not permit this anger. If we think about how we are representing Jesus, we cannot show anger to this person when we know Jesus would show love.



This is not easy. How do we get to such a point? Know what to do, decide to do it and then grow into doing it:

1 Peter 2:1-2: (NASB) ¹*Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,* ²*like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,*

Long for the pure milk of the word - when a newborn is hungry, his whole little body longs for and cries for the milk.

As we mature in our representation of Jesus, our spiritually-based actions will dictate our words and even our emotions.

For example, parents need to deal with their own anger. Sometimes our children need firmness. When this happens, we need to express that firmness with compassion, grace and love. If we express that firmness with anger, the child picks up on the anger and feels like they are being rejected. It is much better they see the firmness with compassion and realize that though the parent is firm, they are being so because they will never give up on them. If we pursue this course of action, we will eventually change our mindset and our emotions will react more with compassion than with anger.



Ephesians 4:25-27,29-32: (NASB) ²⁵Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. ²⁶be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not give the devil an opportunity.

It is okay to be angry, but it is not okay to sin because of it. Speak to each other from the perspective of being eternally connected; *for we are members of one another*. This crushes Satan's hold.

Do not give the devil an opportunity - if we are so focused on someone who has upset us that we cannot think of anything else, and we are calling them names and stewing over what they did every day, this anger has become our god, our idol. All of our attention is now focused on that person. That is why our anger at the person instead of at the circumstance becomes so sinful. Now we have idolized revenge, jealousy, frustration or hurt. We will go into idolatry further in the next segment.

We can and *must* decide what we want our communication to look like, sound like and accomplish. Will it *murder* or will it *nourish*?

²⁹Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

No unwholesome word comes out of your mouth. Paul verifies what Jesus taught. We want to build up and bless those who hear us because this is our mission in Christ.

³⁰Do not grieve the holy spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

We are grieving God by not doing the right thing with our words; we are going against the working of His holy spirit within us.

³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and **slander <988>** be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Slander: Strongs #988 *blasphemia*; vilification (especially against God)

Vilification means abusively disparaging speech or writing. We need to put away this and all of these evil things far from our minds and our hearts. Be *kind, tenderhearted, forgiving*. This is what we have been given; now we need to give it back to others even if they do not seem to deserve it at that moment. These beautiful verses give us a picture of what our life should look like as a Christian.



SUPPORTING LIFE PRINCIPLE

Every aspect of our discipleship depends on our daily decisions to live in accordance with godliness and the influence of God's spirit. Our vilification or support of others is the fruitage of these daily decisions.



**We have seen what the transformation of thoughts and words looks like.
Now, how do we do it?**

It can be difficult to conclude we are wrong - and even murderous - in our thoughts and words. This is hard to accept in ourselves. Once we have the humility and courage to recognize this, our next step is to have the humility and courage to change. While this is scary, it is achieved by taking small, definitive, spiritually-based steps.

Let's start with what we know:

James 1:17-18: (NASB) ¹⁷Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. ¹⁸In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.



Observations we need to know:

- Every good and perfect thing comes from above.
- God brought us forth by the word of Truth.
- Why? So that we can be the first fruits, a first result of the good outcome of God's plan.

This is what the call of Christianity is about. These are things we know.

Knowing these things focuses us on attaining and maintaining a willingness to listen:

James 1:19-20: (NASB) ¹⁹This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

This is exactly what Jesus was saying in Matthew 5. We cannot say these wrongful things about our brother because we are liable before God. As a Christian, when we get angry and want to tell someone off, are we achieving the righteousness of God or are we grieving the holy spirit?

We know our anger does not bring God's righteousness, so we need to:

1. SLOW OUR MINDS AND EMOTIONS DOWN enough to hear what the other is saying and detect what the other is feeling.
2. Then we must *stay* in that listening mode - do not talk, do not escalate, just listen with appreciative inquiry!

We must strive to put things into their appropriate perspective!

Now it comes down to what we do with what we hear:

James 1:21: (NASB) *Therefore, (because you know and are listening) putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.*

Remember, we were *brought forth by the word of truth*. Take the word that brought us forth, *receive* it and implant it in our hearts. If we are listening and repeating God's words, we have no room for our own. If we are a conduit for God's words, there will not be space for our judgments, vitriol and anger. It gets drowned out by something bigger and stronger.



Replace what we were listening to, which was sinful, with a new source of input, which is heavenly. Choose your source! Let's change the phrase, "Garbage in, garbage out" to:



The proof is evident in how we transform:

James 1:22: (NASB) *But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.*

The Pharisees were hearers and repeaters of the word, not "do-ers" of the word. Jesus changed that. When Jesus was gathering his proposed disciples, he did not say, "Come, listen to me." He said, "Come, follow me." A follower needs to deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23). To follow is an action. Be *doers of the word*. If we are doers, there is no time for murderous talk; it becomes irrelevant, unimportant and foolish. It takes a lot of work, but Jesus was very specific. We can hurt others by what we say *to* them and what we say *about* them. We do not want to do that, as we will be liable to judgment. We need to treat others with respect - that is what Jesus did.

The James 1 Scriptures taught us how to be transformed. Once transformed, we need to work to stay that way.

These next verses are a foundation level gut check to see if we are really living that transformation:

Colossians 3:5-6: (NASB) ⁵*Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.*

All those things listed amount to idolatry, which stems from the heart.



In the Colossians text above, we choose to not follow those old lusts of the heart, by being godly.

The choice to be godly comes from the heart. Idolatry also comes from the heart. Do we have both of these in our heart? Which will we choose?

⁶*For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,*

Be very clear - idolatry brings God's anger - always has and always will!

What do we choose? Godliness in our hearts or idolatry?

Colossians 3:7-8: (NASB) ⁷*and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.* ⁸*But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, **slander <988>**, and abusive speech from your mouth.*



Once upon a time, we were like this. It was one thing when we did not know better, but now we *cannot be like this*. Jesus charged us with representing him. That word for *slander*, vilification, is in this verse again. To overcome these things requires daily reminders that while this is what we used to be, this is *not* what we are now.

Remembering how we agreed to represent Jesus might help us with rage or having a mean spirit. Because of this agreement, we need to ask why we are having these ungodly reactions. Ask with honesty, sincerity and prayer, and perhaps with spiritual fellowship so that we can get to the bottom of why we are acting this way. Make changes so we do not become murderous in our thoughts, speech or actions to avoid judgment upon ourselves in return.

Jesus charged us with representing him. This requires daily renewal. Be willing to ask yourself, do I really reject these things?

Colossians 3:9-10: (NASB) ⁹*Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,* ¹⁰*and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.*

Do not lie to each other or to ourselves. Do not neglect the truth of the difficulties we face. We can only *put on our new self* if we have a heart longing for God and His blessing. If we do long for God and His blessing, but have issues with our thoughts and our words, bring this before God. We might get spiritual help from those we trust spiritually and then work on it - become accountable. This gut check can bring us from idolatrous and murderous behavior to godly words and most importantly - godly thoughts.

One final reminder that we do NOT sit in the seat of judgment. That is for God. For we who are imperfect, such a seat can lead to murder:

Romans 14:10-13: (NASB) ¹⁰*But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.* ¹¹*For it is written, as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.* ¹²*So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.* ¹³*Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.*



Here is a huge paradigm shift - we go from being judgmental to opening the way for others so they can have the most direct road to *their own* spirituality. Jesus was emphatic about *thou shall not murder* in the New Testament sense. We are putting a stumbling block in front of those we demean. We should be *taking away* stumbling blocks from them instead of contributing to their tripping, if we are supposed to be *salt and light* in this world.

Now when we go back to the words of Jesus in Matthew 5, we see the necessity of these harsh words. If we are a representation of Jesus, *Christ in you the hope of glory*, then we need to open the way, the truth and the goodness to everybody - friend or enemy. Jesus told us to *love your enemies, pray for those who spitefully use you* in Luke 6:28. It is imperative that our words and thoughts keep that “open door” prospect before us as we are going through our everyday lives. We cannot be murderers with our thoughts, words or actions!



SUPPORTING LIFE PRINCIPLE

Jesus raised the bar considerably concerning the "You shall not murder" Commandment. Let us see, embrace and act on the wisdom in his higher standard, knowing it makes us strive to become truly Christlike in our everyday lives.

We have a choice. We always have a choice. We can look at our traumas and difficulties in our lives, our being mistreated, and can come up with all kinds of excuses to say, "I want to be able to say... or do... I have a right to say... and they did this..." Here is the bottom line: Jesus said, *Love one another as I have loved you.*

Jesus died for every single sinner out there; should we not do the same? Should we not stop our words from harming anyone? Our words and our actions need to follow Jesus' example. We are his ambassadors here and now. Let's act like it!

*So, could God convict me of murder?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on March 15, 2021
Ep. 1169: Is Adultery Really That Wrong?

Bonus Material and Study Questions

The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it. —Henry David Thoreau

James puts our intellect on notice with his unmistakable observations regarding our words. The third chapter in his epistle is teaching us to be tongue-tied!



First point: No one is exempt from speaking poisonous words:

James 3:1-10: (NASB) ¹Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. ²For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.



T H I N K !

Second point: Do not be deceived by the subtlety and seeming insignificance of the tongue:

³Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. ⁴Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. ⁵So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

T H I N K !

Third point: The subtlety is the very thing that wreaks havoc! Think of Satan's simple and even soothing words *thou shalt not surely die*. What sounds inviting actually invites destruction:

⁶And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by *hell*. (Gehenna)

T H I N K !

Fourth point: Left to the whim of human thinking and emotion, the tongue is murderous:

⁷For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. ⁸But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.

T H I N K !

Fifth point: Control our words so that we do not bless the Creator and curse His creation, causing a great contradiction in our lives:

⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

Jesus addresses the power of words right after he had just spoken about blaspheming the holy spirit:

Matthew 12:33-35: (NASB) ³³Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. ³⁵The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil.

Just a "few" more scriptures regarding how we represent others with our words and can ultimately lead to "murder" their characters:

2 Corinthians 12:20: (NIV) *For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.*

Exodus 23:1: (NIV) *Do not spread false reports. Do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness.*

James 1:26: (NIV) *Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.*

James 4:11: (NIV) *Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.*

Leviticus 19:16: (NIV) *Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD.*

Proverbs 10:18,19: (NIV) ¹⁸Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool. ¹⁹Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.



Proverbs 11:9: (NIV) *With their mouths the godless destroy their neighbors, but through knowledge the righteous escape.*

Proverbs 11:13: (NIV) *A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.*

Proverbs 16:28: (NIV) *A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.*

Proverbs 17:9: (NIV) *Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.*

Proverbs 18:21: (NIV) *The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

Proverbs 20:19: (NIV) *A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid anyone who talks too much.*

Psalms 34:13: (NIV) *keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.*

Psalms 41:7: (NIV) *All my enemies whisper together against me; they imagine the worst for me...*

Psalms 141:3: (NIV) *Set a guard over my mouth, LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.*

Proverbs 18:6-7: (NIV) ⁶*The lips of fools bring them strife, and their mouths invite a beating.* ⁷*The mouths of fools are their undoing, and their lips are a snare to their very lives.*

Proverbs 24:2: (ESV) *For their hearts devise violence, and their lips talk of trouble.*

1 Timothy 5:13-14: (NIV) ¹³*Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also busybodies who talk nonsense, saying things they ought not to.* ¹⁴*So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander.*

1 Timothy 3:9-11: (NIV) ⁹*They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.* ¹⁰*They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.* ¹¹*In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.*

Titus 2:2-5: (NIV) ²*Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.* ³*Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.* ⁴*Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children,* ⁵*to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.*

1 Thessalonians 4:11: (ESV) *And to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you,*

2 Thessalonians 3:11: (ESV) *For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies*

1 Peter 4:15: (ESV) *But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.*

Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1168: Could God Convict ME of Murder?

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1168-murder/>

See:



1. What are the lessons of the first five Commandments? Why is the sixth one unique? While sanctifying justice, what does it *not* allow? (See Genesis 9:6, Exodus 20:3-13, Leviticus 24:17, Numbers 35:30, Deuteronomy 5:17)
2. What does it mean to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world”? What are some practical examples you can think of in your own life? (See Matthew 5:13-16, 43-44)
3. Is it a sin to be angry? If not, why did Jesus relate it to murder? How can we refocus our justifiable anger, deflecting it away from sinning? (See Matthew 5:20-24, 15:19, Ephesians 4:26)
4. Under what circumstances did Jesus become angry? Why were these incidents not a sin? (See Matthew 21:12-13, 23:1-39)
5. How does Jesus address angry feelings and our judgment of others? What is the “origin of slander”? Have you ever looked for the “speck” in someone else’s eye? What are some of the social media implications? (See Matthew 7:1-4)
6. As Christians, what should we be doing instead of instead of judging others? What can this focus on revenge become for us? (See Romans 13:8-10, Ephesians 4:25-32, 1 Peter 2:1-2)
7. What is our responsibility to our neighbors, especially other Christians that should cause a huge paradigm shift in our thinking towards *those who spitefully use you*, as described in Luke 6:28 (NKJV) (See Romans 14:10-13)
8. What are the steps we can take to transform our thoughts and words to prevent anger from taking hold of us? (See James 1:17-22)
9. How can we check to see if we are living out the transformation of our minds? (See Colossians 3:5-10, Romans 14:10-13)
10. Can God convict YOU of murder? What will you do to transform yourself to be more godly and live your transformation every day?