

DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 19 APRIL 2021 – 25 APRIL 2021



**UPPER
HUNTER**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear church family,

We had about a month of break from using the Heidelberg Catechism in our worship service and for weekly devotional aid. From this week, we now return to it where we left it, which is Lord's Day 40, Q105-107. These questions deal with the simple command, "You shall not murder (Exodus 20:13). This may be the simplest looking command among the Ten Commandments. What could be simpler, and perhaps one might even say, easier to keep than this Commandment, "You shall not murder"? A vast majority of the general population would be quick to claim that they have never killed anybody and therefore they have never broken this Commandment. Not so fast, the Catechism says.

As Jesus has shown so clearly, this Commandment not to murder an innocent human being is not merely about actual taking away of someone's life (which includes abortion by the way). It is about our words, attitude, and other ways of mistreating people. In short, it is about the heart (Matt 5:21–22). It seems almost unnecessary for me to explain beyond what the Catechism itself says, but Kevin DeYoung gives very good examples and applications that convicted me, and I'd like to share them below.

This is where the commandment gets tough. I've never performed an abortion or committed involuntary manslaughter (though there is forgiveness for both), but I struggled with unrighteous anger just yesterday. I grimaced as the car in front of me went 55 mph instead of 70, and I growled as my children bounced off the walls instead of bounding into bed. These are not made-up examples. I really do get angry, usually unrighteously so. And it's not funny; it's a sin.

Anger is one of those respectable sins. It doesn't seem like a big deal. Granted, not all anger is sin (think Jesus in the temple). It is possible to be angry and sin not (Eph. 4:26). But, honestly, that doesn't describe most of our anger. Sinful anger is anger directed at the wrong person, motivated by the wrong reasons, or out of proportion to the offence. Sadly, this is a truer description of our anger. We take our rage out on other people, get upset for less than noble purposes, and blow up over minor hurts and slight inconveniences. We get grumpy with checkout clerks, snap at tech support over the phone, hold grudges against our spouse, spew venom when sports don't go our way, wish the worst on our enemies, and cherish thoughts of revenge toward those who hurt us. [...]

I'm all for passion and righteous indignation. I want people who hate injustice and despise falsehood. But I don't want a church full of mean, angry people. We are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. If we only love those who love us, "what reward do [we] have? Do not even tax collectors do the same?" (Matt. 5:46; cf. v. 44)

We can talk about murder and the sins of others, but if we do not love our neighbours—even those who get their theology all wrong and those who annoy us to no end—we have not been transformed by the Spirit of Jesus and we have not truly understood the Sixth Commandment.¹

May our church not be full of mean, angry people. May we be people full of love even towards our enemies, just as God loved us in Christ while we were still His enemies (Romans 5:10).

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee

<https://www.upperhunterpc.com>

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM²

Lord's Day 40

Q105) What is God's will for you in the Sixth Commandment?

¹ Kevin DeYoung, *The Good News We Almost Forgot*, p190–191.

² The text of the Catechism is usually from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>, but time to time, for the sake of clarity, I have also adopted the translation used in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* by Kevin DeYoung.

A) I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbour—not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds—and I am not to be party to this in others; rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge. I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either. Prevention of murder is also why government is armed with the sword.

Q106) Does this commandment refer only to killing?

A) By forbidding murder God teaches us that He hates the root of murder: envy, anger, vindictiveness. In God's sight all such are murder.

Q107) Is it enough then that we do not kill our neighbour in any such way?

A) No. By condemning envy, hatred, and anger God tells us to love our neighbours as ourselves, to be patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly to them, to protect them from harm as much as we can, and to do good even to our enemies.

MATTHEW 5:21–22

Matt 5:21 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.

This really is hard. Our society seems full of anger and I realise I am often the same. As Kevin DeYoung shared above, I also get easily annoyed and even angry when things do not go as I wanted. Slow drivers. Fast drivers. Noisy neighbours. Noisy children of my own. My computer that does not work well or fast enough. The computer industry that seems to be just hungry for my money. Or people on TV that speak ill of Christians or the Christian Faith. Or Christians who disagree with me in a disrespectful way. I get angry for all these and more. How about you? How has your heart been when things do not go your way? The one who spoke these words in Matthew 5 is the one who also died to pay the penalty for our unrighteous anger so we may not come under God's righteous anger. And even more than that, He promised to keep transforming us so we may become more like Christ. So then, let us ask for God's help whenever anger bubbles up in our hearts.

Prayer

Dear heavenly Father,

Thank you so much that you sent Your Son Jesus so I may be forgiven of my sins of anger and murderous thoughts and even the actual murder itself. But You want me to live differently now by the power of Your Spirit. So please change me and make me a person full of peace and love. And when I struggle with anger, please help me to look to You for help. In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.

ROMANS 12:14

Rom 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

As Christians in Australia, we feel the negative social pressure more and more. Some might want to say we are being persecuted, or at least very close to it. Whatever the case, God makes it clear how we, Christians are to respond in a hostile environment: blessing not cursing. We are told point blank here in Romans 12:14, that we should bless our persecutors instead of cursing them. Is this how we respond to those who ridicule us for our faith, subtly (or perhaps not so subtly in some cases) bullying us to remain silent about all sorts of issues?

Prayer

Dear heavenly Father,

I feel attacked for my faith in You sometimes by the society and some people I personally know. I confess that I sometimes wanted to strike back with harsh words or sometimes even more than just words. But You call us to bless them. So I repent my ways, and I want to bless those who persecute me for my faith in You. Please help me, and please be gracious and do good to those who have hurt me with their unfair treatment towards me. In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.

