

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 34 (Q3LES9) - THOU SHALT NOT KILL

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: Luke 10: 29 - 35**
3. **Review:** In our last lesson, we discussed the fifth commandment. We learned that the fifth commandment is “honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” We learned that this commandment deals not only with our father and mother, but includes our relationships (read honor and duty) with all others, superiors, inferiors, and equals. We are required to preserve the honor and duty with others, and are forbidden from neglecting, or doing anything against that honor and duty. We also learned that the fifth commandment is the first commandment with promise. In this commandment, God promises long life and prosperity to all such as keep this commandment, as far as it serves for God’s glory and our own good.
4. **Introduction:** This week we continue our discussion of the ten commandments, covering the sixth commandment. We will cover SC questions 67, 68, and 69.
5. **Questions:**

Question 63: Which is the sixth commandment?

Answer: The sixth commandment is, thou shalt not kill.

Question 64: What is required in the sixth commandment?

Answer: The sixth commandment requireth all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.

Question 65: What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?

Answer: The sixth commandment forbiddeth the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatsoever tendeth thereunto.

6. **The SC, LC and WCF.**

The sixth commandment is covered in three questions in the SC, questions 67 through 69. The LC also covers the sixth commandment in three questions, 134, 135, and 136. The questions are the same, except that the word “duties” is added in front of “required”, and the word “sin” in front of “forbidden”. The answers in the LC are greatly expanded. The WCF contains no specific direction related to this commandment. Remember, WCF, chapter 19, The Law of God deals with the origin of the ten commandments, and our relationship with them.

7. Our own life, and the life of others

- a. Both the SC and the LC are in agreement, and state that the sixth commandment requires the preservation of our own life, and the life of others. The SC leave it at that. The LC expands greatly upon what is meant by this statement. Reading the numerous scripture proofs provided with the answer with the LC question, it becomes apparent that this commandment deals with more than the rules for killing each other, and that both the fifth and sixth commandment deal with our relationships with others. The fifth commandment deals with the honor and duty required in our relations with each other. The sixth commandment deals with the civility of our relations with each other.
- b. How are we to preserve the lives of ourselves and others? The SC simply says “all lawful means”. The LC, q135, expands greatly. It answers, *“The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away of the life of any; by just defense thereof against violence, patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit; a sober use of meat, drink, physick, sleep, labor, and recreations; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness; peaceable, mild and courteous speeches and behavior; forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil; comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.”*
 - By resisting all thoughts and purposes – **(Jer 26:15 – 16 ¹⁵But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitation thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears. ¹⁶Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.)** Reading the scripture proofs for this one, it seems to require us not to think or plot the death of ourselves or others. Do not plot evil against thy fellow man. (Also Acts 23, where Paul’s enemies take an oath not to eat until they have killed him)

- By subduing all passions. - (Eph 4:26 – 27 ²⁶Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: ²⁷Neither give place to the devil) This seem to be telling us not to let anger control our actions, that we should be able to control or anger.
- By avoiding all occasions, temptations and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away of any life:
 - occasions – (2 Samuel 2:22 *And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground?*, Deut 22:8 *When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence*) This tells us to do whatever necessary to keep from putting ourselves in a position where we could be harmed or do harm to others.
 - Temptations – (Proverbs 1:10 – 11 ¹⁰My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. ¹¹If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:) We should be capable of resisting, or keep from putting ourselves in a position where we are tempted to sin,
 - Practices
- By just defense thereof against violence (Psalm 82:4 *Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.*) We are to protect ourselves and help others out of the hands of violence
- Patient bearing the hand of God – (James 5:7 *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain*) Not sure I understand this one. It seems to be saying we should endure what cards are given us while waiting for help from God.
- Quietness of mind (Psalm 37:8 – 11 ⁸Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil ⁹For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. ¹⁰ For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. ¹¹But the meek shall inherit the earth: and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.) We should mind our own business, trust in God, for God will take care of he evil
- Cheerfulness of spirit (Prov 17:22 *A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.*) Keep our faith and spirit up, a broken spirit will lead us in the wrong direction.
- A sober use of meat, drink, phisic, sleep, labor and recreations – (Prov 25:16 *Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it*) We are not to abuse these things to the detriment of our health.

- By charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness – (**Rom 13:10** *Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*) We should love our neighbor as ourselves.
- Peaceable, mild and courteous speeches and behavior. (**1 Peter 3: 8 – 11** *⁸Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: ⁹Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. ¹⁰For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: ¹¹Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.*) turn the other cheek.
- Forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing, and forgiveness of injuries, and requiting good for evil. (**Eph 4:2** *With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.*) Not only turn the other cheek, but forgiveness of the evils of others toward us.
- Comforting and succouring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent. (**Job 31: 19 – 20** *¹⁹if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; ²⁰If his loins have not blessed me, and if he were no warmed with the fleece of my sheep;*) Help those who are in danger or distressed.

8. The taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly

- a. The SC simply says “unjustly”, then adds “*or whatsoever tendeth thereunto*”. The LC, q136, is significantly more specific. It says, “*all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of publick justice, lawful war, or necessary defense; the neglecting or withdrawing of the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge; all excessive passions, and distracting cares; immoderate use of meet, drink, labor, and recreations; provoking words, oppression, quarreling, striking, wounding, and whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.*”

Let’s look at each of these points.

- b. What are the circumstances which justify the taking away of a life?
 - Public justice (**Num 35:31** *Moreover, ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death; but he shall surely be put to death.*) Justice in accordance with God’s law
 - Lawful war (**Jer 48:10** *Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.*) Self explanatory
 - Necessary defense (**Ex 22: 2 – 3** *²If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him*) Self defense

- c. The neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life. (**James 2: 15 – 16** ¹⁶*If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?*), we must provide to those in need of assistance, what is required to sustain life.
- d. Sinful anger, hatred, envy, desiring of revenge (**Rom 12:19** *Dearly beloved, **avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord***) forgive and forget.
- e. All excess passions, distracting cares, immodest use of meat, drink, labor and recreations. (**Luke 21:34** *And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.*) We must eat and take care of ourselves as necessary for our survival..
- e. Provoking words, oppression, quarrelling, striking, wounding, and whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any. (**Numbers 35:16 - 17** ¹⁶*And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.* ¹⁷ *And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.* ¹⁷ Do nothing to harm others, or you are guilty in God's eyes.

9. Questions

- a. Abortion is forbidden by this commandment. It is the killing of an unborn child. Exodus 21 is a list of misdeeds and required penalties. **Read Exodus 21: 22 – 23**. Is God saying that if you injure a pregnant woman, and only her child dies, a minor penalty must be imposed, but if the woman dies, death is the penalty. Why is the child's life worth less than the woman's?
- b. Is it acceptable to deny Christ, and his truths for the preservation of our life, if acknowledging them will result in our death? No, this is not an acceptable way of preserving our own life. (**Matt 10:33** *But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*)