

Valued
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Deuteronomy 5:17; 19:4-13

Do you ever watch shows like Antiques Roadshow, American Pickers, or that Pawn Shop show from Vegas (name excluded on purpose) and shake your head saying, “I wouldn’t pay that kind of money for that thing!” Ever say the same thing at an art gallery? **Why do those things sell? Why do real people pay real money for objects and items that others of us have no interest in? Every one of us has something at home that isn’t worth much money but is priceless to us. Any examples from your home?** Back to painters and sculptors, why would a pair of Rembrandt portraits go for \$180 million in 2015? Michelangelo’s sculpture the Pieta depicting Mary holding the crucified body of Christ is priceless in part because it’s the only one of his works he signed. **What makes these works of art valuable to someone with big money?**

The writer of our Explore the Bible commentary (Janice Meier) illustrates this beautifully. These works of art are “*valued because of the artist who created it.*” In the same way, “*each human being has value because of his or her Creator – God...[Who] personally breathed into [man] the breath of life. [Then] He...signed His work by stamping His image into each person at the time of...conception.*”ⁱ

Big Idea: God values human life because He made each in His image. He expects His people to value life as well.

- The book of Deuteronomy contains a series of sermons Moses delivered to the Israelites just before he died. We could sum it up with these “R” words: Repeat, Remind, Reiterate, and Rededicate.
- These sermons were to remind them of what God had done, reiterate His expectations of them, and challenge them to rededicate their lives to Him.
- One of the things Moses repeated was the Ten Commandments.

- This lesson focuses on the sixth commandment (5:17) “Do not murder.”
- We’ve all heard “thou shall not kill,” but **how is the word murder in this verse different than killing in general?**
- Today we use the term “homicide,” defined as “the deliberate and unlawful killing of one person by another.”ⁱⁱ Another term is “manslaughter” which is “[t]he crime of killing a human being without malice aforethought, or otherwise in circumstances not amounting to murder.”
- **Why is killing in wars not murder (i.e. God commanded His people to conquer pagan tribes?) Why is a legitimate police killing or self-defense not murder? Why does our nation say that abortion is not murder? Why do ten states say assisted suicide is not murder?**
- So, a person could conclude that Deuteronomy 5:17 means “Do not commit homicide – kill a person – without legitimate legal sanction.”
- Some people argue that if abortion is not illegal, then the command in 5:17 hasn’t been violated. That argument places higher value on man’s laws than God’s law. It allows men to “re-write” God’s law.
- Bible Knowledge Commentary: *“Murder means to take someone’s life illegally. Since man was created by God and in His image, man should not take another human’s life apart from divine permission. (This commandment, therefore, did not prohibit capital punishment or engaging in war, both of which were regulated by laws in the Torah.)”ⁱⁱⁱ*
- Another problem. If murder (homicide) is killing a person without legitimate legal sanction, what if a worker on a roof accidentally drops a heavy tool and kills someone standing below? **That wasn’t sanctioned by law – so why isn’t it murder?**
- God knew that His people would need clarification in dealing with the taking of human life. We read how Moses addressed this in chapter 19.
- Accidental killing (“without having hated him in the past”) would happen, so God designated three cities of “refuge” for an accidental “manslayer.”

Deuteronomy 19:4–6 (ESV)

⁴ “This is the provision for the manslayer, who by fleeing there may save his life. If anyone kills his neighbor unintentionally without having hated him in the past— ⁵ as when someone goes into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down a tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities and live, ⁶ lest the avenger of blood in hot anger pursue the manslayer and overtake him, because the way is long, and strike him fatally, though the man did not deserve to die, since he had not hated his neighbor in the past.

- What does this have to do with “don’t murder?” The point is that God was very specific about how He values life and what is and is NOT murder.
- He instructed the people to make provision for accidental homicide and gave very specific guidelines for when someone should be given “refuge.”
- He also gave specifics on what “murder” looks like:

Deuteronomy 19:11–13 (ESV)

¹¹ “But if anyone hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and attacks him and strikes him fatally so that he dies, and he flees into one of these cities, ¹² then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there, and hand him over to the avenger of blood, so that he may die. ¹³ Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, so that it may be well with you.

- There was mercy and refuge for the accidental “manslayer” but there was also justice for the premeditated murderer.
- The Life Application Study Bible: *“This is a beautiful example of how God blended his justice and mercy toward his people.”^{iv}*
- This is a good place for me to say what I say every year on “Sanctity of Life Sunday.” There are many believers who are still struggling with the pain of an abortion. The same good news that saves us is the good news in this case. Christ died to provide forgiveness for ALL sins. Though the pain lingers, we need to encourage people to cling to the truth that God’s grace covers that choice and provides freedom from guilt.

- Our lesson writers point out interesting contrasts between cities of refuge and salvation in Christ: *“A person fled to the city of refuge because he wasn’t guilty; we come to Christ because we are guilty. The elders of a city of refuge investigated the case to determine the accused’s innocence; believers know they deserve the Lord’s punishment. To save his life, the accused must remain in the city out of fear of the avenger. Those in Christ are free and can live without fear. Whether in times of old or today, God provides grace and protection for those who seek Him and follow Him.”*
- Back to the value of human life. The key words to me in verse 13 are, “purge the guilt of innocent blood.” The whole matter hinges on who determines whether innocent blood has been shed.
- For followers of Christ our source for how to live should be the word of God. That means our definition of what is or is not murder should be God’s definition in scripture and we see that He was very specific.
- On the other hand, scripture also instructs us to obey governmental authorities (Rom. 13.) Sadly, abortion has been legalized in our country and assisted suicide is legal in ten states. What is a Christ-follower to do?
- We can and should support efforts to change any law that violates His law.
- We can support Christian crisis pregnancy and adoption organizations.
- What about our personal conversations on this issue? **How can we be prolife without pushing people away from Christ?**
- Be firm in your convictions while being loving and grace-filled in how you communicate them. Chip Ingram writes, *“How far should I go in the fight to protect human life?” As strongly as you and I may feel about our responsibility to protect the lives of the unborn, harming others or breaking the law are never righteous options. Our methods must match our message! The witness of every Christian suffers when someone claiming a biblical mandate takes another rude stab at justice.”*
- We can show compassion without compromise when this topic comes up.
- Get educated about the issues and how to lovingly defend life.

- Then there is the argument that a baby in the womb is not really a human life. The strongest rebuttal for that argument is a 4-D ultrasound.
- Last May our friends at Focus on the Family staged an event in Times Square. The climax of the event was showing a live 4-D ultrasound on big screens. Focus CEO Jim Daly shared with us a few weeks ago about that dramatic moment. There had been angry protestors with nasty chants and signs kept corralled by police. When that 4-D image came on the screens and that baby's heartbeat was heard on the sound system, Jim said the crowd grew quiet and the *"protestors, moved by hearing and seeing the preborn baby's heartbeat and face, dropped their signs and fell silent – left speechless by the miracle of life."*^{vi}
- Mark your calendars for May 9th, Mothers Day weekend, when Focus will do another "Alive" event in five cities including Atlanta. Details to come.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- God values human life because He created each life in His image.
- Though human laws change, followers of Christ must recognize that God's law is the real standard and He has commanded us not to *"take another human's life apart from divine permission."*
- God also commands that His people obey the law of the land. Our response to that is to support efforts to change laws that violate His law.
- We need to educate ourselves on how to lovingly defend life in a way that shows compassion without compromise. (Some resource links below)
- Ultimately, only God has the power to change hearts.
- Do you know the name Norma McCorvey? She was Jane Roe in "Roe vs. Wade." After years of being an abortion advocate and working in abortion clinics, God changed her heart and she not only professed faith in Christ, but also became an advocate for life before her death in 2017.
- In her book, *Won by Love*, She explained how God changed her heart:

"I was sitting in O.R.'s offices when I noticed a fetal development poster. The progression was so obvious, the eyes were so sweet. It

hurt my heart, just looking at them. I ran outside and finally, it dawned on me. 'Norma', I said to myself, 'They're right'. I had worked with pregnant women for years. I had been through three pregnancies and deliveries myself. I should have known. Yet something in that poster made me lose my breath. I kept seeing the picture of that tiny, 10-week-old embryo, and I said to myself, that's a baby! It's as if blinders just fell off my eyes and I suddenly understood the truth—that's a baby!^{vii}

- God values human life because He made each in His image. We need to look for ways we can help others see that truth.
- We also need to pray for God to change hearts as only He can do.

Some Resources

<https://www.flipsnack.com/Focus/the-dignity-and-sanctity-of-every-human-life-resource-guide.html>

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/pro-life/>

<http://kentuckytoday.com/stories/sanctity-of-life-beware-the-distractions,17285>

ⁱ Explore the Bible Commentary – Lifeway 2019 P.80

ⁱⁱ <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/homicide>

ⁱⁱⁱ Deere, J. S. (1985). [Deuteronomy](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 273). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Location 137137). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

^v Explore the Bible Leaders Guide – Lifeway 2019 P. 88

^{vi} <https://jimdalys.focusonthefamily.com/big-news-focus-on-the-family-announces-nationwide-pro-life-celebration-alive-2020/>

^{vii} McCorvey, Norma & Thomas, Gary (January 1998). "[Roe v. McCorvey](#)". *Leadership U*. Retrieved February 18, 2017.