

# Winning the Hard Ones

The Ten Commandments Part 3

Mike Brinkmeier

*“In my preaching of the Word, I took special notice of this one thing, namely, that the Lord did lead me to begin where His Word begins with sinners; that is, to condemn all flesh, and to open and allege that the curse of God, by the Law, doth belong to and lay hold on all men as they come into the world, because of sin.”*

**JOHN BUNYAN**

Let us look at the Sixth Commandment, and what it means in light of New Testament revelation: **“You shall not kill”** (Exodus 20:13).

In the dim light of their ignorance, the world looks at the Sixth Commandment and proclaims itself “not guilty.”

However, God requires truth in the inward parts (Psalm 51:6). In other words, He sees the thought-life—the intent, the innermost motive of every human being.

If civil law can prove that you are planning to assassinate the President, you can be prosecuted and severely punished.

That law, however, is limited in its search for evidence—it can't see what a man *thinks*.

Not so with the all-seeing eye of our Creator. His Law searches the heart, and He sees “evil thoughts.”

To even *think* hatred is to transgress the Sixth Commandment.

Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say to you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matthew 5:21, 22).

The Bible further adds that if we hate someone, we are murderers (1 John 3:15).

There are many who would like to kill, but refrain because of fear of punishment. God counts them guilty of murder.

Even if we don't have thoughts of physically murdering someone we hate, there is another sense in which we desire their death. John 8:44 says of the devil that "he was a murderer from the beginning." While Satan didn't go around physically killing men and women, by tempting Adam and Eve he did bring about the spiritual death of all mankind through sin (see Romans 5:12).

If we hate someone, the last thought in our minds will be sharing the gospel with them out of concern for their salvation. In that sense, we too become a murderer, desiring the person's eternal death, by not giving them the words of life.

Some states have laws that declare a bystander guilty for standing by and failing to prevent a crime. In the same way, God declares us guilty of murder if we stand by and do nothing to prevent someone's eternal death. Their blood is our on hands (see Ezekiel 3:18).

Sixty people are murdered each day in the United States (FBI statistics reveal an average of around 20,000 murders per year). Homicide has become so common that it hardly merits a mention on the news.

Some time ago, Thomas Lyndon Jr. of Rocky Point, Long Island, confessed to the murder of a woman during a robbery.

He admitted that he held the point of a four-inch hunting knife to her throat, and then “dug it in a little deeper” after she awoke and began to struggle. He said that after Lea Greene stopped moving, “I counted her heartbeats out of curiosity to see how long it’d take her to die...I knew exactly what I was doing...I knew it was against the law...I felt powerful—invincible, sort of, you know?”

How true are the words of Charles Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers:

“Look at fallen human nature. Whitefield used to say that it was half beast and half devil. I question whether both beast and devil are not slandered by being compared with man when he is left to his own.”

Some equate capital punishment with murder, and cite Jesus' command to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44) as evidence that He did not endorse capital punishment. However, just because we have love for an enemy doesn't give us the right to allow him to escape punishment for murder. The Bible says, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation...But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil" (Romans 13:1-4).

The Bible says that anyone who deliberately takes a life should lose his own: “Whoso kills any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.

Moreover you shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death” (Numbers 35:30, 31). Genesis 9:6 says, “Whoso sheds man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”

This shows the value God places on human life.

The seriousness of a crime is revealed in the punishment dealt to the criminal.

It is interesting to note that when Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh requested the death penalty, 250 relatives of the victims he killed asked to watch his execution. Their desire to actually see justice done testifies to the value they place on the loved one they lost.

Despite claims to the contrary, capital punishment does deter crime. The person executed will not do it again.

Still, there are respected Christian leaders whose conscience will not allow them to advocate capital punishment, out of concern that innocent people may fall through the cracks of a godless justice system.

That is why such extensive effort is expended to ascertain the guilt of the accused in a capital murder case.

It was God who instituted the death penalty in the beginning. The Judge of the Universe pronounced the death sentence upon all humanity when He said, “The soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20)

## **Famous Last Words**

**Edith Louisa Cavell (1865–1915)** was a British nurse martyred by the Germans for harboring British refugees. About to die, she said:

**“Standing, as I do, in view of God and eternity...I realize that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness against anyone.”**

*“God made me to be a homosexual, so He doesn’t want me to change.”*

Homosexuals argue that they did not make a conscious decision to be that way, so it must be natural. They are born that way—just as all of us are born with a sin nature and sinful desires (Ephesians 2:1–3). Tell them that it is natural for them, and for all of us, to be tempted to do things that God says are wrong. In the same way, pedophiles, adulterers, alcoholics, drug addicts, etc., don’t make a conscious decision to “choose” that self-destructive lifestyle; they simply give in to their sinful desires.

However, although sin is natural for unbelievers, that doesn't mean God wants them to remain that way.

God can set them free from their sinful nature (Romans 7:23–8:2),

give them new desires (Ephesians 4:22–24),

and help them withstand temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Now, we will look at the Seventh Commandment and what it means in light of New Testament revelation:  
**“You shall not commit adultery”** (Exodus 20:14).

The Bible said that the Messiah would magnify the Law and make it honorable (Isaiah 42:21).

The Pharisees had dishonored the Law by teaching that God required only an outward show of piety. However, Jesus explained that God judges even the thought-life.

He said, “You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not commit adultery: But I say to you, that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:27, 28).

In doing so He touched the apple of the eye of humanity. Men live for and will die because of lust. For them it is life’s greatest pleasure, and they would rather be damned than let it go. If salvation were the work of man, no one would be saved.

The evangelistic endeavor would be hopeless.

But thank God it is He who gives us repentance leading us to the knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 2:25).

It is God who brings us to our senses and shows us the end of our transgressions. This Commandment is perhaps the most powerful of the mighty cannons of God and therefore must be used often to awaken sinners to their plight.

Lust is especially dangerous because it rarely lies alone. Its bedfellows are fornication, adultery, perversion, rape, and even murder. It burns in the heart of man, and like acid reflux, it forces its way through his flesh in a great all-consuming wave with a mind of its own.

Lust caused Herod to murder John the Baptist, the greatest man born of women. It doesn't want a mere half of your kingdom, it wants your head on a plate. It brings forth sin, and sin when it's conceived brings forth death. Proverbs 6:32 warns us, "But whoso commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding: he that does it destroys his own soul."

The gift of sex was given by God for procreation and pleasure.

Scripture says that the only time a husband and wife should refrain from the joys of sex is when they are praying and fasting; otherwise, they set themselves up for temptation (1 Corinthians 7:5).

The Bible also says that a man should be ravished (enraptured) always with her love (Proverbs 5:18–20). The only stipulation is that it is his wife he is to be enraptured with—not the woman down the street.

Men will often deceive themselves by believing that the Ten Commandments condemn only adultery, leaving them free to have sex outside of marriage.

However, the Law condemns all unlawful sex. First Timothy 1:8–10 tells us that the Law was also made for fornicators (whoremongers).

Galatians 5:19 lists adultery and fornication at the top of the list of works of the flesh.

Those who forsake marriage thinking that they can enjoy sex outside the bonds of the institution risk getting AIDS and numerous other sexually transmitted diseases—several of which are incurable.

One who commits fornication (from the Greek *Porneia*, “illicit sexual intercourse”) takes what could lawfully be his as a gift from God, and corrupts it. He is like a child who one night steals a crisp, new twenty-dollar bill from his father’s wallet, not realizing that his father intended to give it to him as a gift in the morning.

The fornicator not only sins against God and incurs the wrath of eternal justice, but he sins against his conscience, and his own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). Fornicators will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9). Scripture warns us to “abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

Don't be discouraged if you have a battle with lust. If you are struggling, then at least you are fighting it. If you have no problem with it, then you have given your heart to demons and they will drag you to hell. These are fearful words—but they are needed to awaken us to what is at stake.

Would you ever take pornography to church and look at it during worship? You may as well, because God is just as present in your bedroom as He is in the church building. If you are given to pornography, face the fact that you may not be saved. Examine yourself to ensure that Christ is living in you (2 Corinthians 13:5). See Romans 6:11–22; 8:1–14; Ephesians 5:3–8.

Realize that when you give yourself to pornography, you are committing adultery (Matthew 5:27, 28). Grasp the serious nature of your sin. Jesus said that it would be better for you to be blind and go to heaven than for your eye to cause you to sin and end up in hell (Matthew 5:29). Those who profess to be Christians yet drool over pornographic material evidently lack the fear of God (Proverbs 16:6). Cultivate the fear of the Lord by reading Proverbs 2:1–5. Think of where lust led King David. He opened himself to many other sins, including murder, and brought misery and shame to his family name. Read Psalm 51 and make it your own prayer.

Memorize James 1:14, 15 and 1 Corinthians 10:13. Follow Jesus' example (Matthew 4:3–11) and quote the Word of God when you are tempted (see Ephesians 6:12–20).

Make no provision for your flesh (Romans 13:14; 1 Peter 2:11). Get rid of every access to pornographic material—the Internet, printed literature, TV, videos, and movies. Stop feeding the fire.

Instead, guard your heart with all diligence (Proverbs 4:23). Don't let the demonic realm have access to your thought-life. If you give yourself to it, you will become its slave (Romans 6:16).

Read the Bible daily, without fail. As you submit to God, the devil will flee (James 4:7, 8). The next time temptation comes, do fifty push-ups, then fifty sit-ups. If you are still burning, repeat the process (see 1 Corinthians 9:27).

Take confidence that even though sinners may shake off your words when you talk to them about lust, they will find it more difficult to shake off the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Plant the seed of truth in the soil of the heart. Tell them what Jesus said about this sin, and then pray that the Holy Spirit makes the word grow in their hearts.

So much of the world's misery is self-inflicted: AIDS, alcoholism, obesity, guilt, drug addiction, nicotine addiction and its related diseases, etc. Look at the repercussions of adultery, revealed in this unsigned letter: "Eleven years ago, I walked out on a twelve-year marriage. My wife was a good person, but for a long time she was under a lot of stress. Instead of helping her, I began an affair with her best friend. It was a disaster. This is what I gave up: 1) seeing my daughter grow up; 2) the respect of many long-time friends; 3) the enjoyment of living as a family; 4) a wife who was loyal, was appreciative and tried to make me happy.

This is what I got:

- 1) two stepchildren who treated me like dirt;
- 2) a wife who didn't know how to make anything for dinner but reservations;
- 3) a wife whose only interest in me was how much money she could get;
- 4) a wife who made disparaging remarks about my family and ruined all my existing friendships;
- 5) finally, the best thing I got was a bitter, expensive divorce.”

Now let us look at the Eighth Commandment: **“You shall not steal”** (Exodus 20:15).

Most people don't think that God considers theft to be theft until the value of what is taken impresses Him. However, if I open your wallet and take just one dollar, I'm a thief, and the Bible says that thieves will not enter the kingdom of God. What would be worth stealing for the loss of your soul?

Jesus asked, “What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26).

It is a sad testimony to the wickedness of the human heart when the world honors an honest person.

Someone finds a wallet filled with money and returns it to the owner—and that makes national news.

It is rare when a human being does what he should. Theft comes easily to us because our spiritual father is a thief. He came to steal, kill, and destroy, and his will we willingly do...and love it.

We don't realize how sin crouches at the door of the human heart. Many would never consider theft until temptation arises.

Take for instance the situation on May 14, 1993, in Chicago, when \$600,000 fell out of an armored truck onto the interstate. Panic-stricken motorists screeched their vehicles to a halt and stuffed bills into their pockets. Motorcyclists were seen cramming their helmets with cash, and speeding off into the distance. Two paramedics handed police \$120,000. They returned the cash only because they suspected it was drug money and therefore "marked." Around \$450,000 is still missing.

Sinners will often dig deep into the realm of fantasy to try to justify theft. They will say, “Are you telling me that if a man steals a loaf of bread to feed his starving children that God calls that theft?” The answer is yes. It is theft and the Bible says that he should make restitution for his crime. If a man is hungry, he should beg before he steals. A sinner will often admit to stealing but say that it was just a bar of candy when he was young. Or he will say that he has stolen once, but has since reformed. He must be told that time doesn't forgive sin, and that God still sees the sins of yesterday as if they were committed today. Stop his mouth using the Law (Romans 3:19).

Show him that the only way to escape the terrible consequences of his sin is the Door of the Savior. Let the hurricane of the wrath of the Law of God blow far from him the scanty leaves of self-righteousness.

Have him admit his transgression by name—that he is a thief. Then point to (and have him read) 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

Charles Finney said, “This Law, then, should be arrayed in all its majesty against selfishness and enmity of the sinner. All men know that they have sinned, but all are not convicted of the guilt and ill dessert of sin.

But without this they cannot understand or appreciate the gospel method of salvation. Away with this milk-and-water preaching of a love of Christ that has no holiness or moral discrimination in it. Away with preaching a love of God that is not angry with sinners every day.”

*“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

**MARK 8:36, 37**

*“I do not believe that any man can preach the gospel who does not preach the Law.”*

**CHARLES SPURGEON**

## ***Objections to Christianity***

***“What if someone says they’ve never lied, stolen, lusted, blasphemed—if they deny having any sin at all?”***

Ask the person if he has kept the First of the Ten Commandments. Has he always loved God above all else—with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30)? If he says that he has, gently say, “The Bible says that ‘there is none that seeks after God’ (Romans 3:11). Nobody (except Jesus Christ) has kept the First of the Ten Commandments. One of you is lying—either you or God—and the Bible says that it is impossible for God to lie” (Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2).

In this lesson we will look at the Ninth Commandment: “**You shall not bear false witness** against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16).

It is common when mentioning this Commandment to hear the response, “You mean that if some lady asks you if you think she is ugly, you have to tell her the truth—that she is?” Let the person know that there is a big difference between discretion (wise self-restraint in speech) and lying (a false statement intended to deceive), and that God knows the difference.

Should a Christian ever tell a lie? There are times when we may find ourselves in the difficult position of realizing that telling the truth may have dire repercussions. For example, you are asked by a Nazi if you are hiding any Jews in your home. Should you tell him there are two under your bed? To do so would result in their sure death. Your choice is to lie and save lives, or tell the truth and be a party to murder. Another example is putting “tourist” rather than “Bible smuggler” on your visa into China, or not telling the police in a persecuted country the names of other members of your underground church. Perhaps the answer is that it is the *motive* that matters. However, the issue depends on the conscience of each individual.

The Bible tells us that God doesn't lie, and the Ninth Commandment makes it clear that bearing false witness against our neighbor is wrong.

Bearing false witness in order to cause harm to another, or to avoid the consequences of our own wrong behavior, is never acceptable to a holy God who knows our motive.

The dictionary defines a lie as a false statement deliberately presented as being true; a falsehood; something intended to deceive or give a wrong impression.

People often claim that they have told only a “white lie.” But there is *no* difference between a white lie, a half-truth, a fib, or an exaggeration. All are lies in the sight of God.

How many murders does one have to commit to be a murderer? Just one. In the same way, if they have told even one lie, no matter what color or size, that makes them a liar.

The Ninth Commandment requires the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

God is a God of truth and His Law demands absolute honesty from the heart. Yet the human heart is deceitful above all things.

It has been well said that taking the easy path is what makes rivers and men crooked. Look at this telling quote:

...20,000 middle and high-schoolers were surveyed by the Josephson Institute of Ethics—a nonprofit organization in Marina del Rey, Calif., devoted to character education.

Ninety-two percent of the teenagers admitted having lied to their parents in the previous year, and 73 percent characterized themselves as “serial liars,” meaning they told lies weekly. Despite these admissions, 91 percent of all respondents said they were “satisfied with my own ethics and character.”  
(*Reader's Digest*, November 1999)

The path of lies is often the easy path, but it leads to hell.

The Bible warns that all liars will have their part in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 21:8). What a fearful thought! People may not think deceitfulness is a serious sin, but God does.

It should break our hearts to even think of the fate of the ungodly.

*“A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaks lies shall not escape.”*

**PROVERBS 19:5**

*“I have broken the Ten Commandments, but I do good things for people.”*

Many people do similar things. They may steal from their employer or cheat on their taxes, then give to a charity or spend Thanksgiving helping at a soup kitchen. They think they are balancing the scales: they have done bad, and now they are doing good. However, the Bible reveals that the motive of guilty sinners is one of guilt (see Hebrews 9:14). They are attempting to bribe the Judge of the Universe. The Judge in this case will not be corrupted. He must punish all sinners. Good works cannot earn mercy; it comes purely by the grace of God. He will dismiss our iniquity only on the grounds of our faith in Jesus.

In this lesson we will look at the Tenth Commandment: “**You shall not covet...**anything that is your neighbor’s” (Exodus 20:17).

Covetousness is perhaps the most subtle of sins. It seems minor compared to adultery, theft, or rape. However, before a man steals, he covets. Before he rapes or commits adultery, he covets. Covetousness is the spark that sets off the fuse of sin. It is a sin that lies close to the surface of every human being. Few children are content with ten pieces of candy when the child next to him gets eleven.

Covetousness is the bedfellow of jealousy, greed, and lust. It was this quiet sin that found a place in the heart of King David, rich and blessed though he was.

His covetous eye roamed toward another man's wife, and opened the door to a multitude of sins.

Who of us can stand guiltless and say that we have never jealously desired something that belongs to someone else? Whether we long for another's house, car, income, or lifestyle, our covetousness reveals a lack of gratitude for what God has already given us.

That's why Scripture admonishes us to "be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have" (Hebrews 13:5). Learn to pray along with the psalmist, "Incline my heart unto your testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity..." (Psalm 119:36, 37).

Matthew Henry said, "The Tenth Commandment strikes at the root; Thou shalt not covet. The others forbid all desire of doing what will be an injury to our neighbor; this forbids all wrong desire of having what will gratify ourselves."

Look at this incredible quote from Martin Luther. It reminds us of the function and power of the Law to reveal our “hidden” sins:

As long as a person is not a murderer, adulterer, thief, he would swear that he is righteous. How is God going to humble such a person except by the Law? The Law is the hammer of death, the thunder of hell and the thunder of God’s wrath to bring down the proud and shameless hypocrites. When the Law was instituted on Mount Sinai it was accompanied by lightning, by storms, by the sounds of trumpets, to tear to pieces that monster called self-righteousness.

As long as a person thinks he is right he is going to be incomprehensibly proud and presumptuous. He is going to hate God, despise His grace and mercy, and ignore the promises in Christ.

The gospel of free forgiveness of sins through Christ will never appeal to the self-righteous. This monster of self-righteousness, this stiff-necked beast, needs an axe. And that is what the Law is, a big axe. Accordingly the proper use and function of the Law is to threaten until the conscience is scared stiff.

It's important to warn those who are guilty of this "harmless" sin that according to Scripture, "No covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5:3, 5).

In coveting, a person transgresses not only the Tenth, but also the First and Second Commandments. When he loves material things more than he loves God, he is setting his affections on the gift, rather than on the Giver. What father wouldn't be grieved if his beloved child loved his toys more than the father who gave him the toys? A child should love his father first and foremost. He should love the giver more than the gift, and be content with what he has.

*“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

**1 JOHN 2:15**