

10 Keys To Successful Living

6 – Treat Life As Precious

Ex 20.13

The Ten Commandments are “little containers for big ideas.”

Ex 2-.13 is a very small container for a big idea; treat life as something precious.

This command doesn't address all killing

The word used in the Hebrew of Exodus 20:13 is *ratsach*, and it poses a bit of a problem for us in English. “Kill” is too broad and “murder” is too narrow.

Doesn't apply to animals

It is only ever applied to human beings

Doesn't talk about war or the death penalty

The Bible talks a lot about killing in warfare, and the death penalty. This word is never used in those contexts.

A good translation might be, “*You shall not wrongfully end the life of another human being.*”

It does say that human life is of great value

The Israelites had been dehumanised as slaves for generations in Egypt.

Slavery doesn't just diminish the value of people in the eyes of their masters. It diminishes their value in their own eyes.

It's into this kind of situation that God gives this command.

Because all life belongs to God

Only God has life in himself. He lends it to his creatures. (Job 27.3, Ecc 8.15)

Because human beings are made in God's image

Each one of us, not just the “important” people, is God's image bearer in the world.

Devaluing human life has serious consequences

For unborn children

The Bible doesn't address questions like “Is the foetus a person?” or “At what point is life sustainable?” It asks a much simpler question. “Is it alive?” Life belongs to God and is not ours to take.

For the elderly

As the population ages, euthanasia of the elderly will become more and more of an issue.

For the terminally ill

The question of “physician assisted suicide.”

For the disabled

And all of this leads to a devaluing of any life that doesn't meet some kind of accepted standard of “quality” or “value.” So it's only a short step to devaluing the disabled in our midst.

Ps 49:7-8, No-one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them—the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough