



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V24 N31

July 31, 2022

TEN WORDS

"Murder Conviction "

Exodus 20:13; 21:12-36

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Love

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.

care."

1 John 4:10-12



Why is love the best basis for morality?

The first, post-Edenic sin recorded in Scripture was the sin of murder. Cain took the life of his brother Abel (Gen. 4:1-10). God said that the voice of Abel's blood "cried from the ground" at the injustice of Cain's aggressive and fatal strike. The first sin within the Garden of Eden was an act of vain self-idolatry. The first sin outside the Garden was an act of envious violence. Humanity's self-focused idolatry led rapidly to fratricide.

From Cain to Noah, the world devolved into a boiling cauldron of evil and aggression. Genesis states, "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, 'I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth'" (Gen. 6:11-13).

God brought judgment upon an evil and violent humanity with a flood. Only Noah and his sons with their families survived. God proclaimed to Noah that "for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind" (Gen. 9:5-6).

Before the giving of the Mosaic Law and the Ten Commandments, God had placed a high value upon human life and brought severe consequences upon those who harmed those created in God's image.

Thousands of years of advancing civilizations, improved education, scientific dis-

coveries and sophisticated social conditioning have done little to diminish the problem of violence and murder in our world. Jesus said that God's enemy, Satan was the "father of lies" and a "murder from the beginning" (John 8:44). Satan's influence upon Cain and his parents continues upon the sons of Noah even unto today. We should not be surprised at the level of violence and harm in our world. It has been with us from the beginning.

What is the answer to our present dilemma of violence and murder? The answer, without being trite, is "love." Love of God addresses our predilection toward idolatry. Love of neighbor can correct our tendency toward envy or vengeance. Keeping the two greatest commandments (Mark 12:28-34) keeps us from harming those made in God's image. Because God has loved us so supremely and made himself the atoning sacrifice for our sins, we can love one another (1 John 4:10-12). God within us, by his Holy Spirit, can empower us to love those who have more than we have, who are better than we are, or who perhaps have harmed us in some way. "Love" and "Forgiveness" are hallmarks of Christian virtue. A follower of Christ who has been forgiven has the motivation and compassion to extend forgiveness even to those who are perceived to not deserve forgiveness or love. If we have been forgiven, we can find it easier to forgive.

How do we begin to solve the present crisis of violence and murder? We do so through the long and arduous task of bringing love to a broken and hurting world. As you contemplate the sixth commandment, consider how you are sharing love as an antidote to violence and mayhem.

Read Exodus 20:33 and 21:12-36

20:13 *You shall not murder.*

21:12 *"Anyone who strikes a person with a fatal blow is to be put to death. 13 However, if it is not done intentionally, but God lets it happen, they are to flee to a place I will designate. 14 But if anyone schemes and kills someone deliberately, that person is to be taken from my altar and put to death.*

15 *"Anyone who attacks their father or mother is to be put to death.*

16 *"Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper's possession.*

17 *"Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.*

18 *"If people quarrel and one person hits another with a stone or with their fist and the victim does not die but is confined to bed, 19 the one who struck the blow will not be held liable if the other can get up and walk around outside with a staff; however, the guilty party must pay the injured person for any loss of time and see that the victim is completely healed.*

20 *"Anyone who beats their male or female slave with a rod must be punished if the slave dies as a direct result, 21 but they are not to be punished if the slave recovers after a day or two, since the slave is their property.*

22 *"If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. 23 But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.*

26 *"An owner who hits a male or female slave in the eye and destroys it must let the slave go free to compensate for the eye. 27 And an owner who knocks out the tooth of a male or female slave must let the slave go free to compensate for the tooth.*

28 *"If a bull gores a man or woman to death, the bull is to be stoned to death, and its meat must not be eaten. But the owner of the bull will not be held responsible. 29 If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull is to be stoned and its owner also is to be put to death. 30 However, if payment is demanded, the owner may redeem his life by the payment of whatever is demanded. 31 This law also applies if the bull gores a son or daughter. 32 If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver to the master of the slave, and the bull is to be stoned to death.*

33 *"If anyone uncovers a pit or digs one and fails to cover it and an ox or a donkey falls into it, 34 the one who opened the pit must pay the owner for the loss and take the dead animal in exchange.*

35 *"If anyone's bull injures someone else's bull and it dies, the two parties are to sell the live one and divide both the money and the dead animal equally. 36 However, if it was known that the bull had the habit of goring, yet the owner did not keep it penned up, the owner must pay, animal for animal, and take the dead animal in exchange.*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle the main word in v. 13.
- Underline the words that are used for murder in vv. 21:12-14.
- Double underline the words that show consequence of murder in vv. 21:12-14.
- Draw arrows between words that are the same in vv. 21:15 and 21:17.
- Circle the word "punished" in v. 21:20. Draw an arrow to the type of punishment for such a crime as described in vv. 21:12-19.
- Put a box around the phrase "gives birth prematurely" in v. 21:22.
- Place brackets around the phrase "serious injury" in vv. 21:22-23. Draw an arrow from this phrase to what you think it may mean in vv. 21:12-21.
- Double underline the end of v. 21:23 and all of v. 21:24.
- Underline the consequences of the killing of anyone by a reckless bull with a careless owner in v. 21:29.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Why is murder bad and to be prohibited (Gen. 4:1-15; 9:5-6)?
2. Exodus 20:13 uses the word “murder.” Why is this a better translation than “kill”?
3. What additional condition is added to the consideration of murder in vv. 21:12-14?
4. What crimes other than murder carry death sentences as punishment according to vv. 21:15-17?
5. If injury is caused but no death results, what is the designated punishment according to vv. 21:18-21?
6. What constitutes a “serious injury” when a pregnant woman is accidentally “hit” by people who are fighting (vv. 21:22-23)?
7. What does the punishment for “serious injury” (v. 21:23) say about the value of the life of the mother? What does this punishment say about the value of the life of the child?
8. What is the purpose of *talionic* justice (“life for life,” “eye for eye,” etc.; see vv. 21:23-25)?
9. Slavery, unfortunately, was a universal component of society in the Ancient Near East and included the Hebrews who were previously slaves in Egypt. What did Hebrew laws regarding slaves (vv. 21:16, 26-27) say about the value of human life?
10. Humans were responsible for animals under their control, even if these animals killed others (vv. 21:28-36). What do these laws contribute to the understanding of the value of life?

The sixth commandment (Ex. 20:13) begins a triad of laws of only two words each. “In regard to the three prohibitions: You shall not kill—you shall not commit adultery—you shall not steal, there is nothing new in their substance, for in every civilized society, murder, adultery and theft are accounted forbidden acts; and yet even these verses contain something unusual: (a) first of all, their absolute form, without object or complement, without definitions or qualifications, without particulars or conditions, like the enunciation of fundamental, abstract and eternal principles, which transcend any condition or circumstance, detailed definition or restriction; (b) the incorporation of these principles in the Divine preamble to the Deed of Covenant as apodictic imperatives and statutes sanctified by the sanctity of their Legislator, as a fundamental basis and central pillar of the life of humanity according to the Creator’s will” (U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 247).

The sixth commandment echoes earlier biblical warnings against the taking of human life (Genesis 4:1-15; 9:5-6). Because humanity is created in the image of God, it is an offense to God to indiscriminately harm or eliminate those bearing his image. “The Hebrew word for ‘murder’ is *rasah*. It occurs forty-seven times in the Old Testament. In every instance but one it speaks of one human being killing another. It is never used of a person killing an animal. In addition, *rasah* is never employed in contexts of war, capital punishment, or self-defense. Most often it denotes planned or premeditated murder in the form of revenge (Num. 35:27, 30) or assassination (2 Kings 6:32). Unpremeditated killing, known as manslaughter in English common law, is also prohibited in Numbers 35 because it is *rasah*. It should be noted that the verb does not specify any particular person(s) as its direct object. The form is thus not qualified in that way. Consequently, it is likely that suicide is included in the prohibition. Jesus’ interpretation of this law goes well beyond the physical act of murder (see Matt. 5:21-22). It also ‘forbids murder of the heart,’ as Calvin puts it. Indeed, it is the hand that gives birth to murder, but it is the heart infected and inflamed with hate and anger that conceives it” (John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Exodus: Exodus 19-40*, Vol. 2, EP Study Commentary, 45-46).

“Pre-meditated” and “accidental” killings are introduced in the “case-law” of Exodus 21. Exodus 21:12-14 discuss the consequences for those who deliberately murder. Those who accidentally kill (Ex. 21:13), may have their lives spared from avengers by fleeing to a city of refuge. Those who purposefully killed someone were not afforded such a safe-haven. “In the case of accidental death, a place of asylum is to be provided (later there were cities of refuge: Nu 35:6-34; Dt 19:1-13). But no sanctuary—not even at the altar itself (cf. 1 Ki 1:51; 2:28)—is to be given to the deliberate murderer” (Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Exodus*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis-Leviticus, Vol. 1, 490).

Cases involving non-fatal injury are discussed next (Ex. 21:18-27). Finally, cases that involve injury or death caused by livestock are explained (Ex. 21:28-36). These cases regarding the loss of human life assist application of the law, “Never murder.”

In the midst of this “case law,” the concept of retribution is introduced (Ex. 21:23-25). “The *lex talionis* was in force but apparently was not followed to the letter. Rather, it served to enforce the principle of proportional compensation (i.e., it kept compensation or punishment from exceeding the crime). Indeed, the context of Ex. 21:23 (the earliest expression of *lex talionis*) is a list of compensations for specific injuries. The development of the *lex talionis* was an important breakthrough in the ancient Near East in that it gave equal legal standing to the poor and curbed the callousness of the nobility” (D. G. Burke, “Murder; Murderer,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Revised, 434).

Talionis justice is introduced in a case involving men fighting who accidentally struck a pregnant woman. If the striker caused the mother to literally “drop” the child from her body prematurely, then a fine was to be paid. The amount of this fine was agreed upon by the husband of the assaulted wife and an impartial court (Ex. 21:22). If a “serious injury” to an eye of the mother or child resulted from such a fracas, then the offending party would have to give an “eye” or pay a fine equivalent to an eye to the leader of the offended family. If the life of the mother or child were lost, then “life for life” would be the just punishment (Ex. 21:23). “‘Life for life’ was usually enforced only for intentional injury (Ex. 21:12, 14). If death (of the mother or the child) was the result, it was treated as murder: ‘you are to take life for life.’ This was the same penalty as for capital offenses (attacking parents or murder, Ex. 21:12-17). The detail of eye, tooth, hand, foot, burn, wound, and bruise turned attention to the possible debilitating effects on surviving premature babies. Whether intentional or not, the death or injury of a woman or her child was the biblical test case for the protection of life and limb” (James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series, 204).

The value of life for the most vulnerable (women/children), also applied to slaves. If slaves suffered debilitating injuries by masters, they were to be freed (Ex. 21:26). If a master killed a slave (Ex. 21:20), he would be punished as a murder (Ex. 21:12-14). “‘Punished’ is, literally, ‘avenged,’ which meant death for death. The owner could not ransom his life with wealth (Num. 35:30-31). The death penalty for the murder of a slave was unique to Hebrew law” (Bruckner, 204).

The value of human life was so high for the Hebrews that harm to humans warranted judgment even upon injurious livestock and their neglectful owners (Ex. 21:28-36). *Talionis* justice was applied for injuries and deaths caused by unruly bulls. Fines for “life for life” were enforced upon negligent owners and their livestock if either were the causes of human injury or death.

We do well to honor our Creator by preserving the lives of those he created in his image.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 13 **murder** ““This verb (*rasah*) recalls the importance of creation theology, as well as the explicit post-flood command of Yahweh not to kill persons because they were created in the image of God. It does not, in this case, prohibit capital punishment (cf. Gen 9:6). God made humankind in his image, therefore, ‘Whoever pours out the blood of humankind, by humankind his blood shall be poured out, because in the image of God, [God] has made humankind.’ This poetic gem (cf. Gen 1:27) prohibits murdering persons and at the same time delivers a divine instruction to execute the person who would dare commit such a heinous crime against another human being. The rationale for the prohibition is a theological one—persons bear the image of God himself. It implicitly condemns disrespect for humans at any socio-economic level, for every person bears the Creator’s image (Prov 14:31; 17:5; 22:2). Therefore, the sixth commandment prohibits any human from killing another unless directed by God to do so through his approved social, legal, and jurisprudence system” (Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary, Vol. 2, 48-49).

v. 13 **murder** “The sixth commandment is one of the shortest. It is just two words in the original: *lo ratzach*, or ‘Don’t kill.’ But what kind of killing does the Bible have in mind? The Hebrew language has at least eight different words for killing, and the one used here has been chosen carefully. The word *ratzach* is never used in the legal system or in the military. There are other Hebrew words for the execution of a death sentence or for the kind of killing that a soldier does in mortal combat. Nor is the word *ratzach* ever used for hunting and killing animals. So the King James Version, which says, ‘Thou shalt not kill’ (Exod. 20:13), is somewhat imprecise. What the commandment forbids is not killing, but the *unlawful* killing of a human being” (Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God’s Glory*, 614).

Ex. 21:13 **intentionally** “This is a list of offenses that demand the death penalty: murder, striking one’s parents, kidnapping, or cursing one’s parents. Homicide contravenes the divine order established in Genesis 9:6. Since men and women are made in the image of God, no money or property settlement can atone for the sinful and premeditated destruction of people and the image of God in them. Accidental death is distinguished from intentional murder in vv. 13-14, which is an act of God. Additional expressions of unintentionality are found in Numbers 35:22-23; “without seeing”; “[since he was] not his enemy” and in Deuteronomy 19:4-5—“unintentionally” (Kaiser, 490).

v. 22 **no serious injury** “The scene described here is a brawl that results in the unintentional hitting of a pregnant bystander. The blow results in a premature birth. If, however, there is no ‘harm’, then a fine is set upon the offender. It should be noted that there is no dative added to the term ‘harm’, such as ‘to the woman’ or ‘to the child’. The reason is because both mother and child are covered by this law. There is no doubt about the fact that the law-breaker is to be fined: ‘strictly fined’ translates the Hebrew construction of an infinitive absolute followed by an imperfect of the same verb. It is emphatic. The process of imposing the fine begins with the husband of the woman making a financial claim upon the offender. That claim then goes before the judges” (Currid, 79).

v. 23 **serious injury** “If, however, harm comes to the mother or child then the concept of *lex talionis* comes into effect. It literally means ‘law of retaliation’, and it prescribes that the punishment for a crime must fit the crime, measure for measure (Lev. 24:17-22; Deut. 19:18-21). It is a principle of equivalence, and it is found in law codes throughout the history of the ancient Near East. Although often understood as barbaric, the law of retaliation in the Bible is a significant advancement over the practice of other ancient Near-Eastern societies. In Israel, these laws applied to all the people, whereas the laws of Hammurabi and others chiefly protected the rights of the privileged few, the aristocracy” (Currid, 80).

v. 27 **go free** “Freedom would be the obvious preference of a slave, rather than taking the master’s eye or tooth. This sets a trajectory of better and more restorative justice. Giving freedom to a slave who had lost his eye by a violent master was more effective compensation for the slave as well as the master, who would keep his eye, but forfeit the worker he had abused. These two cases establish a precedent for applying the law of *talion restoratively* rather than *strictly*. This level of protection for all slaves (vv. 20, 26-27) had no parallel in ancient Middle Eastern law codes” (James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series, 205).

v. 28 **bull** “If a bull not known to be dangerous suddenly gores someone fatally, the bull is to be killed, but the owner is to suffer no punishment beyond this quite considerable financial loss. If, however, the bull is known to be dangerous and its owner warned of the consequences of his negligence, a fatal attack is to be compensated by the death of both the bull and its owner. An indemnity payment is permitted in such a case, but it is an indemnity not for the life of the bull’s victim, but for the life of the owner, put into jeopardy not by malicious intent but by negligence. This payment was to be of an amount apparently set by the victim’s family” (John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 3, 324).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Do not dishonor and disobey God by carelessly harming or taking the life of others created in his image.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

When we read commandment six, it is tempting to think, “well, at least I can do this one.” Don’t murder. Short, sweet, to the point. You might think, I haven’t killed anybody and don’t plan to, let’s check the box and skip to commandment seven. However, anything God is trying to teach us goes much deeper. Ask yourself, “why?” Why did God put don’t murder in his top ten? The answer is found in Genesis 1:27. “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” God put his image in you, in your friends, and even in those people down the street that let their dog use your yard as a toilet. All of us have value to God, no matter how messed up we seem to be. It’s easy to forget. Jesus addressed this when the religious leaders boasted about keeping all the commandments. Matthew 5:21,22 (MSG) “You’re familiar with the command to the ancients, ‘Do not murder.’ I’m telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder. Carelessly call a brother ‘idiot!’ and you just might find yourself hauled into court. Thoughtlessly yell ‘stupid!’ at a sister and you are on the brink of hellfire. The simple moral fact is that words kill.” WOW, commandment six just got real. As we teach the commandments to our kids, we need to teach the spirit of the commandment, not just the do’s and don’ts. What we harbor in our heart matters just as much as what we do.

*Scrolls guest written by Kim Jack, MiniMix Coordinator

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Exodus 20:13, 21:12-36.

1. How do these verses show the importance God puts on valuing life?
2. How does the text show us sin leads to death?
3. How does following this command lead to life?

What Do You Think?

Read the story of Cain & Abel in Genesis 4 together as a family. How could Cain have kept from getting angry with his little brother and what should he have done?

What Do You Do?

Practice lifting up family members with words & actions. Write a note to your siblings or a friend telling them what you love and are thankful for about them.

CORE COMPETENCY: Love

I love and forgive others no matter what.

MEMORY VERSE: Galatians 5:1

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.”

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week’s verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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