

God's Plan of Salvation:

1. Hear - Romans 10:17
2. Believe - Mark 16:16
3. Repent - Acts 2:38
4. Confess - Romans 10:10
5. Be baptized - Acts 22:16
6. Live faithfully - Revelation 2:10

Announcements:

Sick: Mrs. Calvert, Mr. and Mrs. Douglas, Mr. Douglas' mother, Mr. and Mrs. Hadley, Mrs. Kelly Hall, Mrs. Elizabeth Jackson, Ms. Kim (Ashley Law's mother), Lamar Mathis, Mr. and Mrs. Pete Newsome, Mr. Winns.

If you would be interested in any of the following ways to study the Bible, feel free to let us know:

- Home Bible Study - We will come into your home or other place you feel comfortable and study the Bible with you. Bible questions are welcome in these studies and we will seek to give a Bible answer.
- Correspondence courses - We will be glad to mail you a correspondence lesson that you can fill out and mail back to us and we will send you the next lesson.
- Call us with your Bible question - #503-707-6014.
- Visit our website:
www.oakgrovechurchofchristjenningsflorida.com
- Come and visit - We always strive to have good, practical Bible instruction at each of our assemblies.

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Principles for Handling End-of-Life Decisions

By Derek Long

Advances in medical technology have led us to be able to extend a person's life longer than it would have been possible to have done years ago. Our medical system contains things such as advance directives, do not resuscitate orders, etc. which people use to express their wishes regarding what kind of care/life-saving measures they want to receive or do not wish to receive. Another challenge arises when the individual with a medical problem is no longer competent to make their own medical decisions and a person is given a medical power of attorney to make these decisions for another. Christians who draw toward the last stages of life or have a loved one who is drawing near to the final stages of life may be confronted with how to make various decisions relating to these subjects. This article will not be able to address every question a person may have relating to end of life decisions. What are some Bible principles which will help us navigate these questions as they arise?

Many decisions regarding end-of-life are not specifically addressed in Scripture. The Bible does not speak about a feeding tube, life support, etc. in those terms. While the Bible may not specifically address a certain topic it does contain the principles needed in order to make a godly decision in every situation (2 Peter 1:3). When the Bible does not specifically address a practice, we are left to take the principles contained in Scripture which apply to these practices and apply them to the situations we are in. God's word teaches people who mature spiritually should have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:12-14) and it takes such spiritual maturity to help answer questions regarding end-of-life decisions.

One principle we need to remember when handling end-of-life decisions is all life is important and valuable regardless of the individual's quality of life as perceived by man. God has given to mankind life (Genesis 2:7; Zechariah 12:1), He holds our breath in His hand (Daniel 5:23), and alone has the right to end human life. The taking of another's life is condemned by God (Genesis 9:6). Efforts are being made in various

segments of society to legalize the practice of physician assisted suicide. The “right to die” movement is gaining traction among some but is nothing short of legalized murder. Arguments are made making it seem like a humane and merciful action. However, God condemns murder (Romans 1:29; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Timothy 1:9; Revelation 21:8; 22:15) and Christians should not participate in or approve of (Romans 1:32) the practice of physician assisted suicide. Christians who recognize the sinfulness of physician-assisted suicide must also be careful not to begin thinking their life is meaningless or pointless. As one ages days come which are no longer as pleasant as they once were in one’s youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1). However, God still has things for us to do in our old age (Psalm 92:12-15). Peter, Paul, and others faced the prospect of death without fear but at the same time with an awareness of the fact they still had work to do till that time came (Philippians 1:21-23; 2 Peter 1:12-15). Christians need to be ready to depart and be with Christ but at the same time need to recognize they have important work to do till that time arrives. Even if a person is unable to do what they once did, they still can do valuable work for the Lord. Let’s avoid resigning to death because we feel there is nothing important left for us to do here upon the earth or our quality of life is not what we would like it to be.

Is the cessation of treatment for an illness equivalent to physician assisted suicide? If one ceases a medical treatment out of a desire to kill themselves, it certainly falls into the category of suicide and would be condemned as murdering oneself. If one ceases medical treatment because of the potential risks of continuing the medical treatment, the fact the medical treatment is no longer proving effective, etc. it appears to be in a different category than attempting to kill oneself. For example, if a person was taking treatments for cancer which were no longer working, a person may decide to stop the treatment to avoid the side-effects of the treatment realizing the treatment is not likely to extend his life anyway. Such is not done from a desire to end one’s life but from a desire to live as long as possible without further complications because of the medical treatment. A thought which might distinguish the removal of medical care from the practice of physician assisted suicide is physician assisted suicide is introducing something into a person which becomes the cause of death. The removal of medical care is simply allowing the disease to naturally progress. One thing which has helped me think through the distinction is to ask the question: What is causing the person to die? If the person or a doctor is doing something which is causing them to die, then such would be murder. If the thing causing a person to die is the disease, then the doctor or patient is not causing the death. The disease is killing the person. Based upon my knowledge, the removal of medical treatment is normally only done when it is clear there is no treatment which will cure the disease.

A question which seems to be a little more complicated is: Does a person have to pursue every medical option available to prolong life? The Bible clearly endorses the medical profession (Matthew 9:12; Colossians 4:14). Therefore, the Bible is not opposed to people seeking to find medical help for the physical illnesses, etc. Christianity would teach us to take care of our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Some life-saving measures taken could be prompted by an unwillingness of the person to face death. Christians though should not live in fear (dread) of death (Hebrews 2:14-15). Medical treatments come with certain risks and it is always a decision a person must weigh as to whether the risks of the treatment outweigh the risks of not treating the disease. A person does this even when the disease may not necessarily imminently end their life.

What does the Bible teach about using pain medications to help a terminally ill patient not feel all the pain of the dying process? God’s word teaches us to seek to provide comfort to others (Matthew 25:31-46; James 1:27) and this would appear to apply to those dying as well. 1 Timothy 5:23 speaks of using wine as a treatment for some stomach problem Timothy had. God authorizes using medicine. Using medicine to treat pain in a dying individual is not condemned by any principle and is thus authorized under the authorization to use medicine. It seems Scripture is not opposed to using medicine to help one who is facing death. It is true pain can serve a beneficial role (Psalm 119:67, 71; 2 Corinthians 12:10) but such does not mean we cannot seek to lessen the pain we face throughout life. Sometimes a person may feel death is the result of sin entering the world and so they need to experience all the pain accompanying death (Genesis 3:19). However, such an argument would also mean a person could not take pain medication ever in life. The same logic would also mean a person could not do things to make their working the ground easier because it was part of the punishment for sin as well. People are still going to face death even if they are administered pain medicines to lessen the pain of dying. We also are not entirely sure such people face no pain whatsoever in dying. A question may also arise regarding what about the idea of needing to remain sober (1 Peter 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8). Anesthesia is normally administered during a surgery to keep a person from feeling the pain of the surgery. A person should not want to be anesthetized throughout their whole life but such may be appropriate at certain points in a person’s life. The need to be sober does not cause many Christians to question anesthesia during a surgery so why would it cause problems for the person nearing death. A danger I could see with being completely out of it as one dies is then a person will not have the mental faculties available to make corrections if corrections need to be made. Instead of looking to make corrections at the last moment though, we need to go ahead and make our corrections right away.