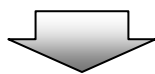


Euthanasia Sermon Series – Introduction

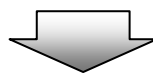
Death is a reality with which all world-views, all cultures, and all individuals must ultimately deal. Euthanasia has strong media-interest, and unexpected death is the mainstay of news headlines. Yet on an individual level we rarely talk about it, and very few are prepared when it comes. In the Gospel of Luke, God says to one man, shockingly, “This very night your life will be demanded of you” – and the emptiness of his life is thrown into instant and harsh relief. In this series we look at the meaning of life and death and suffering in the Bible, engaging with the arguments for euthanasia, and suggesting how a Christian might prepare for this hardest of realities. You can also find these devotions and other resources for the series online at <http://stjamescroydon.org.au/sermons>.

Day	Wk1: The Biblical Position	Wk2: Secular Objections	Wk3: Preparing for Death
1	Rom 8:18-30 How does suffering fit into the plans of God?	Luke 12:15-31 What misunderstandings about life does Jesus warn against?	Phil 1:18b-30 If death is better, why does Paul decide he should keep living?
2	Gen 9:1-7 What reasons does God give for treating life responsibly?	Job 2:1-10 What's the difference between Job's attitude and his wife's?	1 Cor 15:14-20 How is Jesus' death and resurrection important for our attitude to life and death?
3	2 Sam 1:1-16 What do you think of the man's reasons for killing Saul?	Lev 19:32-37 How does God's model of love expose the narrowness of love in our society?	Eccles 12 What is the Teacher's advice in preparing for old age?
4	1 Peter 4:12-19 How could someone ever rejoice in the middle of suffering?	Prov 31:10-31 Where does the noble woman's dignity come from in this passage?	James 4:13-17 How should knowledge of our mortality affect your life now?
5	Heb 12:1-11 Why would God willingly put us through suffering?	Job 7:9-21 Job 30:15-23 What is right and what is wrong about Job's complaints to God? (see Job 42)	Rev 20:13-21:7 What encouragement does this picture give you for life now?



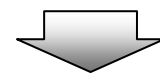
Pray for:

- A clear, biblical understanding of death and suffering
- Comfort for those recently touched by death and disaster
- Opportunities to minister to others who are suffering
- State and federal law-makers who have a say on euthanasia and on funding for aged and palliative care



Pray for:

- Wisdom in discussing euthanasia with friends & workmates etc.
- Forgiveness for any wrong cultural attitudes you have found yourself going along with
- Strength to treat people with dignity despite their circumstances
- Fair coverage of Christian leaders in the press on euthanasia



Pray for:

- Courage to live for others and not for your own preferences
- Praise God's great work in defeating death at the cross
- God to refine and discipline you now in preparation for hard choices later
- Christians facing death for their faith in places hostile to Christianity

Prayer for the Series: Oh Lord, death and suffering lie open before you – how much more my own heart! You know my anxious thoughts – so on this difficult topic will you grant me right thinking, humble speaking, and faithful living? In the face of death I put my trust in the name of the Lord Jesus, and his death for me. Amen.

A Euthanasia Primer

Euthanasia is presently legal in Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, and in two U.S. states. It was briefly legal in the N.T., but then banned by the Howard Government. The Greens plan to re-propose euthanasia legislation in NSW after the March election, while the Federal Greens are pushing for the overturning of Howard's law for the territories.

Euthanasia is: A deliberate dose of drugs administered by a doctor and requested by a patient to end their suffering due to a terminal illness.

Euthanasia is not: Withdrawal of treatment leading to death from the underlying illness – this is legal and presently happens in hospitals.

Euthanasia is not: Drugs administered with the intention of relieving pain, but with the knowledge that they may hasten the process of death from the underlying illness – again this is legal and currently happens.

Euthanasia is not: Lethal drugs given at the discretion of doctors or by family request, without consent from the patient. That's murder.

Prime Minister, Julia Gillard (2010)

"Intellectually, you would say, people should be able to make their own decisions. But I find it very hard to conceptualise the sort of safeguards that we would need if we did say that euthanasia was legal."

Governor General, Bill Hayden

"There is a point when the succeeding generations deserve to be disencumbered - to coin a clumsy word - of some unproductive burdens"
(Speaking to the Royal Australian College of Physicians in 1995)

"Dignity in the Terminally Ill"

"Less has been said about the issue of hope, although among the dying, this notion seems to depend more on a person's ability to find or maintain a sense of meaning or purpose than on prognostic expectation. Thus, strategies that enhance meaning and purpose could be integral to maintaining dignity. Care that confers honour, and recognises the deservedness of respect and esteem of every individual - despite their dependency, infirmity, and fragility - could lie at the heart of care that conserves dignity"

(A Canadian study conducted in 1996-2000 with 213 terminally ill cancer patients)

South Australian MP, Sandra Kanck (2006)

"The issue is largely not about pain, although this can be part of it. Ultimately, the issue is about quality of life and dignity. People whose lives have no quality, or who face the prospect that in the near future their life will progress to that point, have few options available."

Palliative Care Expert, Dr Megan Best

"We do not need legal euthanasia for people to have a say in what happens at the end of life. Many of the fears held by people in our community are needless. They think that they would want the option of euthanasia when they face their own death, but evidence suggests that most of them won't"

(Speaking to the Sydney Anglican Synod in 2010)

STUDIES AND SURVEYS

The Remmerlink Report: In the Netherlands, where euthanasia is legal, a commission was set up to investigate end-of-life decision making. In the year studied, out of 130,000 documented deaths, there were 2,300 cases of legal euthanasia, and 1,000 cases without clear and explicit consent. That figure has continued as the yearly average since the report.

Australian Polls: In Sept 2010, an AusPoll of 1500 people found 76% in favour of changing euthanasia laws. Highest support was amongst people 45-65yrs (80%), but the lowest among the very next bracket, 65-74yrs (18%). A NewsPoll of 1200 people commissioned by "Dying with Dignity" in Oct 2009 found 85% support for euthanasia, but again support declined as age increased. The wording of the survey question was also leading:

"If a hopelessly ill patient, experiencing unrelievable suffering, with absolutely no chance of recovering asks for a lethal dose, should a doctor be allowed to provide a lethal dose, or not?"

Euthanasia Advocate, Dr Philip Nitschke

"The thing that irks me most about people who oppose this issue is that they are quite keen to shove their worldview down other people's throats... The fact that we've created a society where people have to go to these lengths to get what they desperately want, which is control, I think is disgusting. I would lay it right back at the feet of the politicians who have taken away access to decent legislation."

(Speaking to Andrew Denton on Enough Rope in 2007)

Further Reading

Links have been shortened – just type into your browser address bar
Or, to save typing, these links are all listed together at bit.ly/iioh83.

Dr Megan Best on euthanasia and palliative care: bit.ly/gAHVyV

"Right to die polls no basis for radical change", *The Australian*: bit.ly/glda3h

"Fight for life to the last breath", *The Australian*: bit.ly/eZ33br

"Euthanasia Question Needs Wider Discussion", *SMH*: bit.ly/g5rLWo

"Who is euthanasia really for?", *The Punch*: bit.ly/dSuV7W

Euthanasia Page, *Anglican Social Issues Executive* bit.ly/gg0c9Y

Tasmanian Senator, Helen Polley (2010)

"If assisted suicide was legalised and accepted by the community, how could expectations for people surrounding the patient influence his or her decision, particularly if the patient feels she or he is a burden to the family? Some would feel pressure to resort to assisted suicide when financial and institutional resources are scarce."