



Euthanasia – a Christian Response!

The word Euthanasia comes from two Greek words – eu –good and thanatos – death. This word means “good” or “happy death.” One definition that has been used is:- “the intentional killing by an ACT or OMISSION of one who’s life is deemed not worth living.” Practice of euthanasia was widespread in the ancient world and is an intricate part of many primitive societies today.

Today certain states in the USA permit Euthanasia and in Europe three countries including Holland and Belgium have legalised the right of assisted euthanasia. There has been a massive move in this country to legalise euthanasia supported by high profile cases such as the Diane Pretty case from Leagrave, Luton. Recently Christian MP’s have been writing letters to churches warning of that fact that this law is coming before the House of Commons once again.

Different definitions of Euthanasia :-

Active Euthanasia – This is where a patient asks to end their lives and a doctor assists this ending of life through medical means. Example by injecting patient lethal dose of painkiller. In this definition there is a active intervention by the doctor to end life.

Passive Euthanasia – This is where there is a deliberate withdrawing or withholding of medical treatment which would help a person to live longer. This is done with the intention of ending the person’s life.

Voluntary Euthanasia – Performed at the request of the person who wants to die.

Involuntary Euthanasia – Ending of life of an able patient without their permission or against their will.

Non voluntary Euthanasia – Ending of the life of a patient who is unable or incapable of giving their permission. Carried out with their best interests at heart.

Physician Assisted Suicide – Doctor only prescribes the lethal dose – rather than him giving it. It is then left to the patient whether they take the drug or not.

Discuss – Which of these ways of ending a person’s life do you think a Christian could go with? (If any)

What are the arguments for and against each one of these ideas of euthanasia?

Rules governing Euthanasia in those countries that have legalised it!

- The patient must have a incurable disease.
- He or she must be experiencing unbearable suffering
- The patient must be of sound mind and have given consent
- Termination of life must be carried out in a medically appropriate manner.

Argument For Euthanasia

Because of medical technology people are kept alive longer during illnesses that are normally fatal. This results in people suffering longer and their bodies going through more extreme breakdown before death. Therefore euthanasia should be used to correct this balance of drug and technology manipulation of the body by the person having the say when they should die.

This decision after all would only be given to someone who was a competent adult who is suffering unbearable pain through a terminal illness.

As a human being we have certain inherent rights. One of those rights is to our dignity and honour as a person. Many of the treatments and illnesses themselves rob a person of that dignity and keep them alive long after the person ceases to have dignity or even the basic privileges of humanity. As a result a person should be able to say enough is enough and chose both how they die and also how the family will remember them.

Most of the protesters against euthanasia come from religious groups who hold views that the majority of society does not hold. Therefore why should this small diverse group in society impose its views on the rest of society and restrict its freedom of choice. After all some polls say that 85% of British people say that they are in favour of well regulated euthanasia.

In most European Countries it is not a crime to assist in the suicide of a terminally ill adult. In Britain it is. Therefore British law should be brought into line with the rest of the European Union.

Arguments Against Euthanasia

We are all created in the image of God and therefore human life has a supreme value to it. there are over 60 references in the bible that talk about the great value of human life and the need to honour it. **In the Word** of God the six commandment makes it clear that we shall not murder. That is taking about taking a life when it is not necessary and outside the bounds of self defence. **The third argument** comes from the idea that God Himself is a sovereign being. He is the one that gives us life and therefore He should be the one to take it away again. Also Scripture tells us there is value in human suffering.

The argument that drugs and technology prolong the suffering of the patient is just plain wrong. First of all technology or drugs are not used unless they will significantly improve the quality of the patient life or give possibility of a cure. In today’s world treatment is not given without this criteria being meant because there is a significant question today about the cost of treatment. Drugs today are so powerful that they can almost completely take away the pain – even if it means shortening the person’s life.