

What About Euthanasia, Doctor Assisted Suicide, and the Terri Schiavo Case?

Introduction: Sometimes called euthanasia or mercy killing. The hemlock society (Socrates drank hemlock to commit suicide) is an organization that promotes it; the government has prosecuted cases (Jack Kervorkian in Michigan); voters have voted on it (in Oregon); Holland has legalized it; Hitler was condemned for similar things; and Terri Schiavo was “legally” starved to death in the USA in March 2005. But what does God think?

The Human Claim: Human suffering is purposeless, degrading, affects quality of life, takes away one’s dignity. The merciful thing to do in extreme and hopeless cases is to terminate life.

Questions: (for some I have no answer, for some I have only a personal opinion)

1. Do we really want euthanasia to be a role of doctors, devoted to saving life? (Would you want a doctor working on your health who is not committed to to your healing?)
2. Is the manner of suicide always humane and truly merciful? (There have been cases of prolonged agony; starving one of food and water for days is viewed inhumane even to animals).
3. What about the mental competency of those requesting suicide? (Some have had previous psychiatric treatment).
4. Who should be allowed to make the decision? (Some in a coma are unable; disputes arise between members of the same family; what about living wills, power of attorney agreements, etc.?)
5. What constitutes a truly hopeless case? (There have been many cases where doctors have given up only to be amazed later by a so-called “miraculous” recovery).

Not Under Consideration: The withholding of certain modern medical technologies to unnaturally prolong “life” (eg. artificial life-support) is not, it seems to me, the same as doctor assisted death, self inflicted death, or willful neglect. “Do Not Resuscitate” orders not under consideration here.

How Does God View It? (Though no specific passage of Scripture addresses the topic of euthanasia, still there are relevant Biblical references. Think on these things).

1. Even in death, the Lord, not self must prevail. Romans 14:7-8 says, *For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.*
2. The body is to be viewed as sacred, not ours ultimately to do with as we please. I Cor. 6:19-20 says, *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you*

have from God, and you are not your own?...therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

3. Faith in God produces expectancy of life - II Tim 4:6,18 says, *For I am already poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand...And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom.*

4. It is in God we live, move and have our being - Acts 17:28. It is in Christ that all things consist - Colossians 1:17.

5. If it is a crime (against the law) then we must abide by civil ordinances - I Peter 2:13

6. It may rob God of future service - eg. compare Judas and Peter.

7. In some cases, it may condemn one to hell - In Acts 1:25, Judas is described as having gone to his own place after killing himself, rather than to be with God or to Paradise.

8. God, not man, claims to possess the ultimate power in death - Eccl. 8:8 reads, *No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, and no one has power in the day of death...*

9. God holds our breath - Isaiah 42:5; Daniel 5:23; Acts 17:25. He breathed into Adam the breath of life and continues to maintain that for all men.

10. Both in living and dying, Christ should be magnified in our bodies - Philippians 1:20

Is Human Suffering Purposeless? It can produce:

1. Heavenly longing (II Corinthians 5:1-5; Romans 8:20-23)

2. Character (Romans 5:3-4)

3. Gratitude (thanksgivings for past good health, faithful friends, God's mercy, etc.)

4. Greater Dependence on God and Humility (II Cor. 12:7-10; James 5:11)

5. Spiritual maturity (James 1:2-5; I Peter 1:6-7)

6. More intense praying; something we always ought to do, but often do not.

7. A positive impact on others (Paul knew his suffering caused others to more boldly preach - Philippians 1:14; though wishing to die, his holding on promoted progress in others who remained - 1:21-26; there may be some who come to know God or even obey the gospel when they witness how one deals with suffering or even breath there last - *When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"* - Mark 15:39

Conclusion: Though we might pray for death, as our earthly sojourn worsens, let us leave the matter in God's hands.