

Euthanasia

By Jack Greenoe

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Genesis 1:26–27 in the section **Its in the Book**. Especially study the comments on God’s creating humans in His image and His relationship to humans. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: How do you think God views human life? Do humans have the right to decide when and how to die?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Deuteronomy 32:39 in the section **It’s in the Book**. Prepare to explain the peace of mind in knowing that God allows bad things to happen so He can bring something out of it for His glory. Since God told us that He gives life and He causes death, how do you think He feels about humans helping other humans die prematurely?

Assignment Three

Read Jeremiah 10:23. When we read that God directs our steps, the Bible does not imply that we are mindless robots programmed by God to do what He wants us to do. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Since no one other than Jesus has ever lived a sinless life, how exactly does God direct our steps when we have the ability to make decisions?

Scripture to Memorize

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Philippians 1:21

Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will be able to discern and articulate the biblical approach to human life.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

If you have a family pet, you will probably face the day when the veterinarian will put your pet to a peaceful death. Who do you think will make this decision about when to end the pet's life?

We must understand how much more God values humans than animals. Unlike our pets, we should leave the death of our loved ones in God's hands. We don't want someone we love to suffer, and we do want that person to wake up in the presence of the Lord, but the timing of that is not our call.

Created in God's Image

Read Genesis 1:26–27 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 27. God created man in His own image. Humans don't actually look like God because God is spirit (John 4:24) and we have physical bodies. We are made in His image in that we were designed with the same moral attributes He has. Because of this "image of God" issue, Christians embrace the idea that human life is special. Animals were not created in the image of God and do not have the rational, moral or social capacities that enable them to have a relationship with God.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: How do you think God views human life? Do humans have the right to decide when and how to die?

Discussion Questions

Why should doctors not have the final decision over ending someone's life medically? What is the difference between mercy killing and murder? What is the difference between physician-assisted suicide and someone ending his or her life without a doctor's help? Why is this God's decision?

On Your Own

Since God speaks through His Word, find several Bible verses that describe how God knows and controls every aspect of human life (example: the hairs on our heads are numbered). Write the references below.

God Gives Life and Death

Read Deuteronomy 32:39 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 39. kill . . . make alive. We may sometimes think we are a big deal, but God is the only reason any of us exists. Your parents had something to do with your arrival on earth, but the truth is that God designed you and then allowed you to be born who you are. He could have chosen not to.

Samuel was eventually born to his mother Hannah, but God had closed her womb for years (see 1 Samuel 1). Life is His call, and so is death.

Verse 39. wound . . . heal. The Hebrew word for “heal” is used frequently in the Old Testament, whether it’s God doing the healing or a physician. The word for *wounded* literally means to thoroughly strike. God allows disaster, disease and even the death of others to teach us certain things and to accomplish His purposes.

Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.” To the Christ follower, there is no such thing as luck or chance. Everything that happens has a reason, and it’s our mission to find out what God is teaching us through all that occurs.

Verse 39. none that can deliver. The word for *deliver* literally means “to snatch.” Living in the center of God’s will, whether the circumstances seem good or bad, is a great place to be.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now explain the peace of mind in knowing that God allows bad things to happen so He can bring something out in it that would give Him glory. Since God told us He gives life and He causes death, how do you think He feels about humans helping other humans die prematurely?

Discussion Question

Why would the God of mercy allow people to suffer in the days leading up to death?

On Your Own

Do you have members of your family who are elderly or near death? Make a priority to spend as much time as possible with them in their remaining years. Call them more often. You cannot imagine how much they enjoy hearing your voice. They are aware of how little time they have remaining. You will bless them, and they will share amazing wisdom and insight with you. In the space below, write your next plan for contacting someone.

God Directs Our Steps

Read Jeremiah 10:23 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 23. the way of man. The Hebrew people had fallen into idolatry, and God was going to allow their captivity as a result. While reflecting on this, Jeremiah observed that God directs our way. The word for way means “a path or a journey.” Again, God sets the route for us to travel. We have to move forward, but He sets the course. **not in himself.** People often think they are the masters of their own destinies. Nothing could be further from the truth. God directs our paths, and His Word is a light for our feet and for the path (Psalm 119:105).

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: Since no one other than Jesus has ever lived a sinless life, how exactly does God direct our steps when we have the ability to make decisions?

On Your Own

We often make the mistake of developing plans and asking God to bless them. That’s actually backward! A wise disciple will prayerfully seek God’s will through His Word and ask Him to unveil His plan. Once the path is clear, we then can take the steps. Disciples should understand that prematurely ending someone’s life, however merciful that may seem, actually would mean that we were operating in our own plans and not God’s plans. Making decisions that belong to God lacks wisdom and is sin.

In the space below, write a brief prayer, asking Jesus to be your only guide when people you love are close to death.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

For the most part, we have our lives in front of us. Death is not something to seriously contemplate since life has really not even hit its peak. However, great-grandparents and grandparents will be approaching death in short order, and disciples will be faced with that reality.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is all about the assured hope of spending eternity in the presence of God based on personal faith in His Son. Most believers feel peace concerning heaven, but unpleasant feelings concerning growing older and dying.

Fear of Death—Unbelievers can experience the specter of fear of death. The believer in Jesus should not fear death. First Corinthians 15:26 says, “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

Fear of Dependence—The elderly face a fear of dependence on the government or the family, and neither option is pleasant.

Fear of Pain—The elderly or those with serious diseases can experience the fear of unbearable pain. Wouldn't it be great if we could all simply die in our sleep and then wake up in heaven? Unfortunately, it doesn't always work that way. The truth is that no one wants to see Grandma suffer in her last days. Sometimes we mercifully end the lives of old and impaired pets to eliminate suffering. So the question presents itself: Why wouldn't we give Grandma a shot that would cause her to die and wake up in heaven?

Bottom line, God is in control of our lives. He is sovereign. He gives us a measure of free will, and we are morally responsible and accountable for choosing His will alone. He gave us the Bible to assist us in the choices we should make that would lead to lives that would please Him.

Related to life and death, 1 Samuel 2:6 says, “The LORD kills and brings to life; He brings down to Sheol [death] and raises up.” You didn't ask to be born. You had no vote in the matter. Similarly, we shouldn't have a vote as to when to die. Rushing that decision for ourselves or for loved ones oversteps our bounds and is therefore sinful.

Follow up Question

When our eldest relative approaches death, is your heart prepared to allow God to be the only One who decides the time for that death?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.