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## Euthanasia - Biblical Perspective

The Bible tells us that human beings are unique amongst God's creatures in being made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) and it is on this basis, that God introduces to all humankind the death penalty for murder (Genesis 9:6,7).

The prohibition against killing *legally innocent* people is later formalised in the sixth commandment, 'You shall not murder' (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17). There is no provision for compassionate killing, even at the person's request and there is no recognition of a 'right to die' as all human life belongs to God (Psalms 24:1). Our lives are not actually our own. Suicide – as a choice by a person not afflicted by mental illness is therefore wrong, as is assisted suicide.

Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount that that we should go beyond the mere letter of the sixth commandment to fulfil the very spirit of love on which it is based (Matthew 5:21,22). We are called to walk in Jesus' footsteps, to be imitators of God, to love as he himself loved (1 John 2:6; Ephesians 5:1,2; John 13:34, 35).

It is often argued that we have only two equally undesirable alternatives to choose from - either 'living hell' or the euthanasia needle – both of which are imperfect and unloving solutions.

But there is a third way – loving like Jesus loved. We are to love our neighbour as we love ourselves – fully and without reservation. This love calls us to give our whole selves to the love and service of others by expending our time, money and energy in finding compassionate solutions to human suffering. (Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 8:34; Philippians 2:4-11; Galatians 6:2).

It has found practical shape historically in the hospice movement and in good palliative care - pioneered in large part by Christian doctors and nurses. When a



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person's physical, social, psychological and spiritual needs are adequately tended to, requests for euthanasia are very rare indeed.

But perhaps the most powerful Christian argument against euthanasia is that death is not the end. God's intervention through Christ's death and resurrection for our sins (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3) means that through the eyes of faith we can look forward to a new world after death with God where there is 'no more death or mourning or crying or pain' (Revelation 21:4).

For those, however, who do not know God euthanasia is not a 'merciful release' at all. It may rather be propelling them towards a judgement for which they are unprepared. It may be the worst thing we could ever do for them! **(Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:15) Euthanasia is wrong because God says it is wrong. Instead he points us to a better way, offering hope, love and compassionate care.**

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