

Equipping the Church For Life – Lesson 9 – Student Guide

The Other End of Life

Key Concept – God gives life value and purpose and decides the time of our death.

Gospel Focus – Christ’s victory over death and the grave makes death a gain and makes life meaningful.

Bible Study Review of DVD
The Other End of Life

The God-given Value of Human Life

Read Isaiah 43:1-2a. What has our Triune God done that gives value to every human life?

Why is this so important to remember and to teach our children?

What is God’s answer to the question, “What is man?” (Psalm 8:5-8)

The Christian View of Death

Read Romans 6:23a. Luther saw death as law. Why is it important to be reminded of this?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:55-57. Luther saw death as Gospel. Why is it important to be reminded of this?

The Christian View of Suffering

Read Romans 8:28. We quote this verse often, especially to others who are experiencing suffering in their lives. It’s not always as easy to believe it when the suffering happens to us. What is our assurance that this promise is true and comforting? (Read Romans 8:32)

Why can it be said that we have a “backwards” God?

Briefly discuss this quote from the DVD. “God not only blesses; He decides what blessings are.”

Why is it important to keep in mind this Christian view of suffering?

The Christian’s Tension

Read Philippians 1:23-24. What was Paul’s tension?

Who determines the “more necessary”?

Making Decisions

A Christian has the right to refuse treatment or to withdraw existing treatment. However, what is the decision based upon?

What are some questions we can ask about the treatment when faced with this decision?

Bible Study Guide: The Other End of Life DVD (LFL1409DVD)

Discuss these two quotes from the DVD. “We can and should allow the dying to die. We must never intend for the death of the living.” “As long as God gives life, He gives life meaning and purpose.”

As discussed above, Christians do have the right to discontinue treatment or not to start treatment under certain conditions. But if this right is not exercised in a God-pleasing manner, where does it lead? What is the “slippery slope” talked about in the DVD?

What if we make wrong decisions?

Christian Compassion

What does the word “compassion” really mean?

What are some practical ways we can “suffer with” others, to help them feel “cared for and about”?

Advance Directives

The two main types:

1. Living Will – Deals with making decisions in advance about the kind of treatment you may or may not want should you be unable to make such decisions in the future.
2. Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care – Allows you to appoint a person or persons to make health care decisions for you should you be unable to do so.

What are some problems we might have with Living Wills?

What if you have a Living Will?

What are the advantages of a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care?

For Life Application

Discuss the following questions.

1. Who determines the time of our death?

World’s Answer – We do. The world says that we should have the right to determine the time and manner of our death.

Word’s Answer – God. There is a time to die (Ecclesiastes 3:2), but that time is in God’s hands (Psalm 31:15).

2. How do we view death?

World's Answer – A friend. The world sees death as a friend to save us from suffering.

Word's Answer – A defeated enemy. Christ's death and resurrection defeated death and makes it a door to life.

3. How do we view life?

World's Answer – “Eat, drink, be merry.” The world seeks pleasure.

Word's Answer – Purposeful. As long as God gives life, God gives life purpose.

Equipping the Saints Homework

1. During the week find ways to “suffer with” (have compassion on) those dealing with end-of-life issues. Visit members in the hospital or in care centers or senior living facilities or who are homebound. Take them for a ride or bring them to church for a special meal or program or concert. Visit them with groups like a confirmation or Sunday school class. Our children can learn much from our seniors about the faith and living the faith.

For those who are able, you might think of some “project” they can help with. Examples may include things like stuffing some envelopes for a church mailing, knitting or crocheting booties or caps or scarves for babies and needy children, anything you can think of to help them feel cared for and needed.

2. With other interested people and appropriate congregational committees or boards, plan an “Advance Directive Workshop.” Have a For Life Christian attorney discuss your state's living will and go over some of the legal aspects involved in a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care. Another idea would be to order copies of the Durable Power of Attorney—Christian Version along with the supplement from Christian Life Resources. Have a workshop where everyone goes through it. Using the supplement, your pastor or other leader could act as facilitator.
3. Further reading from the end-of-life commentaries in *GOD'S WORD for Life: The Abundant Life*, page 1242a; *An Able God for Disabled People*, page 1354a; *God Gives Purpose to Your Life*, page 1396a; *Have Hope! God is in Control*, page 1308a; *Making Life and Death Decisions in Hope*, page 1406a, and *The Theology of the Cross: Making Sense of Suffering*, page 1334a.

Resources

1. GOD'S WORD for Life Bible (www.lutheransforlife.org/store-gods-word-for-life/)
2. LFL End-of-Life resources at www.cph.org. Click on Books and Bibles, Sanctity of Life, Topical Area, End-of-Life. We particularly recommend. *A Christian Guide to Ethical Decision Making; Ventilators, Feeding Tubes and other End-of-Life issues; God's Love in Human Suffering.*

Bible Study Guide: The Other End of Life DVD (LFL1409DVD)

3. “Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care—Christian Version” from Christian Life Resources (www.christianliferesources.com/?/mdstatement/index.php). This is a highly recommended free download. It is state specific and comes with an explanatory supplement.

Equipping the Church For Life – Lesson 9 – Leader Guide

The Other End of Life

Key Concept – God gives life value and purpose and decides the time of our death.

Gospel Focus – Christ’s victory over death and the grave makes death a gain and makes life meaningful.

Bible Study Review of DVD
The Other End of Life

[This presentation and study guide are designed to be flexible. *The Other End of Life* is fifty-three minutes long. If you have used other DVDs in the *Equipping the Church For Life* series, you may want to skip the introduction which is three minutes. You may view the entire DVD in one session and then use this study guide for another session of similar length. For an adult Bible study type setting where the second session may be a week later, you might want to stop the DVD where indicated in this leader’s guide and then cover the related study questions. You are also supplied with much additional material and resources. So this lesson could easily be expanded beyond two weeks. We invite you to develop it as you think best for your situation.]

The God-given Value of Human Life

Read Isaiah 43:1-2a. What has our Triune God done that gives value to every human life? [This section is a brief review of the concepts in *The Handiwork of God DVD*. Every human life is created by God the Father, redeemed by God the Son, and someone God the Holy Spirit desires to call into an eternal relationship with Him.]

Why is this so important to remember and to teach our children? [We live in a society where many see no intrinsic value in human life whatsoever. Review some of the quotes in the DVD. What is man? “A curious accident in a backwater.” (Bertrand Russell) “Just a bit of slime on the planet.” (Peter Otkins, Oxford) “A fortuitous cosmic after thought, a tiny little twig on the enormously aborescent bush of life.” (Stephen Jay Could, Harvard)]

What is God’s answer to the question, “What is man?” (Psalm 8:5-8)

The Christian View of Death

Read Romans 6:23a. Luther saw death as law. Why is it important to be reminded of this? [We live in a world that sees death as just another part of life, as our friend, our savior and rescuer from our problems. But death is our enemy, not something God intended, the wages of sin, a reminder of God’s wrath.]

Luther’s quotes from the DVD: “The death of a man is, however, an infinite and eternal misery and wrath.” “Our death is a more terrible thing than all death not only of other living beings, but also than the troubles and death of other men. What of it when Epicurus dies? He not only does not know that there is a God, but even fails to understand his own

misery and recognize the disaster which he is experiencing. Christians, however, and God-fearing men know that their death, together with all the other miseries of this life, is to be equated with God's wrath." (Martin Luther LW, 13, 112)]

Read 1 Corinthians 15:55-57. Luther saw death as Gospel. Why is it important to be reminded of this? **[Because of Christ's victory, we need not fear death. Because of Him, death releases us from this "body of death" (Romans 7:24).**

Luther's quotes from the DVD: "We should be happy to die and desire death. Death is only the narrow gate and the small way to life." His summary quote: "In the midst of life, we are in death. In the midst of death, we are in life." (Luther LW 13,83)

[OPTION- PAUSE THE DVD AFTER THE "CHRISTIAN VIEW OF DEATH" SECTION (17:22) TO DISCUSS THE ABOVE]

The Christian View of Suffering

Read Romans 8:28. We quote this verse often, especially to others who are experiencing suffering in their lives. It's not always as easy to believe it when the suffering happens to us. What is our assurance that this promise is true and comforting? (Read Romans 8:32) **[We do not always see or feel the good God works. Our assurance comes from the fact that He did not spare His own Son for us. Our assurance of His love in our lives is not the absence of "crosses" but the presence of His Cross.]**

Why can it be said that we have a "backwards" God? **[He works through things and in ways that do not seem to us to be very "God-like."**

Luther's quote from the DVD: "God shows that He is God precisely in the fact that He is mighty in weakness, glorious in lowliness, living and life-giving in death." (Paul Althaus. Theology of Martin Luther p. 34) Ask for some examples of God's "backwardness"? As an embryo, Jesus is referred to as "my Lord" (Luke 1:43). As a baby in a manger, Jesus is referred to as "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Jesus referred to His cross as His glory (John 13:31). His awful death on the cross brought "life and immortality" (2 Timothy 1:10).]

Briefly discuss this quote from the DVD. "God not only blesses; He decides what blessings are." **[God can and does work His blessings in ways and through means we would never imagine. E.g. The world sees the Down syndrome baby as needing to be aborted. Christian parents of these children see them as blessings.]**

Why is it important to keep in mind this Christian view of suffering? **[We live in a world that exploits our fear of suffering. From the DVD : "The well-organized campaign for legalized euthanasia cruelly exploits the fear of suffering and the frustration felt when we cannot restore to health those whom we love. Such fear and frustration is genuine and deeply felt, especially with respect to the aging. But to deal with suffering by eliminating those who suffer is an evasion of moral duty and a great wrong." (Always to Care, Never to Kill: A Declaration on Euthanasia by the Ramsey Colloquium as published in First Things February 1992:45-47)**

The Christian's Tension

Read Philippians 1:23-24. What was Paul's tension? [The tension between the "better by far" of heaven and the "more necessary" of remaining in the flesh.]

Who determines the "more necessary"? [Answer is obvious, God does. But this is such an important answer. We who eagerly accept the "better by far" from our God, must also accept the "more necessary" from that same God. He calls us to pray "Thy will be done" and asks us to trust that it always is.]

[OPTION- PAUSE THE DVD AFTER THE "CHRISTIAN TENSION" SECTION (25:48) TO DISCUSS THE ABOVE]

Making Decisions

A Christian has the right to refuse treatment or to withdraw existing treatment. However, what is the decision based upon? [It is based upon the treatment and what it will do or not do. It is not the based upon the person and what they are able to do or not do.]

What are some questions we can ask about the treatment when faced with this decision? [We can ask whether the treatment is sustaining life or merely prolonging the dying process. We can ask whether the treatment is excessively physically burdensome to the person. Is the treatment doing more harm than good? Will withdrawing the treatment *allow* the person to die or *cause* that person to die?

Quote from the DVD: "Once we have transgressed and blurred the line between killing and allowing to die, it will be exceedingly difficult—in logic, law, and practice—to limit the license to kill. Once the judgment is not about the worth of specific treatments but about the worth of specific lives, our nursing homes and other institutions will present us with countless candidates for elimination who would be better off dead." (Always to Care, Never to Kill: A Declaration on Euthanasia by the Ramsey Colloquium as published in First Things February 1992:45-47)]

Discuss these two quotes from the DVD. "We can and should allow the dying to die. We must never intend for the death of the living." "As long as God gives life, He gives life meaning and purpose." [Treatments that only prolong dying may be withdrawn. Indeed, when the body is dying its starts to shut down and may not be able to process even food and fluids. When people are dying, treatments can sometimes do more harm than good.

E.g. To remove a feeding tube because the person's kidneys are shutting down and no longer processing the fluid is perfectly acceptable. It will allow the person to die of their disease with more comfort as the building up of fluids could be painful. To remove a feeding tube from a person who is not dying and still able to process the nutrition and hydration because "he would not want to live this way" is unacceptable. This act would *cause* the person to die, not of their disease, but of dehydration.

Our God is very small if we think He can only give meaning and purpose to someone who is conscious and alert.]

As discussed above, Christians do have the right to discontinue treatment or not to start treatment under certain conditions. But if this right is not exercised in a God-pleasing manner, where does it lead? What is the “slippery slope” the DVD talked about?

[Quote from DVD: “The Netherlands has moved from assisted suicide to euthanasia, from euthanasia for people who are terminally ill to euthanasia for those who are chronically ill, from euthanasia for physical illness to euthanasia for psychological distress, and from voluntary euthanasia to involuntary euthanasia (called ‘termination of the patient without explicit request.’) There is no way to stop the slide once a society steps onto the slippery slope by legalizing physician-assisted suicide.” (Dr. Herbert Hendin, 1996 report to Judiciary Committee of House)]

What if we make wrong decisions? **[Review that fact that as Christians we live in grace like the unborn baby lives in the amniotic fluid. We are protected and nourished. Nothing can touch us without passing through the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Obviously, living in grace does not give us permission to make wrong decisions, but when they are made, grace is our source of forgiveness and comfort.]**

Christian Compassion

What does the word “compassion” really mean? **[Suffer with.]**

What are some practical ways we can “suffer with” others, to help them feel “cared for and about”? **[Visit hospitalized, homebound, those in care centers, VA facilities. Add whatever specific ministries you might have in your congregation.]**

Advance Directives

The two main types:

1. Living Will – Deals with making decisions in advance about the kind of treatment you may or may not want should you be unable to make such decisions in the future.
2. Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care – Allows you to appoint a person or persons to make health care decisions for you should you be unable.

What are some problems we might have with Living Wills? **[Ambiguous language—e.g. “irreversible illness,” “relatively short period of time.” “I direct my attending physician ...” may take decision making away from the family. Making decisions in advance may be risky as you never know what the circumstances might be in the future.]**

What if you have a Living Will? **[Know what it says. If the language is ambiguous or vague or if you have changed your mind about even having one, you can start over. Just make sure all copies you have given to people are removed.]**

What are the advantages of a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care? **[You need not worry about trying to address specific situations that might arise in the future. It removes all doubt about who should be making health care decisions for you. You have peace in knowing decisions will be made by someone who loves you, shares your values, and will base decisions upon a Christian world view.]**

For Life Application

[Some of the discussion may have naturally occurred during the review Bible study. Try to keep things moving. When dealing with this issue, people like to tell their stories or stories about “Uncle Ralph.” This can be good if it helps illustrate a principle in real life. It can be bad if it goes on and on!]

Discuss the following questions.

1. Who determines the time of our death?

World’s Answer – We do. The world says that we should have the right to determine the time and manner of our death. [This thinking drives the assisted suicide and euthanasia movement. It is important to understand that this is a real movement with real people, organizations, and agendas. There is a World Federation of Right to Dies Societies with 33 member organizations. (See www.finalexit.org)]

Word’s Answer – God. There is a time to die (Ecclesiastes 3:2), but that time is in God’s hands (Psalm 31:15). [The Christian trusts as did Job. “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21b). It is okay for the Christian to join Paul in saying, “I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far” (Philippians 1:23b NIV), but God sets the timetable for the departure. We do not need to use extraordinary means to prolong the dying process. We can and should allow the dying to die. However, we must never intend for the death of the living. In other words, if a treatment is doing more harm than good, if it is only prolonging death, it may be withdrawn so the person is allowed to die. But to remove a treatment with the express purpose to cause someone to die is inappropriate.]

2. How do we view death?

World’s Answer – A friend. The world sees death as a friend to save us from suffering. [The pro-death Hemlock Society (now Compassion and Choices) had as a convention theme, “Death isn’t Our Enemy: Suffering is.” They seek the “compassionate relief of suffering,” which is a noble pursuit, but they seek it through death.]

Word’s Answer – A defeated enemy. Christ’s death and resurrection defeated death and makes it a door to life. [Bring out here, if needed, Luther’s view of death from the DVD or Bible review. Luther saw death as both Law and Gospel. Death as Law reminds us of our sin and what we deserve because of it. In that sense, the death of a person is a terrible thing. But death as Gospel sees death is the “narrow gate to life” because of what Christ has done. In

that sense, death is a joyous thing. This is our comfort and hope when we grieve at the death of a Christian.]

3. How do we view life?

World's Answer – “Eat, drink, be merry.” The world seeks pleasure. [The world seeks a pain-free and suffering-free life. They are willing to turn to death as means to relieve suffering, and it should be noted that “suffering” includes much more than pain associated with terminal disease. It often includes emotional suffering or even economic suffering.]

Word's Answer – Purposeful. As long as God gives life, God gives life purpose. [It is not what we do or are able to do that gives life purpose. It is what God is able to do through us. Dying itself can be used by God to great purpose—renewing faith, healing old wounds, bringing family together, etc.]

Equipping the Saints Homework

1. During the week find ways to “suffer with” (have compassion on) those dealing with end-of-life issues. Visit members in the hospital or in care centers or senior living facilities or who are homebound. Take them for a ride or bring them to church for a special meal or program or concert. Visit them with groups like a confirmation or Sunday school class. Our children can learn much from our seniors about the faith and living the faith.

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