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Why Can We Euthanize Pets but Not People?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about why we can euthanize pets to end their suffering but we can't do the same for people, how to talk to a six-year-old about biblical marriage when she's been told same-sex marriage is okay, and thoughts on the phrase "biological sex."

- * What is the biblical position on euthanizing pets that are old or sick, and if it's okay, why doesn't the same principle apply to people? They shouldn't have to suffer either.
- * How should I talk to my six-year-old granddaughter about biblical marriage when her parents tell her same-sex marriage is okay and she brings it up often because she's confused?
- * What do you think of the phrase "biological sex"? What other kind of sex is there?

Transcript

This is Amy Hall. I'm here with Greg Cokel and you're listening to the hashtag, S-T-R-S-S-Podcast. Yep, ready to go.

Great. Let's start with a question from Mo. What is the biblical position on euthanizing pets that are old slash sick? I used to think it was only God's place to end life.

But when you see your pet suffering, it's unbearable. How do you answer those who say the same principle should apply to people because they shouldn't have to suffer either? Well, it's kind of like they shoot horses, don't they? That was a title of a movie back in the late 60s, I think. And it was about these crazy things during the Depression where they had these dances, they had people dance forever.

And if they, whoever dropped glass would get a prize or something like that. But at the end, some guy was killed and that was that they shoot horses, don't they? And they took the man out of his misery for dancing for 50 days or whatever it was. Well, the reason that they shoot horses is because they're horses and they don't shoot human beings is because we're human beings.

There's a difference. Okay. Now, the statement underlying kind of the concern here is that I thought it was only God's responsibility to take life.

I'm not sure where that comes from. There certainly, capital punishment was established in the Bible in Genesis chapter 9 verse 6. And there are multiple crimes in the Mosaic Law that are capital crimes. So it's not even accurate to say that taking human life is only something God can do.

Now, of course, God has to justify it or provide somewhat the conditions under which that's appropriate. And that's what Genesis 9 verse 6 does to some degree. But the, in other words, taking human life is the kind of act that requires justification.

There is nothing like that regarding animal life anywhere in the Scripture. There is an exhortation regarding wisdom to care for the life of your beast. But that's how you treat domestic animals.

That's not about taking life. And in fact, unless you're a strict vegetarian, you're taking life implicitly. Life is being taken for your benefit every time you eat meat.

In fact, every time you eat celery because that's a life, plant life that's been destroyed. So I don't think there's any good reason to think, first of all, that taking life in general is mistaken, including animal life. Okay.

Now, in this circumstance, you have an animal who is also suffering. So the proverb says that a just man or something like that, a kind man, a wise man has regard for the life of his beast. So if you have a domestic animal that's suffering, I don't see any reason why not to end the suffering by euthanizing the pet.

Well, I don't have any problem morally with euthanizing a pet for a number of other reasons. You want to do it in a way that doesn't create excessive pain. That's just an act of kindness to the pet, but euthanizing the pet, especially since it's older than firm and whatever is absolutely fine.

All right. There's no moral consequence to that at all. Now, the other part of the question is if we can do this to pets, why can't we do this to human beings? They shoot horses, don't they? Yes, that's because they're horses.

Human beings are different. Human beings require a justification that is appropriate for taking their lives because they're made in the image of God. And that's what Genesis chapter 9 says.

It says, is this post flood and God gives this directive, if man sheds man's blood by man, his blood shall be shed for in the image of God, God created man. So we have, when a circumstance that we'll just call it like cold blooded murder, that ought to be responded with by the loss of the life of the person who did the murder. I for an eye, tooth for a

tooth.

Now, some people think of that, well, that's just revenge. No, that's actually a justice principle. Okay.

In other words, you don't cut a person's hand off because he stole a loaf of bread. There needs to be a proportionality between the crime and the punishment for the crime. And that's the, the, the, the, the, the law of the Talon or an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth.

These are all the same concept. And the concept, there is a concept of justice. And that's what we see in Genesis 9 verse 6. You take a life, you sacrifice your life because human lives are valuable.

I'm trying to think of, if there's an example from scripture that relates to this. The only one that comes to mind is when Saul and his sons, I think, are, he's hurt. I think he's, he's had a, I don't know how he was hurt, but he was in some sort of battle.

And some, someone comes along and he asked them to kill him. Right. That's right.

To end his suffering. And later on, when that person takes responsibility for it with David, David puts him to death. Yeah.

So thinking he's doing David a favor, you know, he's bragging about it. And he said, you touched God's anointed. Right.

So even in that case, I mean, you have a situation where it was wrong of them to put Saul to death. Right. Now, there were other things that mortally wounded in that battle.

Right. There are other things in play there, but just, that's the only example that I can think of. Now, the other thing, why, why would we not put humans to death and we would put animals to death to end their suffering? One reason beyond what you've already said, Greg, obviously their value made in the image of God.

But another reason would be that we have our, our timeline is eternal. So the things that we're doing now have eternal ramifications. And there's actually a value in suffering in shaping who we are and showing us who God is in bringing us to repentance, in teaching us to depend on Jesus.

And God, there are all sorts of things that God uses suffering to do. It's not something that we just end because there's, there's no reason because we don't like it. Yeah.

Or they don't like it, the one suffering. Right. And this is something I just wish Christians would think a lot more about suffering and what it does in our lives and that we should expect it.

Because a lot of Christians think God's going to protect them from all suffering. And then when it comes along, they're shocked because they think God's goal for us is comfort. Because that's our goal for us.

Right. And, but the truth is God's goal for us is to make us like Jesus. Read first Peter if you want to read about suffering because there's a lot in there at first Peter and 2 Corinthians chapter 2 verse, chapter 2 verse 16 and 18 contains the famous passage that C.S. Lewis wrote a famous essay on, For momentary light affliction is producing for us and note the verb.

It is the affliction that is producing the eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. So that's another place where you see your point being made in scripture. So as God is making us more like Christ, this is Romans 8, you know, he's working all things together to make us like Christ.

That's his goal for us. And he uses suffering to do that. So there's a long term goal to this suffering and I don't want to minimize the suffering.

Suffering is terrible. But just as Christ's suffering accomplished something bigger, your suffering is accomplishing something bigger. And that's hard to hang on to.

I know it is really hard, but it's true. And I do recommend that you read first Peter and think about the cross and think about God working something good through suffering. And so with human beings, this is all working towards a long term goal, whereas with animals, animals are not going to be, as far as I know, they're not going to be resurrected.

There's no long term goal that suffering is working in their lives. It's just something they're enduring. So they're not moral creatures so it can't develop their character.

Right. Maybe I can have this too. That doesn't mean we have an obligation to suffer as much as we possibly can.

I mean, you can take an Advil, you know, you can get your shoulder repaired and your rotator cuff sewed up. And if somebody is dying and they're suffering, there can be palliative measures that ease the pain. The point here is when we face suffering that is that we have, we are limited in what we are allowed to do by God to alleviate the suffering in people's lives.

We can't kill them so they don't suffer anymore, but we can give other other things. And the fact is that there are other things that we can take and other modalities or whatever that are meant to address the suffering. That's not going to take care of all the suffering.

A lot of the suffering is emotional. You know, for example, you get rejected by your family because you were a Christian. Think of Muslims who become Christian and the

rejection they face, the pain and difficulty that is.

Yet, nevertheless, this is a consequence of the life they've chosen to follow Christ. And there's no getting around that. So you accept that as a cost of following Christ and Christ will use that suffering that you can't deflect.

Deflecting suffering is not a problem when we're able to do it in a morally sound way. I'm glad you said that, Greg, because that is a perfect point to make here. God, we leave how suffering comes into our lives to God.

God is the only one who knows what is going to lead to what. There are way too many factors for us to purposefully inflict suffering. I mean, we're not allowed to do that.

That is not our role at all. Part of what happens when people suffer is that it does inspire people to help and to alleviate it. And that is honoring to God.

That is what we are supposed to do. We are supposed to try to help people suffering. We are doing those things.

So that's part of what it accomplishes in us. When we are suffering, that gives others the opportunity to serve, to find new ways, to alleviate that suffering. All of that is a good thing.

So I don't want people to hear that. I'm glad you mentioned that, Greg. All right.

Let's go to a question from Shannon. How do I talk to my six-year-old granddaughter about biblical marriage when her parents tell her same-sex marriage is okay? She brings it up often and is so confused. Well, this is challenging, especially when you have a six-year-old who is now being sexualized at an age when it's inappropriate.

When I say sexualized is when you talk about marriage and making the distinction between same-sex marriage and heterosexual marriage, it's difficult to justify the distinction without making reference to sexual elements. Because that just is the distinction that you have people of opposite sex that are joined together, one man, one woman becoming one flesh for one lifetime is my summary of the way Jesus characterizes marriage in Matthew 19. It's hard to talk about that without talking about one flesh.

Marriages begin families. Families have children. Children are accomplished because you have a male and female that are becoming one flesh, and this is how families develop.

This is God's plan. And so that's the difficulty here. How do you do this with a six-year-old? Okay.

And I guess the way, and especially, this is grandma with the grandchild when the grandchild's parents are telling her something else. And so I think what I would probably

suggest in this circumstance is relate the creation order to the child and say, this is what God's purpose is. So something like, look here in the Bible, from the very beginning, God made them, what does it say here, honey? Male and female, I don't know if she can read it, six, my daughter could read the whole chronicles of Narnia at six.

But says male and female, that's a man and a woman, right? Okay, made them, and then he says what? Be fruitful and what? Multiply. You realize, honey, it takes a man and a woman to multiply. You can't multiply, have kids without a man and a woman.

So maybe you don't need to get much more explicit than that. It might be common sense, but it may not be to six-year-old. By the way, and this is a feeling frustration now because we should not, six-year-olds, seven-year-olds, eight-year-olds should not have to be forced to struggle with this information.

It's too young. I think I mentioned this on the air before, but in Corey Tenboom's account of her growing up with her father in the account in the hiding place, she asks her dad what sex sin is because she read about this in the Bible. And she's reading, what does this mean? And she's a young girl.

And he asked her to get there on a train, and he says, can you get my suitcase up from the top level? And she said, Papa, I can't do that. That's too heavy. And then he says, Corey, this concept, what you just asked about, that's too heavy for you too.

And you're going to have to let Papa carry that until you're ready to understand it. Now that's wisdom. Okay, what's happening in our culture is kids are being required to carry burdens that are too heavy for them.

And they're being required because of an ideology that is being forced in the culture. Okay, and an attempt to grotesquely indoctrinate younger generations. Okay, and so in any event, to answer this challenge, you have to touch on this issue somewhat.

And say, here's the way God made it. Here's the way God intended it. This is the way it works well.

Okay, and it's the only way to be fruitful multiply. And this is God's purpose. And then I would just, I would kind of leave it at that and not get, if the child at the grandchild asked more questions, I would answer it in a simple and straightforward biblical way, not trying to do a lot of defense or apologetics say this is God's purposes.

And when we follow God's purpose, things work out much better than we disobey, than when we disobey God. Same sex marriage is a disobedience of God. And then leave it there because you don't want to be in a perpetual fight with the, with your children, who are the parents of the grandchildren, that just creates more chaos and difficulty.

And it might result in you being a separator for the grandchildren. Well, you can't talk to

my kids anymore because of what you say. All right.

But if you're saying the simple truth that's God's truth, you have the advantage then of having the truth used by the Holy Spirit to make a difference in that child's life. It's not clear to me what she is confused about and what might be what she being the child. Yeah, what she might be confused about is why some people are saying one thing and some people are saying another thing.

So it might also be worth saying, look, here, here's what God says, but you know what? Not everyone wants to follow what God says. So now this is kind of a new thing. People want to do it this different way and they want to try to do it this different way.

That's not God's way. That's not good. This is what they're choosing to do.

And so you'll get people who have different views on this and will say different things and say different things. So maybe just give her an idea of why people are saying different things. So it's not quite so confusing.

She at least has a category for why people are saying different things. Nice to go. All right.

But I do think it's tricky with the parents. And I'm not sure maybe maybe they need to talk to the parents too about. I don't know.

I suspect that conversation is already. Yeah. To know effect.

Well, it's unclear if the parents are Christians or claim to be Christians. It's so there might be more going on here. That's a divide of worldview.

Okay. Here's a question from Troy Dohar. What do you think of the phrase biological sex? Isn't sex just biology? What other kind of sex is there? Sort of like social justice.

Qualifier is unnecessary. Well, in that in social justice, that is, I agree that the qualifier ends up politicizing something that ought not be politicized. And so it corrupts it.

Whenever you add an adjective like that to justice, biological sex, I don't know. I guess you could say it is a somewhat of a redundancy. It never struck me as a problem.

I don't know what could possibly be the problem. You know, it's so funny. I just read something in Benjamin Franklin's biography.

And they're talking about John such and so had her hats made here. And hats sold here. And so we're going to take an exception.

Wait, if he's a had her, he makes hats. So you don't need to wear a had her. Okay.

Well, that's his sold here. Whether they're not given away. So you don't have to say sold.

All you have to do it, what they ended up with is John Smith hats. You know, tripped it all down. But it does seem some of these extra words just give, make the concept more robust.

You know, and so I have no problem with the word biological sex. I don't know what you think about that. I don't know if there's anything hidden behind the use of that or it suggests something that I don't know.

I'm not quite quite sure I get it. I agree. Obviously it is redundant.

The problem is that in order to be clear, it seems like we need to do that. So people understand what we're saying. Now, I think what people worry about is this is some way giving into the culture that we have to define sex as biological that we're granting that they could be a different kind of, they could have a different sex.

That's not biological. And what would not biological be because all sexual activity entails the use of the biological body, even solo sexual activity does. Unless what they're talking about is biological means heterosexual sex.

Well, I know I think that I think what people worry about is if they if they further identify, if they further qualify sex, then they're saying that you could determine your sex. That you could determine your sex by something other than biology. So you can see.

So I think that is the concern here. Now, for example, Alan says he isn't going to use the word gender anymore unless he qualifies it because people don't understand the word. They have a slim and I understand the reasons team, right? People put all sorts of different.

Characterization. Yeah. So for clarity sake, if you want to say biological sex so people aren't confused.

Now, I actually don't think the word sex is used for gender on a normal basis. So I don't think that ever happens. However, I don't think it's a bad thing to refer to biology to remind people that that is how it is determined.

But I'd have to think carefully. I think there might come a time when using the phrase could be. I don't know, maybe giving into that a little bit, but I don't think that's what's happening right now.

I think if you I think that there's more danger of that with the word gender than sex. Yeah. You know, I I just had another thought about this.

I mean, I said that all sex entails the body. I think it's true, but but bodily sex is does not capture all of sex because as many have said, you know, with married couples, sex begins in the kitchen, right? And what they mean is the satisfying bedroom experiences

based on a broader, more satisfying relationship. And I think I think that Josh McDowell says the most important sexual organ is your mind.

Okay. So there certainly is an affect development that is not simply biological. So you the the experience of sex with a stranger is different than the experience of the same kind of biological activity with somebody you're very emotionally attached to.

Okay. So there are additional elements. So I guess you could say, well, biological sex is all biological, but it's only part of the larger sexual enterprise.

I I'm assuming they're talking about male or female biological sex, not the act, not the act, but just rather not your male or female. Yeah. But I don't know.

I think I don't see a problem with it. I mean, you could try just saying sex. I just I'm always for clarity as much as possible.

And so hopefully, I mean, I might change my mind if I if at some point I come to the conclusion that it is encouraging the idea that our sex can be determined by something other than biology, which I don't think that's how people are using the word sex currently. Well, thank you, Greg. And thank you, Mo and Shannon and Troy for your questions.

We love hearing from you. Send us your question on Twitter with the hashtag STR. Ask or go to our website at STR.org. We'd love to hear your question.

This is Amy Hall and Greg Cocle for Stand to Reason.