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What's the Biblical Position on Physician-Assisted Suicide?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about the biblical position on physician-assisted suicide, whether Christians should say that “God is faithful” when he gives them what they asked for, and whether it’s okay to put Christian books into the little libraries people have on their property.

- * What’s the biblical position on physician-assisted suicide?
- * Christians say that “God is faithful” when he gives them what they prayed for, but isn’t God always faithful?
- * Do you think it’s okay to put Christian books into those little libraries people put on their property, and if so, which books do you think would be the most likely to be noticed and read?

Transcript

[Music] Welcome to another episode of Stand to Reasons! #STRask podcast. I'm Amy Hall and with me is Greg Koukl to answer your questions. You ready, Greg? Yes, ma'am.

Let's start with one from Melvin. Could you give a thorough explanation of the Biblical Position on medically assisted suicide? If someone is in great pain with no reasonable hope, it seems harsh to deny it. It is wrong.

Here's the Biblical Position. Now she'll not murder. In other words, it's wrong to take the life of another human being without proper justification.

There is no evidence anywhere that a person in pain, emotional or otherwise, is an adequate reason to take actions to take their life. That is never right to take one's own life. Now, it doesn't mean that suicide is unforgivable because, as I pointed out before, it is a sin, but if Jesus came to cancel out the effects of sin and the guilt of sin and the punishment of sin, then how is it that a sin can cancel out Jesus? It doesn't.

Okay? Nevertheless, it does not give us latitude to take human life because we think it's

a good idea that human life is taken. In matters of justice, that's a different situation. All right? And that's why capital punishment is a responsibility of God's.

In other words, he has the prerogative to take life and he has delegated that under certain circumstances to proper authorities. It is not our job though to participate with someone doing something wrong that is taking their own life. When, because they are in difficult straits and maybe difficult straits is a non-dirt statement for many circumstances, I get that, but the intensity of the suffering does not justify the moral action or the action itself because in this case, the end is not justified by the means that are used.

Okay? Actually, we have palliative measures, measures that can take managed pain, emotional or physical and make it easier and care for people. We do not have the liberty to help them take their own lives. And this is especially a problem.

This is another matter because the question was asked about biblical approach, but now I'm adding to it another issue and that is especially when physicians are involved because physicians are supposed to be healers and it used to be in the Hippocratic oath, I will do no harm. Now they don't have to say that anymore. Now they can do harm.

And one of those examples is physician assisted suicide, but it's not the only example because once that protective measure is removed, the dam breaks. And that's what's happened. In the places where physician assisted suicide first became legal and popular and that would be the Netherlands, there have been horror stories coming out of those countries ever since because now there are different types of suicide.

There are voluntary and there's voluntary, I want to die. I'm sorry, there are different types of death, voluntary suicide, I want to die. Nonvoluntary, you're out, you can't make the decision and someone else takes your life.

And involuntary, I don't want to die, but you get killed anyway. All three take place on a regular basis in the Netherlands. In other words, people who are in a coma, well, we're going to take their life.

That's nonvoluntary. People who are alive and are a problem get sedated and killed. That's what happens.

This is well on the record in many different instances. I haven't talked about it for a long time, but I've read articles on this on the error on the program before recording this news. And so there is a there is in fact a slippery slope.

It's called a logical slippery slope. And that is if one line of thinking justifies another line, if it justifies one thing, it also can justify other things too. And that's what happens here.

If the idea is, well, we don't, well, I won't get into the whole thing. There's no limiting

principle. There's no limiting principle.

And except for the quality of life, but then wait, who's quality of life? You mean the person in the bed or the person taking care of the person in the bed? Oh, there's the switcher who. And this has happened even in well-known court cases in this country as well. So this doesn't mean that people have to stay, choose to stay attached to machines forever.

You can choose to die in actual death if you want to. What you can't do is you can't take your life and you can't help somebody else to take their life. That's what's wrong.

If you want a biblical answer. What happens in these situations is, well, I think there are two things here. Killing becomes the answer.

Not figuring out ways to help, not figuring out ways to alleviate pain or make them comfortable or, you know, because there's even assisted suicide for people who are emotionally in pain. So rather than helping them, what is becoming the default in the places that allow this is killing. That's the answer.

And obviously that's not the right answer. Ultimately, what this is communicating is, you mentioned this, Greg, this is quality of life. It's making a judgment on the value of their life.

And I've heard people who are disabled saying, when you do this with others, you are making it harder for me to live my life because people are assuming my life isn't worth living, and therefore they're no longer willing to help me and make accommodations for me. There are all sorts of bad results to this. Well, there's an overflow here of this concept in abortion because in Iceland they have famously have, it's the right word, it put it, they have ended Down's disease, Down's syndrome.

However, they ended Down's syndrome, they do an amnio, they find out that the baby is a Down's baby and they abort it. So it's easy to say, well, we've gotten rid of this problem, this medical concern, if you just kill everybody, who has it. All right, that's what Hitler did.

That was Third Reich Stuff. Read the Nazi Doctors by Robert J. Lifton. Anyway, you hate to invoke the Third Reich, it seems like heavy-handed, but it's appropriate in many cases, more and more so actually.

It comes out of a certain view of human beings as having instrumental value rather than intrinsic value. Exactly. All right, let's take a question from Matchless M. "I meet Christians that say, 'God is faithful, he answered my prayer and granted my request, but isn't God always faithful? Isn't a denial or a no answer to request an answer to?'" Yes, a timely concern.

God is always faithful. What is he faithful to do? That's the question. It's similar to the question, does Jesus work? Yeah, Jesus works for what he was meant to work for.

What did you have in mind? So the same concept is in play here. God is faithful, but does faithfulness mean that God is going to give us everything we ask for? Certainly not. That would be lack of faithfulness of the things we ask for.

We're not good in long-term. And there is much that we ask for that is not good because we have a different end in mind than God does. The end we have in mind frequently, excuse me, is our personal comfort, our personal ease, our personal prosperity.

We want relief from pain and difficulty. We want pleasure and benefit to be flawless, which I get it. I'm not going to say I never prayed in that way, but remember that James says you have not because you asked not.

And then when you ask, do ask, you ask with wrong motives to spend it on your pleasures. God is not that concerned about our pleasures. Sorry, best life now, guys.

He's not. Okay, he is concerned about our characters and developing us in virtue because virtue is what we take with us when we go to heaven. Physical exercise profits a little bit.

Godliness is a means of great gain for it holds a promise not only for this life, but also for the life to come. And so God's promise to us, and a lot of times people truncate this passage in Romans 8, they should keep reading, "We know that God causes all things to work together for good for those who love him and who are called according to his purpose, for those whom he foreknew he predestined to become conformed to the image of his son." So the way that God works all things for our good is to use them to conform us to the image, to make us like Jesus. And so this is the way we need to understand God's purposes in our lives.

And Paul says in Romans 8, "The sufferings of this present life are not to be compared to the glories that follow." He says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, that momentary light afflictions are producing for us an eternal weight of glory. So why pray away the afflictions when the afflictions are the things that God has designed to give us something better than we're praying for? Now having said that, I'm not saying we shouldn't try to pray away the afflictions. I do it all the time.

But because God is faithful, He is not going to answer all of those prayers all of the time. He may let us live in the afflicted state for a greater benefit, and that's what we must trust Him for because He's faithful. You know, Greg, I had to chuckle a little bit when I saw this question because I just had a conversation with somebody about this.

This is something that really bothers me when I hear people say it. And I'm going to take this in a little in a practical direction right now. Imagine you are praying desperately for

something.

Imagine that you and your spouse are trying to conceive a child, and you can't get pregnant, and you are praying, and you are praying, and you're praying. And then someone comes along and says, "Oh, guess what? I'm pregnant. God is faithful." What have you just said? You have just said, "God is faithful to me because I'm pregnant." And what is the other person here? God's not faithful to me.

That is, I strongly think we should not use that word when we're talking about God's gifts. Gifts that He hasn't promised. He has not promised that He is going to give every person a child.

There are a lot of things He hasn't promised. What I think we should say is God is gracious. He's gracious.

He gave this to me. I didn't deserve it. I'm thankful for it.

This is wonderful. It's not a matter of faithfulness. I don't want us to contribute to the idea that God has promised certain things that He has not promised, because then when you don't get those things, now you think God has failed you.

Or that faithfulness is tied to getting what we asked for. So here I have an additional suggestion. How about if people only use the statement, "God is faithful" when they do not get what they want? In other words, here's all these prayers.

"I didn't get...God did not give me what I asked for, but God is faithful." I didn't get healed. This relationship didn't get repaired. These circumstances didn't come out the way they wanted to, but God is still faithful.

When they do come out, we say, "God is gracious." God... Well, of course, that even raises another issue then, isn't he gracious if he doesn't answer. So there's another issue. Well, it's... What we should do, instead of looking at an answer to prayer and then tying it to a quality of God, let's tie it to an act of God, because the quality of God, qualities, faithfulness, graciousness, they are fixed.

They're always there. Let's tie the response to the act of God. God answered my prayer.

Thank you, God. You answered my prayer. So God answered the prayer.

That was a... Okay, we can praise God for answering the prayer. But if he doesn't answer the prayer, he's still gracious. If he doesn't answer the prayer, he's still faithful.

But he's still answering the prayer. It's just in the negative. Oh, like that's... Yeah, I never liked that.

I never liked that. You can do that with leprechauns, too. You know.

Oh, my leprechaun always hears me. He just doesn't always answer. Okay.

All right. Here's a question from Timothy Phillips. "Greg, do you think it's okay to put Christian books into those tiny libraries people put on their property? If so, which books do you think would be the most likely to be noticed and read by a random pass-by? Do you know what he's talking about? I know.

What's up with that? These are... I go take walks. I don't jog anymore. I take walks in.

And there's a couple places in my neighborhood where they have these things. And I honestly cannot imagine nor have I ever seen. But I can't even imagine somebody walking by, seeing a book, sitting down on the little stool there by the side of the street, and having a reading session.

No, you can take it with you. That's the idea. You take one, you leave one.

Oh, okay. Well, I noticed there's a little settee there or some kind of rock or something. So whatever.

So this is kind of a trading system for books. Okay. Well, that explains it better to me.

So nothing wrong with that. However, the question is what books should you put in? And I have a few books that I recommend that I think are foundational. In this particular case, I think the story of reality would be a really good one because that is written.

It has the substance of the Christian worldview written in an accessible way that's easy to read and has soft apologetics built in. Okay. What am I going to say? That's one.

Okay. I think there are other book, mere Christianity. You know, that's a classic.

All right. And it's really aimed at the same kind of thing that the story of reality is aimed at. The key here is to find something that is a really good read.

And we know it's a good read because of its durability over time and the way people have responded to it. And also has biblical substance. It's the kind of thing that's going to peak somebody's curiosity and get them thinking about biblical things if you're thinking about titles that are evangelistic.

Okay. So this is where now I'm just trying to sweep my book shelves a little bit there. And anything kind of more aggressive might be hard.

Tim Keller has a couple of good books out. Two of them actually, one's called Thinking about God. Is that right? And the reason for God, the reo, not thinking that's Greg Gansal, the reason for God.

And then he's got a backup to that. Something about skeptics. Yeah.

There's two skeptics is in the time. Yeah. There's two of them.

And in any event, both of these are good. I actually, the reason for God is, let me just look here. I'm just trying to get, is the first, the reason for God is the first book he wrote and it's the most famous.

Okay. But he's written another one. Here is the reason for God.

And then he's written another one that's similar that I making sense of God. Oh, okay. And I actually wrote a review of that for Christianity today.

And it was chosen as the book of the year in his category. So I, that I thought was magnificent, making sense of God. The reason for God and making sense of God.

I think both of them would be good ones. So there are, there are going to be, my recommendation would be to use books like that that give some substance, but are very well written and have a kind of a soft touch to them. Yeah, you want you want something that is going to be a page turner.

So they, they keep reading. I think story of reality is the perfect one for this, honestly. And I don't see any reason why you wouldn't want to put these books in there.

What, what's the worst that can happen? People don't want them. I mean, right. Well, it's a great idea.

If you know of some around town, it's a great idea to put them in there. I know of two within three blocks of my house. There you go, Greg, you should sign your books and stick them in there.

All right. Well, thank you for your questions. We got through a few today.

That was nice. We appreciate hearing from you. So send us your questions on Twitter with the hashtag #STRAsk.

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

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