

Lesson 4: Bioethics: Abortion and Euthanasia

Sixth commandment: “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13).

Abortion = terminating a pregnancy (a pre-born fetus).

Euthanasia = terminating a life of suffering (Greek: “well-death”).

Question: Do those medical procedures violate God’s prohibition on murder?

Note: not all killing is unethical, for God commended capital punishment (Genesis 9:6).

I. Abortion:

Though legalized in 1973, it is an ancient practice (more common was infant abandonment).

Due to prostitution, there were actually more abortions in the 1860s per capita than now.

Christian benevolence has curbed levels then and now (Marvin Olasky).

Question: *Is abortion murder?*

Hinge Questions: Human Life or Woman’s Body? Human person?

Making the personal connection to the baby may be the key to stop abortions.

Issues/Data:

1. Do pre-born fetuses have “life”? Scripture often associates “living” with having breath (example: plants do not “live” or “die”) – needs more research.
2. Jeremiah was “known” before being born (Jeremiah 1:5), but is that predestination (preappointment)?
Point: The idea of “known” implies a person as the object.
If so, then we were “known” before we were conceived (not just *born!*).
In God’s mind, *this* person already exists and is associated with *that* body.
3. John the Baptist was filled with Spirit in the womb (Luke 1:15 – “from”?) and “leaped for joy” at the sound of good news (Luke 1:44) – this joy implies personhood.
4. In Mosaic Law, if an injured pregnant woman miscarriages, they were to take “life for life” (Ex. 21:22-23).
Note: The *lex talionis* is quoted. The stress is on equivalence (same value, punishment fits the crime).
Therefore, a full-grown man and a preborn baby are both “life”, i.e. same value!
5. We definitely know that God fashions the pre-born (Psalm 139:13-16), so what right do we have to terminate His doings? (Note: You knew “me.”)
6. When does the unique soul originate? At conception? (Remember, identical twins are natural clones from an original conceived unit) – some will agree that human life begins at conception, but not personhood – and without personhood, there is no crime (but even if that were so, the potential person is prohibited).

Beyond specifics, general considerations:

1. Given the unique status of human beings (made in God’s image) there are limits to tampering (see also: Genesis 9:6) implies that man should not be treated on the par as animals.
Authorized killing can only be delegated from God – if He starts life, do we have the right to end it?
But if so, then where is our prescribed mandate to do so (cf. Matthew 19:6)?
2. Abortion is often motivated by other sins:
 - (1) There is a general anti-baby bent today even among married couples.
 - (2) More common, abortion follows fornication.

Social Factors:

1. Olasky stats – need for better laws (obstacles) and social benevolence (opportunities).
2. Sexual revolution – also the poor view of children even among married couples
3. Related to medical conditions – e.g. testing for Downs Syndrome
4. Post-abortion stress syndrome – even if the value of personal happiness is correct, does it really work?
5. Planned parenthood is racist (Margaret Sanger and eugenics).

II. Euthanasia:

The issue here is not personhood or life (though “brain-dead” cases and so forth exist), but quality of life – like putting a horse out of its misery, why should humans not have that right (that is: the right to die)?

Two issues: Quality of Life? Personal choice?

Answers:

1. God wills suffering as a means of glorifying God: grace is available – Christ Himself endured such and showed the way (1 Peter 2:23 leads to 4:19) – worship is a greater criterion than human comfort.
Jesus let Lazarus die—for the glory of God (John 11:4, 40).
Jesus told Peter “by what kind of death he would glorify God” (John 21:19).
2. Illustration: Job 3 – yes, the Bible agrees that death is preferable to some suffering.
However, Job is commended for not cursing God (which would have cost him his life).
Therefore, suicide is not an option – murdering oneself is still murder.
3. Hell is complete, unmitigated suffering—no mercy at all.
Therefore, to hasten a sinner’s entrance into hell is not merciful, but cruel.
Letting such a man suffer longer may lead him to Christ and eternal comfort (cf. Psalm 119:67, 71).
Illustration: the thief on the cross had opportunity to repent before his legs were broken (Lk. 23).
Opp. Giving morphine often leads to sleep, and prohibits dealings with God.
Interestingly, Jesus refused mind-numbing drink on the cross.

Note: To accept death and even refuse treatment is not euthanasia and may be acceptable.

Christ knew “His hour” had come, and Paul knew when his race had been run (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

4. God alone is the Judge on who is “saved” or “destroyed” (James 4:11-12).

Final Note

For all those who have suffered through an abortion, the guilt often lingers (post-abortion stress syndrome).

Many times, there were mitigating circumstances, youth, naivete, and social pressures, which lessen the guilt.

But rehearsing those factors will never ultimately take the guilt away or the conscience feeling guilty.

The only solution is to confess sin as sin and then realize that Jesus Christ died for *real* sin and *real* guilt.

By taking our sin, we are freed from all guilt—and can live free—if we *believe* the word and believe in Christ.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us *from all unrighteousness.*”

God be praised for saving murders like David and violent aggressors like Paul and sinners like you and me!

Footnote: Although we are made in God’s image, “sanctity” may not be the best word to describe human life. Only God is holy and those connected to Him.