

“Tough Questions: The Problem of Suffering – Part Three”

- I. Problem of Suffering
- II. Purpose of Suffering
- III. Perspective on Suffering (eternal vs temporal): God wills it (Acts 4:27-28; 1 Thess. 3:3-4); Jesus was the Suffering Servant (Is. 52-53; Phil. 3); Suffering is normal for Christians (Jn. 15:20; 1 Pet. 4:1, 12-13); Rejoice when suffering for the cause of Christ (Acts 5:41; Col. 1:24); Focus on eternity and joyfully accept suffering righteously (Heb. 10:34); Suffering isn't worthy to be compared to the glory that will soon be revealed (Rom. 8:18)

IV. Practical Issues Today:

A. Suicide (1 Sam. 31:3-6; 2 Sam. 17:23; 1 Kings 16:15-19; Mt. 27:3-5): Violates Commandment not to murder (Gen. 9:2-6; Ex. 20:13); We are not to kill the innocent and righteous (Ex. 23:7); It is an unfaithful stewardship of life and health (Acts 17:25, 28); Our bodies belong to God (1 Cor. 6:19-20); It comes from a wrong perspective on life: Material possessions (Lk. 12:15); All-important relationship with a particular person; Circumstances not working out for me (Phil. 1); I can't handle it anymore (1 Cor. 10:13); My life is meaningless. Nobody needs me! (Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 12-14); Nobody loves me! (John 3:16); But I'm guilty of so many things and can't be forgiven! (Ps. 51); Suicide is not the unpardonable sin (Mt. 12:31-32)

B. Euthanasia (Judges 9:52-55; 2 Sam. 1; Job 12:10; 14:5; 14:14; 7:1; Ps. 39:4; Heb. 9:27; Gen. 9:6-7; Ex. 20:13; 21:12-14; Lev. 24:17-21; Num. 35:16-31; Dt. 19:4-13)

- **Not** talking about turning off life support machines to let “nature take its course.”
- Euthanasia is the practice of intentionally ending a life in order to relieve pain and suffering.

Biblical Principles:

- God is sovereign in the creation of life (Gen. 1:26-28; Gen. 2:7)
- God is sovereign over conception (Gen. 29:31; Rebekah - Gen. 25:21; Rachel – Gen. 30:12, 22; Manoah and his wife – Judges 13:2-3; Hannah – 1 Sam. 1-2)
- God has a plan for every life & designed them accordingly (Ps. 139)
- The Bible is clear that GOD is in control of our lives and the number of our days (Job 12:10; 14:5)
- God appoints a time for us to die and face Him in judgment (Heb. 9:27)
- We are not to kill another human being because they are created in God's image. If someone murders another human being they should be killed (Gen. 9:6; Ex. 20:13; Dt. 5:17; cf. Ex. 21:12-14; Lev. 24:17-21; Num. 35:16-31; Dt. 19:4-13; Ex. 23:7; 2 Kgs. 21:16; Ps. 106:37-38; Jer. 19:4)

Reasons to be opposed to Physician Assisted Suicide:

- Original Hippocratic Oath
- Acceptance of physician-assisted suicide sends the message that some lives are not worth living.
- The practice of physician-assisted suicide creates a duty to die.
- There are better medical alternatives.
- Physician-assisted suicide ignores what may be a legitimate cry for help.
- Physician-assisted suicide gives too much power to doctors.
- Physician-assisted suicide opens the door to euthanasia.
- This may take away an opportunity for God to be glorified
 - Through healing (John 9:1-12)
 - Through testimony of a persevering eternal perspective (Job)

C. Counseling the Suffering

- Pray and ask God for His compassion and wisdom (2 Cor. 1:3-4; James 1).
- Simply be with them when suffering comes and listen (Job 2:13; 1 Cor. 12:26).
- Admit that you don't know all the answers to their tough questions (Dt. 29:29).
- Talk about suffering. Go over the principles from these three sermons.
- Refer them to good Christian articles and books.
- Focus on faith. Remind them that troubles will come and they should prepare to respond to them in faith (John 16:33).
- Tell them that the Scriptures affirm the appropriateness of bringing our pain and honest complaints to God (Ps. 62:8).
- Pray with them and/or for them.
- Think practically how to serve them, especially in the midst of a crisis (Gal 6:13).
- Don't be afraid to ask for outside help.

Discussion & Application:

1. Why do you think our society is so confused about the morality of suicide and physician-assisted suicide? Should those who believe in the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Scriptures be confused? If not, why not?
2. Did Jesus say much to His disciples about suffering? Did Paul? Should an in-depth study of suffering be included in our discipleship? Did anyone in your past take the time to talk to you about this?
3. When is the best time to talk to people about suffering as a follower of Jesus?
4. What ultimate lessons about suffering do we learn from the life of Job? List as many principles as you can find.
5. Did anyone ever come alongside of you when you were suffering and provide real help? If so, what specifically did they do that ministered to you?
6. What resources would you give to a believer who is going through suffering? What book(s) would you recommend?
7. Rom. 15:14 says that all believers are capable of counseling others. How could you improve as a counselor? Would you be interested in taking some Biblical Counseling classes at TBBF?