



LIFE ISSUES

1: A Look at Motive Knowing the “Why” Before the “What”

No one expected Grandpa to have a stroke. After all, it happened during the annual Easter dinner at a time of celebration. Now, however, the family found itself in the emergency room, emotionally distraught and physically tired. The pastor showed up to provide comfort. Not long after that, the doctor arrived with a progress report.

The prognosis was bleak, and some decisions needed to be made. As the doctor rattled off a handful of options, the family turned to the pastor and asked, “What should we do?”

Dire predicaments can compel the concerned Christian to ask the same question as the family members did in the above scenario: “What should we do?” The unplanned pregnancy, the diagnosis of infertility, the word of an invasive cancer, or the prognosis of an imminent death cause all of us to reach for answers about what to do.

The answers are not always clear, first of all, because most of us are not medical personnel. As we learn more about the biology of human life we often discover how much we don’t yet know. As a result, a doctor becomes the specialist in his or her field of medicine. Such knowledge of the biology at work in the human body far surpasses our own. Sometimes we don’t understand the terms, or we are still emotionally shocked over the predicament. We wonder, “What should we do?”

The path to discovering the answer begins not with the quest for a course of action, but for an introspective understanding of where our hearts are. This is not a biology test but a test of our faith. Before we can talk about what to do we need to consider what we are. We need to return to the foundation of who we are and why we do the things we do. We need to begin with understanding what it means to be a Christian.

Here are six Biblical principles that help guide a Christian in making the right decisions as they help us form a godly motivation.

Principle #1 - Truly right deeds/decisions can only be made by the Christian from a heart of

faith, guided by God’s Word, regardless of its perceived outcome.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that apart from faith we cannot please God. Psalm 119:105 reminds us that God’s Word is the only true guide for our lives. The world debates issues like quality of life and death with dignity, but the Christian focuses on the desire to glorify God in our decisions.

Principle #2 - God alone has the right to initiate and terminate life.

God is the author of life and death according to Deuteronomy 32:39. Man has the responsibility to preserve and protect human life which is evident in passages like Genesis 9:5-6 and Exodus 20:13. A Christian does not have the right to end life prematurely, nor does he have the responsibility to prolong the dying process.

Principle #3 - God demonstrates in His Word that while there may be different qualities of life He extends to all human life an absolute value, being the object of His love and plan of salvation.

A common argument during end-of-life debates is the quality of the person’s life. Many question the wisdom in providing treatment or care if the value of the person’s life is no longer at a certain level. John 3:16 indicates that all



people have absolute value in spite of a perceived quality.

Principle #4 - *The purpose of life is to glorify God by coming to and growing in faith and to then share that faith with others by our words and examples.*

The Great

Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) reminds us to share the Gospel message with all people. This command was not limited to the young, healthy, or strong. All Christians must continually grow in their faith and share it. Those caring for a loved one must not remove those opportunities.

Principle #5 - *While suffering is a result of living in a sinful world, the believer faces it knowing God can use it to display His power, strengthen the sufferer's faith, and provide an avenue for the faith of others to be put into action.*

Suffering cannot be avoided, but we do hold the ability to limit or control pain. A common saying is, "Kill the pain, not the patient." At times, suffering allows God to be glorified as explained by Jesus in John 9:3. At other times, suffering gives others the opportunity to reflect their faith as seen in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:33).

Principle #6 - *A Christian recognizes that sin brought death into this world, but Christ changed the results of death. Despite longing for death and the paradise it brings with Christ, the Christian will seek to retain life as a time of faithful service to God until it is clear God wants to take him out of this life.*

Psalms 31:15 informs us that our lives are in God's hands, and yet Paul in Philippians 1:23-25 shares his desire to depart this world and be in heaven. We conclude from Scripture that we don't have the right to end human life before God's appointed time. This holds true for those at the very beginning of life, those who suffer in mid-life, and those nearing the end of their life. For individuals who say they are ready to go to heaven, we rejoice in their faith. That does not justify any action that prematurely ends a human life.

Walking with the Gods

Read Jeremiah 2:28 & Acts 17:23

Why do you suppose people develop many gods?

Read Deuteronomy 32:39

How many gods are there?

Getting to Know the True God

Using the following passages, describe God.

Exodus 20:4-6

1 Kings 8:39

Matthew 10:37-38

1 Corinthians 10:31

Knowing God Results in Reflecting His Priorities

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3

What is the most important message of all time?

Read Philippians 3:20

In our perspective on life, how do we fit in?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17

How different are we as Christians?

Read Matthew 6:9-10

What do these words say about our relationship with God and our desires in life?

Understanding a Natural and Damaging Tension in Life

Read Romans 7:19

Based on this passage, describe the tension that takes place in your life.

Read Mark 9:17-24

What does this story say about the nature of believers?

Answering the "Why" Before the "What"

When faced with a question of what to do, even in a mundane matter, what does our Christian faith compel us to do?

How do emotional attachments cloud our judgment?

When attempting to answer the question, "What decision should I make?", what is most important to remember?

What are techniques you can use to maintain the objectivity necessary to make the "right" decisions in the eyes of God?

When God's will conflicts with our desires we know that "God's will be done." Discuss life and death matters that can cause such conflicts.