

Life or Death. Who decides?

by Jason McCutcheon



Like many of you, I've been having conversations about Canada's change in attitude and law towards doctor assisted suicide (or the more popular term, physician assisted dying). I have been shocked how quickly people have changed their minds about this issue. I haven't kept up with all the polls of public opinion, but it seems that the majority of Canadians

approve of these changes. To be honest, I'm troubled by this change, and let me tell you why. My faith in Jesus, and the Bible as God's Word informs and guides my thoughts.

1. Is human life sacred or not?

Is human life holy? Is it special and to be protected and honoured? As I held a friend's young son this morning, I'm reminded of the answer. It's a resounding YES! You are special and created in God's image. God loves and cares for you. Jesus said in Matthew 6:26, "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" God loves and cares for all creation. We should too, and sometimes we don't do a good job. But make no mistake, human life is set apart from the rest of creation. It is not ok for me to kill you. I'm sure you'd agree. We are reminded often, and have been reminded by tragedies recently, that people matter. All life is precious. God says this about you; "are you not much more valuable than they?"

2. Is life worth fighting for?

Jeremiah 1:5 says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." Of course, this passage is talking about the prophet Jeremiah, but God knows you too. God formed you in the womb; set you apart with a purpose. There is always hope. Life is worth fighting for. Would we not say this to a young person in despair? When life gets hard, we fight for it. What message does it send, especially to our young people, to end the fight when it gets hard. And I know personally in my own family the difficulties life can throw at you. As my mom battled Lou Gerhigs

disease, those last months and moments were precious, sacred, and worth the fight.

3. Who decides who lives and dies?

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 says, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die..." I believe this is not our decision. And when we move that decision from God's to man's, then it opens a door that is hard to close. Although proponents of assisted dying assure us that the decision and respect of the dying will be honoured, are there not valid questions about the future and where this will lead? Will there be situations where the elderly feel pressured to end their life so they aren't a burden on their family? Who decides what kind of suffering is eligible? Mental illness, severe short term pain...will these be eligible? What about children? [Five children have been euthanized in the Netherlands since it became legal there.](#) What about people who are seen by some as a drain on society or "unwanted". [In the United States, 30% of unborn babies with down syndrome are already aborted.](#) Is it not conceivable that these new laws could lead to this practice moving from before birth, to after birth? "You're being alarmist & dramatic" some would say. Am I? History, even in the modern era, has taught us that we need to remain vigilant in the protection of the sick and vulnerable. You and I shouldn't decide who lives or dies. And a doctor, who is to "do no harm" should certainly not be put in that position either.

4. Are we missing out on seeing God's power at work?

I don't like suffering. I don't like pain. I'm sure you're the same. But I'm sure, we are also the same in recognizing that sometimes suffering and pain have helped us grow. Sometimes how we deal with suffering and pain is an example to our family and has helped us grow closer together. If you're a Christian reading this, have you not at times felt closer to God in times of suffering and pain? I have. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:7b-10,

"Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.**"

I'm not sure if I'm ready to use the word "delight" when talking about my weaknesses...but some of the strongest moments in my life, and in the lives of those I love, have been when facing times of weakness. God has an opportunity to show His strength. I think in our charge to end life, we can miss the very real blessing of showing and seeing God's grace at work.

I put my life and death in the hands of God. After all, it is written that "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4). I look forward to that day. As currently, some in my family face difficult days ahead, I'm reminded that the church is called to be with those who are hurting and in pain. Offering hope of healing, the presence of peace and comforting care. We are there and will continue to be. And we will trust Jesus with the rest.

Praying for God to show His strength in the midst of your weakness,

Jason McCutcheon

*All scripture quotations are from the New International Version.