

Money, Sex, Power and Death: Challenges in Christian Ethics
Questions of life and death, 3/25/17

Many controversial issues in our culture today deal with life and death:

- War and the use of violence
- Capital punishment
- Suicide (and assisted suicide)
- Euthanasia
- Abortion
(right or wrong; how does the government respond; who in the government decides)
- End of life care

Christian ethics use frameworks of:

Law—God’s laws about murder and violence, but applying them raises questions

Purposes—God’s purpose for human life: relationship with God and each other in Christ

--To glorify God

Relationship—to love as Christ loved us

Concepts that come from the laws, purposes and relationships:

We are uniquely made in the image of God, and therefore human life has unique value

We are beloved by God, despite sin, despite disease and disability, despite suffering

Jesus’ life and death defied ideas of “usefulness” and had plenty of suffering,

but he fulfilled the law God’s purposes, and showed us how to love sacrificially.

(note agency: the roles and responsibilities that we have in particular circumstances)

Ethical systems that compete with Christian ethics:

- Vengeance/Retribution
- Utilitarian ethics: human life is only valuable if it is useful;
make decisions on utility (life is not a value in and of itself)
- Communist/Capitalist: both are utilitarian: usefulness for the system
(the part or individual does not have value beyond the whole)
- Radical Libertarian: value based on market value
(but human desires are not always good)
- Individualism/Autonomy: my life comes first; never restrict individual choice
- Hedonism: life is only valuable if it is pleasing or has pleasure
- Idolatry of human life: all other considerations do not matter to keeping someone alive.

How can we respond?

- Honor human life as sacred (with an eternal perspective)
- Seek to heal in mind, body and spirit (and relationship)
- Seek to relieve suffering in mind, body and spirit and relationship
with compassion (walking along side when suffering and dying is present)
- Protect people from harm, continuing to value human life
- Seek repentance and reconciliation