

**A time to be born, a time to die  
Pastor John E. Dubler  
Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8**

Our desire is to live honorably each and every day of our lives by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not, in the last day of our lives, end them dishonorably through suicide and thus leave a legacy of pain to our children and grandchildren.

**Ageing population has forwarded the debate about the “Right to die.”**

As our population ages, the desire for people to choose the time and method of their own death is increasing. What was once considered “unthinkable” is now being permitted and even legislatively protected. Physicians, who are charged by the Oath of Hippocrates, are now violating that oath when they prescribe a combination of drugs to bring about death or assist in a suicide.

**God’s fundamental answer: He alone chooses the date of birth and death.**

We should be aware that our days are numbered.

**Psalm 90:12**

“So teach us to number our days,  
That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.”

**A specific number of days have been ordained for you.**

God already determined the day you were to be born.



**Psalm 139:15-16**

15 My frame was not hidden from You,  
When I was made in secret,  
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;  
16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;  
And in Your book were all written  
The days that were ordained for me,  
When as yet there was not one of them.

## God determines the day you will die.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:1-2**

There is an appointed time for everything.  
And there is a time for every event under heaven —  
A time to give birth and a time to die . . .

**Don't take matters into your own hands.** Taking matters into our own hands concerning our time to die is willful folly, resulting in consequences which end the reign of nations and destroy the fabric of societies.

### **The right to choose**

As with the debate about abortion, the problem with euthanasia has come to the fore because of assumed, or so called "rights." The argument has been framed as a "right to choose."

- It's my body; I have a right to do as I wish.
- Don't tell me how to live my life or when I can die.

**Choices and consequences.** We do have the capacity to choose in certain fundamental situations, such as: "Where will I go to work?" "Where will I go to school?" "What will I eat, what will I wear, where will I live, etc." But even those decisions do not imply a complete divorce between our ability to make a decision and a Holy and Sovereign God to whom we all owe obedience. In addition, all decisions carry with them a cloud of consequences, for good or



bad. Some of the consequences are unseen and unanticipated, simply because finite man cannot understand in advance everything that will take place in the future.

### **Suicide, whether physician assisted or not, is murder**

Suicide is self-murder. Anyone who assists in suicide may be exempted by law of the land from being charged with murder, but in the eyes of God, he or she has assisted in murder.

**Scripture and suicide.** There is only one example in scripture of a person being asked to assist with a suicide. King Saul, mortally wounded in battle, found himself suffering greatly and about to be overrun by the Philistines. He asked his armor bearer to kill him, but the armor bearer would not do it. So Saul, in an attempt to commit suicide, fell on his own sword. His armor bearer also fell on his sword, as a misdirected act of loyalty toward Saul. Saul was not successful, and his life lingered. At Saul's own request an Amalekite, a foreigner, not in the army of Israel, killed Saul. Read the account in **2 Samuel 1: 1-16**.

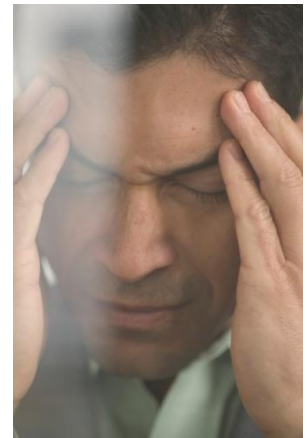
Suicide is expressly forbidden in the Bible. **1 Corinthians 3:16-17** makes the case completely clear: "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy and

that is what you are.” Suicide is “destroying the temple of God.” Our bodies as temples are holy ground, not to be trampled upon by man, nor life extinguished by homicide or suicide.

Your body, in fact, is not your own. As a believer you have been “bought with a price,”<sup>1</sup> and therefore you cannot simply make any decision you like in regard to your body. We are to be good stewards of our bodies just as we are to be with anything else given under our control, from family to finances and even to our very bodies themselves.

### **People are afraid of suffering and pain**

Time and again when I have asked people if they are afraid of death I hear, “No, but I do fear the process of dying.” Only one person has told me they were actually afraid of death. More should be afraid of death, because if a person does not know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of his life, when he dies he will go to hell and be tormented there throughout eternity. There will be no second chance.



However, people, almost universally, are fearful of suffering. Perhaps they have visited a nursing home or seen a relative die in some protracted health struggle. They come to the conclusion that they must do something to prevent such suffering when their time comes. They have either forgotten or never knew that God has promised never to leave us or forsake us, even at the end of life and in the dying process itself.

**Deuteronomy 31: 6-8** “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble, . . . for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you . . .”

**Romans 8: 35-39** tells us that we shall never be separated from the love of Christ.

In **Psalm 23** we read, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me . . .”

### **Christ’s power is perfected in weakness**

We must constantly remind ourselves of this truth: “When I am weak, then I am strong.” Paul sought the Lord in prayer three times that his “thorn in the flesh” would be removed from him. This, I believe, was some sort of physical affliction, most likely a problem with his eyes. This weakness kept him from exalting himself. He had received a direct revelation of heaven and could have easily become puffed up.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:20

Whether a problem with eyes or not, Scripture shows us that Paul had some kind of physical infirmity.

**Galatians 4:13-15** recounts: “But you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.”

### **The Bible tells us how to view weaknesses**

Here is Paul’s account of what happened when he asked the Lord to remove the weakness he was experiencing.

**2 Corinthians 12:7-10** Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me — to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

### **Pray for healing, pray for strength, and be ready for suffering**



Moses lived to the age of 120 and was strong until the day of his death

We are certainly to pray and ask God to heal all our weaknesses. Moses died at the age of 120, and yet the Bible records that his eye was not dim and his physical strength was not abated. I encourage us all to pray and have faith that the Lord will heal all our infirmities and all our diseases. This message is not about healing, but the great sin of suicide, so I will not focus on the aspect of healing but rather knowing how to handle suffering.

Paul, in the midst of suffering would pray for strength from the Lord. In a familiar and often quoted verse he says, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

**Philippians 4:11-14** Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever

circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can

do all things through Him who strengthens me. Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.

Suffering is, of course, not a popular topic. But the pastor who does not prepare his flock for suffering is not preaching the full gospel. Job experienced much pain and suffering, yet “In all these things Job did not sin nor blame God.” (Job 1:22). I am concerned that if many of us suffer we would not be able to say the same thing as did Job. When he was challenged by his wife who said, “Curse God and die,” he responded, “Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” (Job 2:10).



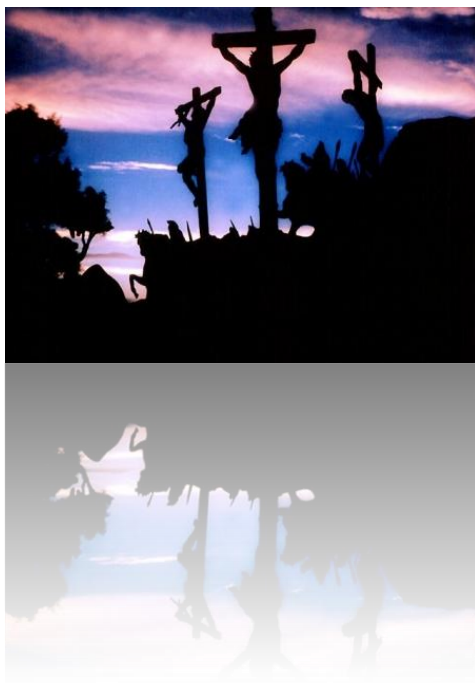
### **The spiritual value of suffering**

I do not speak of suffering as a consequence of doing wrong. There is no value in that. **1 Peter 4:15-16** tells us, “Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.”

### **The fellowship of suffering saints**

There is a fellowship in the sufferings of Christ which we may experience, and if so, we will share in His glory. Consider **Philippians 3:10**: “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

And again, the one of the greatest chapters on suffering, **2 Corinthians 4** tells us: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves” (2 Corinthians 4:7).



It is not completely clear to me, but I know that people who suffer and offer that suffering to the Lord Jesus as a kind prayer, find themselves in closer fellowship with Jesus and with other sufferers as well. No one understands a sufferer as well as another who has suffered the same kind of pain. For this reason nobody understands the sufferer like Jesus, who suffered such cruel torture and crucifixion for our sake, though we were the guilty ones and He the innocent one.

Because Jesus knows first-hand the nature of our trials and sufferings, the scriptures tell us that we have in Him

a completely faithful and understanding High Priest. **Hebrews 4:15-16** relates:

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

### **Refusing medical technology for the terminally ill<sup>2</sup>**



There comes a time for each of us when death is completely natural and the “time to die” has arrived. Medical technology should not be expected or called upon to extend that day or prolong the process. Trying to extend life beyond the natural and expected time of death for the terminally ill is not necessary and indeed not appropriate. Therefore, use of ventilators, respirators, kidney dialysis, and chemotherapy merely to keep a person alive, where that terminally ill person has no hope of living without the aid of those machines or therapies, is not appropriate. In such a case, nature and God’s timing for the day of death should be allowed to take its course.

Great care must be exercised in making the determination that the “time to die” has come, and the use of life sustaining intervention is no longer appropriate.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, a properly executed durable power of attorney for health care decisions in case a person is incapacitated, is a good idea. (For further information on a durable power of attorney, see the end section of this message.)

Use of respirators or ventilators is entirely appropriate in the case of an individual who is not terminally ill or disabled, as a means of giving the body a chance to recoup strength and wellness after a severe accident or illness.

Medically assisted nutrition and hydration is appropriate for every person, young and old, throughout every day of his life, under any and every circumstance. Even if the person is unconscious, giving nutrition and hydration should be considered a normal provision of decent personal care and certainly not an artificial medical extension of life.

### **Hospice and the end of life:**

Although not all Hospice chapters have the same philosophy, Hospice of Larimer County is Pro Life. This means they take special care to help patients with difficult-to-manage symptoms, such as overwhelming pain.

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<sup>2</sup> Terminally ill is defined as: An irreversible and fatal disease, illness or condition. Although a patient may be diagnosed with a terminal condition and live for some time, this term generally refers to cases where the underlying cause of death cannot be reversed by medical technology and death is likely within six months, regardless of treatment or intervention. (C.G. Earll, Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity).

<sup>3</sup> Please note that this information is provided as a matter of ethical concern, and is not intended to be a substitute for competent medical and legal advice which may be provided by Christian medical and legal resources.

- They do not hasten the day of death
- Death is brought about as a result of the disease process
- Proper administration of palliative drugs, including morphine, will make it possible for people in the end stage of life to both receive and give ministry to friends and loved ones almost to the very end.



NOTE: This message was presented at Good Shepherd Bible Chapel with additional information on the durable power of attorney for health care decisions as well as on hospice, by professionals in the field. To hear their comments go to [www.johndubler.com](http://www.johndubler.com) and click on “Audio Sermons.” Select the message “A Time to Die.”

#### **For more information**

Carrie Gordon Earll, Senior Policy Analyst for Bioethics at Focus on the Family and a fellow with the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity has written a short article that is worth reading. Go to <http://www.family.org/socialissues/Sanctity/> for information on euthanasia and medical directives such as living wills (which are not recommended) and durable powers of attorney, (which are). Earll has also written “Making Medical Decisions for a Loved One: A Caregiver's Guide,” which can be viewed at <http://www.citizenlink.org/FOSI/bioethics/A000002289.cfm>.