

BIBLE STUDY 2 (Leader's Guide)
The Meaning of Life: A Gift from God
Second Sunday: Life is a Gift to be Respected as God is Taking It
"Is it OK to pull the plug? What about advanced Medical Directives?"

Last week we talked about how important it is to defend life as the gift of God that it is, the blood-bought value it has. Today, we see that respecting God as the Author and Controller of life means not trying to prevent him from doing what He is doing – not thinking ourselves above Him on the other side of the issue – being willing to let go.

Introduction: Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care. *Discuss this document that was covered in week one. If needed, finish any sections of it you didn't have time for in the previous lesson. Mention that the document seeks to find the balance between the focus of week one and week two. Our attitude ought to be one that defends life from those that want to take it, at the same time shows respect for God when He has decided to take life. Then work into this lesson by encouraging discussion on this question...*

I. The Question of Death

Is it OK to want to die? As with so many things, this involves a person's motives. Do I want to die because I'm sick of life and not content with the role God has given me to play? Then that is sin. Do I want to die to go and be with Jesus forever, grateful for all of God's blessings He has poured out on me? Then this attitude is a beautiful thing, understanding that death is just a gate to eternal life.

Read the following passages and discuss what God says through each one to shape our mindset as we approach the time He will take us.

Philippians 1:23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Paul personally would rather be with Christ, but realizes that his time here has a purpose.

Romans 14:8 If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

We are comforted that no matter what happens, we are the Lord's.

Psalms 31:5 My times are in your hands.

The Psalmist admits that God determines our time here even as He gives us responsibilities to take care of the life He has given us and to make decisions based on that life He has given us.

Psalms 90:12 Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

We are reminded to pray for God's guidance on helping us face death.

Apply It:

Do we have to use every medical measure possible to keep someone alive who is ready to meet their Savior?

Use this opportunity to reinforce the difference between normal medical practice and extraordinary measures. Remind the class that it is the motive in the heart, especially emphasizing that some measures are clearly sinful (such as self-murder). But where the intent is not to hasten death, where the intent is to provide reasonable care (food and water and help with treatable illnesses like pneumonia, etc.) and let God take His child home if it is His will, certainly the believer may deny treatments that don't show reasonable expectation of success.

What if measures have been taken to rescue the life of a loved one? Is there ever a time for us to "pull the plug" on the machinery keeping him/her alive? When is that?

If the diagnosis is that recovery will not occur, and we do not ignore the value of all life and see it all (regardless of quality) as a gift from God, pulling the plug is letting God be God to take his child if He so chooses. Certainly, if someone feels that with the machines, all they are doing is trying to lengthen what God has already taken, it is time to pull the plug, because as Paul writes in Romans 14:23: "Everything that does not come from faith is sin."

II. The Benefits of Death. *Having the proper attitude toward the question of death is something that can benefit all those around us.*

Consider Jesus' death. Read Luke 23:44-49.

(slide) Luke 23:44-49 ⁴⁴ It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. ⁴⁷ The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." ⁴⁸ When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. ⁴⁹ But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

What was Jesus' attitude toward his death? *"Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit" – complete submission to God's will and a realization that God is in control.*

How did hearing this and witnessing the other things the centurion saw that day affect that Roman soldier? *He had to give praise to God and glory to Jesus.*

So now, if our attitude toward death is one of seeing God as in control, and we have a willingness to go when He wants, how can we best use the events around that once-in-a-lifetime event called death to give Him glory?

Discuss the way we talk with our loved ones about it, our attitude toward death as it approaches, and also encourage discussion around our will, our obituary and our funeral.

How could these parts of your death be used to God's glory?

- *The Will: Consider placing a Christian preamble to your will, reminding all those who see it once you're gone of the promises of God and your faith in those promises. Ask for examples of what might be placed in one's Will.*

One sample you could use (slide): I commit myself to God's care, secure in His love for me and trusting in the salvation purchased for me through Christ's suffering and death. I leave those who survive me the comfort of knowing that I have died in this faith and have now joined my Lord in eternal glory. I commend my loved ones to the protecting arms of God knowing that He will continue to provide for them despite my absence. I encourage them to place their faith and trust in Him alone.

- *The Obituary: Provide what you might like to include in your obituary. Examples might be baptism, confirmation, a description of your faith, church involvement, and the importance of faith and passing it on to the next generation, etc, essentially words that testify to trust in Jesus for salvation.*
- *The Funeral: Use this to transition into the next question...*

Which of the following best describes what you would like your funeral to be? *Rank them as most important to least important. Put an x in the blank if you don't want this to be the case at all.*

- _____ A time of mourning for your friends and relatives to deal with the grief of losing you
- _____ A celebration of the life you lived and the impact you had on those around you
- _____ An opportunity for people to get some closure on your life
- _____ An opportunity for relatives to bury the hatchet
- _____ A service of praise to God for his blessings on your life
- _____ A celebration of Jesus' love and righteousness
- _____ An opportunity for those around you to hear God's clear law and sweet gospel
- _____ An outreach event

How can you help insure that your funeral accomplishes the purposes that give God glory? *Tell loved ones, talk with your pastor, live your faith, etc. In this discussion, provide the handout entitled: "Planning my Funeral" and, depending on time, encourage some discussion on things to think about as each is filling it out. You could ask the students to fill out the handout and return it to church for filing for later use.*

Activity: Plan your funeral (see handout).

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have made us as Your own, redeemed us when we rebelled against You, paying with the blood of your Son, and You have called us your own children. Our lives and deaths are in Your hand. Help us to be comforted in that knowledge and to live our lives according to it and be ready to die in that same comfort. Bless our time in Your Word this morning that we continue to grow in our understanding of what Your power over all things means for our lives. In Christ, Amen.

Planning My Funeral

Name: _____

Understanding that funeral planning can often be a difficult thing for those left behind, I offer these suggestions in order that God can be praised as my loved ones celebrate my journey from life here to life with my Savior forever.

First of all, I'd like to make this statement about my faith which can be used to comfort all those who attend – with the knowledge that my faith stands firmly on the foundation of what Jesus has done for me...

Scripture Readings: *The lines below are my suggestions for readings of comfort and promise from God's Word I'd suggest the pastor use at my funeral along with my rationale for each section of Scripture.*

Reading:
Reason:

Reading:
Reason:

Reading:
Reason:

Hymns: *I'd like these hymns sung for the reasons listed...*

Other Comments: *On the back of this page, you may include other items of interest for those planning the funeral such as an encouragement in your own words in the manner they might handle life without you.*