

BIBLE STUDY 1 (Student's Guide)

The Meaning of Life: A Gift From God

First Sunday: Life Is a Gift To Be Defended From Any Who Would Take It

*“My parents say they don't want to be a burden. They want to die with dignity.
Is that OK?”*

Introduction: Agree/Disagree. God is in control of everything.

If you had to design how and when you would die, what would you choose?

Terms:

Euthanasia – From the Greek, meaning “Good death.” It is a term that has been used to describe “mercy killing,” the taking of a life either actively or passively, voluntarily or involuntarily by applying or withdrawing medical treatment with the intent of hastening death.

Active Euthanasia – An act in which a physician actively kills the patient, usually by lethal injection.

Physician Assisted Suicide – An act in which a physician intentionally provides a patient with the means to kill him or herself, usually with an overdose of prescription medication.

Question: Is euthanasia legal?

Should it be? Why or why not?

Read Romans 8:20-22. Describe the “bondage to decay” from which Paul says creation awaits liberation.

What are some of the results of that *bondage to decay* on human life?

Which life has more value – the nursing home patient waiting to die and whose care is bankrupting the family, the newborn in its mother's loving arms, the corporate executive at work, the criminal, or the police officer? Why?

Read Luke 14:12-14, and notice how Jesus challenges the prevalent thoughts and practice.

What natural human tendency does this passage address? How does this passage address it?

Think of a passage of Scripture clarifying the statement that God loves all people equally, regardless of their quality of life.

Read James 2:1-10. Why does James tell us not to show favoritism?

Truth #1 – Life is not to be valued more or less by a Christian based on its perceived quality. Hannah understood this truth when she sang her song of praise to God. She sang: “*The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up*” (1 Samuel 2:6).

Truth #2 – God is the Author of life and death.

Truth #2 is such a given for a Christian that the author of this Bible study could not think of a question to arrive at that truth without sounding patronizing. But applying it and living by that truth becomes more and more difficult with the many options we seem to have about our life and health care.

Apply The Truths: Evaluate some of these situations and apply God’s Word to making that decision.

- In I Samuel 31, King Saul was critically wounded. He asked his armor-bearer, his trusted defender – and perhaps, his friend – to put him out of his misery in order that the enemy wouldn’t torture him. Evaluate the reasons to fulfill that request and those against filling it. What would you do?
- Life Example: Your parents were hardworking, honest, salt-of-the-earth type people. But now, Dad can’t do anything but breathe. He seems to be in pain. Although you love him, you don’t want to see him suffer. Besides that, he needs people to bathe him and wipe him, and he can’t even swallow anymore. The proud and dignified man you knew is just a shell, losing more and more control every day.
 - Should you be able to prescribe something to help send him home to God?
 - What about just not keeping him alive – DNR (do-not-resuscitate) order?
 - What about removing the feeding tube?
- Terri Schiavo was a young woman in Florida described as in a persistent vegetative state. You may remember the court battles as various family members fought over whether or not to withdraw her feeding tube. Although she was breathing on her own and her heart was beating, she needed to be fed through that tube, since she was not able to do that for herself. The doctors said she might have lived in that condition for a long time, costing money and a great deal of care. What decision would reflect a proper application of Biblical principles?
- What if you KNOW the patient wants to die?
 - First of all...is it wrong to want to die?

Activity: The Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care – Christian Version

Closing Prayer

BIBLE STUDY 1 (Leader's Guide)
(Use with accompanying PowerPoint presentation)

The Meaning of Life: A Gift From God

First Sunday: Life Is a Gift To Be Defended From Any Who Would Take It

*“My parents say they don't want to be a burden. They want to die with dignity.
Is that OK?”*

This week we consider God's gift of life and our responsibility to defend human life. This is true even when worldly philosophies determine that life only has value if it meets a perceived quality.

Introduction: Agree/Disagree. God is in control of everything.

Agree – Good, then we can continue with the next question, understanding that we don't have the power to make the final decisions, and that is good, because God will ultimately make the perfect decision for us.

If you had to design how and when you would die, what would you choose?

Talk about pros/cons of dying quickly vs. slightly prolonged or very prolonged. Talk about in sleep vs. suddenly in prime of life. Talk about the reasoning for these pro/con arguments.

The so-called right-to-die movement contends that we should be allowed more “choices” in how and when we die. Organizations such as “Compassion & Choices” aggressively pursue reform to allow individuals to make decisions to take their own lives. As this rhetoric becomes part of everyday conversation in today's society, it is important to know what some of the words mean...

Terms:

Euthanasia – From the Greek, meaning “good death.” This term is also used to describe “mercy killing,” the taking of a life either actively or passively, voluntarily or involuntarily by applying or withdrawing medical treatment with the intent of hastening death.

Active Euthanasia – An act in which a physician actively kills the patient, usually by lethal injection.

Physician Assisted Suicide – An act in which a physician intentionally provides a patient with the means to kill himself or herself, usually with an overdose of prescription medication.

Question: Is euthanasia legal? *The states of Oregon, Washington and Montana currently allow legalized physician-assisted suicide, and other states have considered similar measures. In the Netherlands and Belgium, euthanasia is legal. In the Netherlands, Switzerland and Belgium physician-assisted suicide is also allowed. In several other countries, the topic is often treated as it was in the Netherlands for a long time – although not completely legal, the government does not punish or discourage it in any way.*

Should euthanasia be? Why or why not? *According to God's Word – absolutely not. You shall not murder. From a humanistic perspective, however, if abortion is legal, it doesn't make sense that euthanasia wouldn't be, even if a patient didn't request it (as is the case hundreds of times in such places as the Netherlands – 550 reported deaths without request in 2005. In 2007, there were 2120 euthanasia [requested] reports.) You see the slippery slope of legalizing murder in the form of abortion. This is the logical next step. That's why we need to stand up for the sanctity of life according to God's Word rather than basing it on a perceived value of human life.*

Read Romans 8:20-22. Describe the “bondage to decay” from which Paul says creation awaits liberation.

Because of sin in the world, there are problems in world, and so there are varying degrees of quality of human life.

(slide) **Romans 8:20-22** ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole **creation** has been groaning as in the **pains of childbirth** right up to the present time.

What are some of the results of that *bondage to decay* on human life? *Sickness, injury, accidents, illnesses, ICUs, nursing homes. Walk through a nursing home especially in a poorer area of town and you see that weakness and helplessness quite clearly. Money doesn't hide the helplessness, but it tries to cover up some of the appearances.*

Which life has more value – the nursing home patient waiting to die and whose care is bankrupting the family, the newborn in its mother's loving arms, the corporate executive at work, the criminal, or the police officer?

This is one of those “duh” questions. Of course, their value is all the same in God's eyes, but ask why... they are all sinners he loved enough to sacrifice his son for, sinners whose sins are paid and are now blood-bought souls, his children. But use this portion of the Bible study to explore the concept that we too easily decide which lives we think are better than others.

Read Luke 14:12-14 and notice how Jesus challenges the prevalent thoughts and practice.

(slide) **Luke 14:12-14** Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

What natural human tendency does this passage address? How does this passage address it? *We naturally look differently at different people based on their quality of life. Jesus tells us not to do that.*

Think of a passage of Scripture that makes clear God loves all people equally, regardless of their quality of life.

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world...

Romans 5:8 – While we were still sinners...

1 Peter 1:18,19 – ¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

1 John 2:2 – He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Other....

Read James 2:1-10. Why does James tell us not to show favoritism? *It is judging based on wrong things. God uses the weak, the poor, those who need help to do spectacular things and to give opportunities – because we are all sinners (weak) anyway.*

(slide) James 2:1-10 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶ But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? ⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking.

Truth #1 – Life is not to be valued more or less by a Christian based on its perceived quality.

Hannah understood this truth when she sang her song of praise to God. She sang: "*The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up*" (1 Samuel 2:6).

Truth #2 – God is the Author of life and death.

Truth #2 is such a given for a Christian that the author of this Bible study couldn't think of a question to arrive at that truth without sounding patronizing. But applying it and living by that truth becomes more and more difficult with the many options we seem to have about our life and health care.

Apply It: Evaluate some of these situations and apply God's Word in making that decision. *The teacher may select some or all of these for discussion depending on time available.*

- In I Samuel 31, King Saul was critically wounded. He asked his armor-bearer, his trusted defender – and perhaps his friend – to put him out of his misery so that the enemy wouldn't torture him. Evaluate the reasons to fulfill that request and those against filling it. What would you do? **(slide)**

(You could pop up on the screen a document with two columns and type in the pros and cons)

PRO: King's order, friend's last request; agony of seeing someone you love in pain; concern for the pride and reputation of that friend – dignity (what might enemy do to his body?)

CON: 2 Samuel 1:14 – “Why were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?”; murder; God is in control of life – it is His to bring death and make alive, not mine.

Can you identify a flaw in the reasoning both for and against the argument? Quite often the rationale to end life has to do with what we want to see in life and not in what brings God glory.

For the teacher: Another way to ask the preceding question would be to set up a debate between the two sides of the room using the next slide. Have each side develop a list of their arguments and then come together and let a representative of each side debate.

Resolved: The armor bearer did the right thing in ending Saul's life.

Resolved: The armor bearer should not have ended Saul's life.

Following the debate – analyze the reasons given and supplement with any reasons they didn't come up with and get the group to discuss the right God reserves for Himself to take life.

- Life Example: Your parents were hardworking, honest, salt-of-the-earth type people. But now, Dad can't do anything but breathe. He seems to be in pain. Although you love him, you don't want to see him suffer. Besides that, he needs people to bathe him and wipe him, and he can't even swallow anymore. The proud and dignified man you knew is just a shell, losing more and more control every day.

- Should you be able to prescribe something to help send him home to God?

The answer is the same as we came to above for killing Saul. That is not our place. God is in control. Our sermon text for today (Deuteronomy 32:39) says, “There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life.”

- What about just not keeping him alive – DNR (do-not-resuscitate) order?

If it is clear that his illness or disease is terminal and death is imminent, the decision against extreme measures being taken to resuscitate someone could very well be a God-pleasing one. The motive for the decision – and the attitude toward life, death and God – play a key role in determining whether or not a do-not-resuscitate order is God-pleasing. Teacher, please read Pastor Fleischmann's article at

<http://www.christianliferesources.com/?4819> for more information in leading this discussion. See below a portion of another article found on the CLR website:

Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) Orders

Resuscitation is an aggressive procedure designed primarily to restart a heart by external means which has stopped unexpectedly. It is not uncommon for some patients to suffer broken ribs and bruising during this procedure.

A successful resuscitation is intimately tied to the health of the patient at the time of the arrest. Statistics indicate that elderly patients, generally 70 years of age and older, who undergo a resuscitation in a nursing home have very little chance of surviving more than a few additional days.

When a family is asked whether they wish a DNR order upon a family member admitted to a nursing home or hospital they should consider the age and general health of that patient. A discussion with the attending physician will prove helpful in determining whether or not to authorize a DNR. The motive for not authorizing it would be an acknowledgement that when the heart stops it is perhaps the final attendant medical circumstance to arriving at the conclusion God is bringing death for this person. Other circumstances preceding the heart arrest might be advancing dementia, inoperable cancer or tumors, advanced age and a frail body.

- What about removing the feeding tube?

If the purpose is to hasten death, this is murder. We have the responsibility to care for those who can't care for themselves and to starve or dehydrate them to death is never acceptable. However, if the body is rejecting the food delivered through the feeding tube and the removal of the tube would not hasten death but bring more comfort to the patient, that could very well be the right decision.

- Terri Schiavo was a young woman in Florida described as being in a persistent vegetative state. You may remember the court battles as various family members fought over whether or not to withdraw her feeding tube. Although she was breathing on her own and her heart was beating, she needed to be fed through that tube, since she was not able to do that for herself. The doctors said she might have lived in that condition for a long time, costing money and a great deal of care. What decision would reflect a proper application of Biblical principles?
- What if you KNOW the patient wants to die?
 - First of all...is it wrong to want to die? *Consider Paul – “I desire to depart and be with Christ.” But if that desire trumps our ability to say “Thy will be done,” we sin.*
Our will is not always God's will, and God's will is to be done.

There are many issues and concerns about all of these difficult decisions. How do you know what to do? Well, one thing many people can do is to write out their wishes. This allows time to think through some of the situations according to God's Word instead of letting the emotions take over in the midst of the trauma. Many also appoint someone to make decisions for them when they are unable to do so. For the rest of this lesson, we'll be looking at one way to do both of those things.

Activity: The Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care – Christian Version:
Teacher, please find a copy of the DPOAHC for your state at www.christianliferesources.com. The document and a supplement explaining the document for your state can be found there. Review your state's document addendum when using the PowerPoint presentation.

The manner in which you go through this portion of the Bible study can vary depending on your class size and time availability. It is optional to send the attendees home with the actual DPOAHC document and use the explanatory supplement in class. Since time will likely be limited, consider starting with a look at the DPOAHC Addendum the first week and finishing it the following week.

Some suggestions: Consider speaking to several people in the congregation who are notaries public and ask them to be on hand to serve as witnesses.

See the PowerPoint slides available with this Bible study for a way to go through this segment.

Closing Prayer: Lord God, Heavenly Father, teach us to number our days aright that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Forgive us for the pride of wanting to control our lives and deaths according to our will and fill us with your spirit that we may see that our times are in Your hands. Grant us Your grace to live our lives in joy because of that. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

BIBLE STUDY 2 (Student'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.

I. The Question of Death

Is it OK to want to die?

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

Psalms 31:5

Romans 14:8

Psalms 90:12

Apply It:

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

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?

II. The *Benefits* of Death.

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

What was Jesus' attitude toward his death?

How did hearing this and witnessing the other things the centurion saw that day affect that Roman soldier?

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?

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

- The Will:

- The Obituary:

- The Funeral:

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?

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.

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.*

BIBLE STUDY 3 (STUDENT GUIDE)
The Meaning of Life: A Gift From God
Third Sunday: Life Is A Gift To Be Used to God's Glory
"Why am I still here? Why won't God just let me go home?"

For the past two weeks, we've been discussing how to handle death as Christians. Today God's Word directs our focus on how to handle the life we have before we die as Christians, regardless of its quality.

Introduction: Imagine this scene. You are lying on a hospital bed. You are unable to speak or respond. You aren't able to communicate in any way. You can hear what is going on around you, but no one knows if you are even aware of their presence. What is going through your mind?

I. First of all, why are we here in the first place?

- Read 1 Peter 2:9-12 and list the two related reasons given.

- How does 1 Corinthians 10:31 answer that question?

Sometimes, though, doesn't it seem that God would be more glorified by this or that person if they were in heaven already singing with the saints and angels? In Romans 8, God tells us that He works all things for the good of those who love Him. God's Word gives several examples of God serving good through sufferings.

II. Why do we suffer here?

- Read the following passages and discuss why God allows us to go through difficulties and why He may cause us to suffer longer than we choose.

2 Corinthians 1:3,4

Galatians 6:2

Matthew 25:40

Ephesians 2:8-10

Philippians 1:12-14

Examples: Consider these stories and evaluate the quality and value of the lives involved.

- **Luke 10:30-35 – The Good Samaritan**
 - What was the quality of the traveler’s life as he was lying on the side of the road, left for dead?

 - What was the value of that traveler’s life as he was lying on the side of the road, left for dead?

 - Why did God allow that traveler to survive the attack?

- **John 9:1-7 – The Man Born Blind**
 - Use this true story to defend the statement: God gives people a low quality of life for His glory.

- **Mildred:** Mildred never said a word in the four years I knew her. She lay on the nursing home bed, apparently on the brink of death, only communicating through a few facial expressions. Then, her body started rejecting the food that was coming through the feeding tube, causing all sorts of problems and ultimately resulted in its discontinuation. The family figured it was only a matter of time...not much time. God caused her to continue living for more than over 11 more weeks without food because the options for feeding her had been exhausted. Consider some ways God might have used her during that additional time.

Someday, that might be you. Your loved ones will want to show love to Jesus by showing you love. They might be frustrated and confused, not knowing if you can hear them, not knowing what you want. Think about that. What would you want them to do?

Activity: Develop a wish list for those who might visit you when you aren’t able to communicate with them. Include on the list opportunities for them to serve Jesus by serving you.

Closing Prayer: O Lord, teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. And as we consider the number of our days, bless us with the confidence that our times are in Your hands, and You have purpose for all of our days. Help us to see all life as a gift from You and use the life You have given us for You. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

BIBLE STUDY 3 (LEADER'S GUIDE)
The Meaning of Life: A Gift From God
Third Sunday: Life Is a Gift To Be Used to God's Glory
"Why am I still here? Why won't God just let me go home?"

For the past two weeks, we've been discussing how to handle death as Christians. Today God's Word directs our focus on how to handle the life we have before we die as Christians, regardless of its quality.

Introduction: Imagine this scene. You are lying on a hospital bed. You are unable to speak or respond. You aren't able to communicate in any way. You can hear what is going on around you, but no one knows if you are even aware of their presence. What is going through your mind?

Why didn't God take me? Will I ever be able to communicate again? I wish they knew I could hear them. I sure would like them to _____ (tell me about my grandkids, comfort me with God's Word, give me something to think about, something to distract me, etc.)

Today we'll look at how God uses our lives here on earth as we approach death, often in ways we would never have guessed.

I. First of all, why are we here in the first place?

- Read 1 Peter 2:9-12 and list the two related reasons given.

1 Peter 2:9-12 ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

*To declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.
To live lives that encourage others to glorify God.*

- How does 1 Corinthians 10:31 answer that question?

1 Corinthians 10:31 ³¹ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

To give God glory.

Sometimes, though, doesn't it seem that God would be more glorified by this or that person if they were in heaven already singing with the saints and angels? In Romans 8, God tells us that He works all things for the good of those who love Him. God's Word gives several examples of God serving good through sufferings.

II. Why do we suffer here?

- Read the following passages and discuss why God allows us to go through difficulties and why He may cause us to suffer longer than we choose.

2 Corinthians 1:3,4 ³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

So that we can help others through their sufferings later.

Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

So that we can fulfill the law of Christ

Matthew 25:40 ⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' "

Giving people an opportunity to serve Him.

Ephesians 2:8-10 ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

God may be giving others an opportunity to do a good work.

Philippians 1:12-14 ¹² Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. ¹³ As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴ Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

God could be using your situation as a way to encourage others to share the gospel.

Examples: Consider these stories and evaluate the quality and value of the lives involved.

- **Luke 10:30-35** ³⁰ In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "

- What was the quality of the traveler's life as he was lying on the side of the road, left for dead? *Apparently not too great – helpless and broke and injured.*

- What was the value of that traveler's life as he was lying on the side of the road, left for dead? *High – made and redeemed by God and used by God to give an opportunity for His people to serve Him and give glory to God.*

- Why did God allow that traveler to survive the attack? *To give the Samaritan a chance to show love – one of the “good works God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

- **John 9:1-7** ¹As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. ⁴ As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶ Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. ⁷ “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

Use this true story to defend the statement: God gives people a low quality of life for His glory. *In Jesus' day, being blind meant that you were essentially helpless and reliant on others for nearly everything. The quality of life was considered so low that it was naturally assumed a person was “punished” with the condition of blindness. Jesus flips that on its head when He says that this happened so that God would be glorified, so that people could see God's work. Then He adds that our opportunities are limited to the here and now – so let's give God the glory in how we handle all of those quality-of-life issues.*

- Mildred never said a word in the four years I knew her. She lay on the nursing home bed, apparently on the brink of death, only communicating through a few facial expressions. Then, her body started rejecting the food that was coming through the feeding tube, which caused all sorts of problems and ultimately resulted in its discontinuation. The family figured it was only a matter of time...not much time. God caused her to continue living for more than 11 weeks without food because the options for feeding her had been exhausted. Consider some ways God might have used her during that additional time.

Some of the discussion might include opportunities for family and friends to serve God by serving her – talking with her, being there for her, holding her hand, reading God's Word to her, praying for her, singing hymns to her.

Some discussion might include the opportunities for relationships between those who cared for her to be healed as they were reminded of what was really important. Also consider the impact that those visits might have on Mildred's roommates and nurses. The real Mildred gave her pastor an opportunity to share law and gospel with a worker cleaning her room and had been such a testimony to the nurses through those who came to visit her that they started calling her “the angel.”

Someday, that might be you. Your loved ones will want to show Jesus' love by showing you love. They might be frustrated and confused, not knowing if you can hear them, not knowing what you want. Think about that. What would you want them to do?

As this discussion continues, pass out the activity page entitled, "My Wish List." Then continue to discuss this question as you go through the page. Depending on time, you can either give this sheet as an assignment or talk about parts of it to get people to share their ideas which others may want to use.

Activity: Develop a wish list for those who might visit you when you aren't able to communicate with them. Include on the list opportunities for them to serve Jesus by serving you. *Perhaps the congregation could store a copy of this document in the member's file. Appoint someone to be responsible for filing them.*

Closing Prayer: O Lord, teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. And as we consider the number of our days, bless us with the confidence that our times are in Your hands, and You have purpose for all of our days. Help us to see all life as a gift from You and use the life You have given us for You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

My Wish List

Name: _____

This form is intended for all those I love if I am ever unable to communicate with you. Know that God has a purpose for my life, even now, and that He is working even this for the good of those who love Him. Realizing that I may not be able to communicate with you, here are some things I'd love to hear...

My favorite Bible stories, passages, and sections:

My favorite hymns:

My favorite topics in our life to hear about:

My favorite prayers to pray with you:

And here's what I'd like to say to you...

In Christ's Love,
