

*HOW
SHOULD
WE
THEN
DIE?*

*Group
Discussion Questions*

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Chapter 1. Why Not?

1. How does contemporary pluralistic Western culture and society generally reach conclusions about what is morally and socially acceptable?
2. How might the question of physician-assisted death impact on your life? Have you been witness to death and dying in your life? How might your previous experience, or even your lack of experience, of bearing witness to the dying process shape your views on dying?
3. Should Christians allow their personal moral values, shaped by their personal religious beliefs, to guide how they act in their professional lives in the public square?
 - a. Why might this be controversial or difficult in our present cultural moment?
 - b. What does it mean to be “neutral” in the public square? Is such “neutrality” a genuine possibility?

Chapter 2. Why Assisted Death?

1. What do we mean by the idea of human dignity? How can suffering and dying affect our sense of dignity?
2. Define physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia? How are they distinguished? What is the relevance of the distinction between them?
3. How are physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia categorically different from palliative care? From withholding or withdrawing life sustaining-therapies?

4. What is the basic moral question at stake in evaluating the ethics of physician-assisted death?
5. What are some reasons that patients seek physician-assisted death? What does this tell us about the kind of suffering that physician-assisted death addresses?
6. Do the reasons given by Gillian Bennett for ending her life suggest a particular philosophy about the purpose and meaning of human life? How does she understand human value?

Chapter 3. Assisted Death Devalues People

1. In what ways is advocacy for physician-assisted death based on a concern for human value? How is opposition to physician-assisted death based on a concern for human value? How might people reach opposite conclusions from the same starting point?
2. What is the difference between intrinsic value and extrinsic value? What characteristics help to distinguish intrinsic value from extrinsic value?
3. What is the moral significance of intrinsic human value? What does it mean to treat someone as a means to an end? What does it mean to treat someone as an end in themselves? What are some historical examples both types of actions?
4. Explain the logical connection between value and goodness of existence? What does it say about something's value when we say that it doesn't matter whether it exists?

5. How does physician-assisted necessarily deny the idea of intrinsic human value? Are there any circumstances under which physician-assisted death can be said to respect intrinsic human value?
6. How does the idea of intrinsic human value put limits on individual freedom and autonomy?
7. What is the difference between general and special revelation? Is general revelation a useful category? Can nature speak to questions of right and wrong action?
8. The author argues that “we cannot not know” that people matter. Do you agree or disagree? Can this claim be reconciled with the fact that human value has regularly been disregarded throughout history? If so, how can it be reconciled?
9. Where does human value ultimately come from? What does it mean to be created in the image of God? How does the image of God manifest in humanity?
10. What does the gospel—the good news of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection—teach us about human value?
11. In what way is human community essential to upholding our individual sense of human value?

Chapter 4. Assisted Death is an Act of Secular Faith

1. What happens to us after we die? What are some popular conceptions about death? What is the Secular position on what it is like to be dead?
2. What is a fate worse than death? What assumptions do we make when we assert that there are fates worse than death?
3. How is physician-assisted death an act of blind faith in death? How does uncertainty about the nature of death make it unethical for doctors or nurses to cause death?
4. Discuss the differences between the mind and the brain and explain how consciousness, cognition, and free will give evidence that humans are not purely physical beings. How does this affect our assumptions about what it is like to be dead?
5. How does our understanding of what a human is affect our view of physician-assisted death? Discuss how this issue bears on the question of neutrality in the public square.
6. How does the bodily resurrection of Christ shape our expectations for life beyond the grave? Is it paradoxical for Christians to believe that they are better off dead while also opposing physician-assisted death?

Chapter 5. Escape from Despair

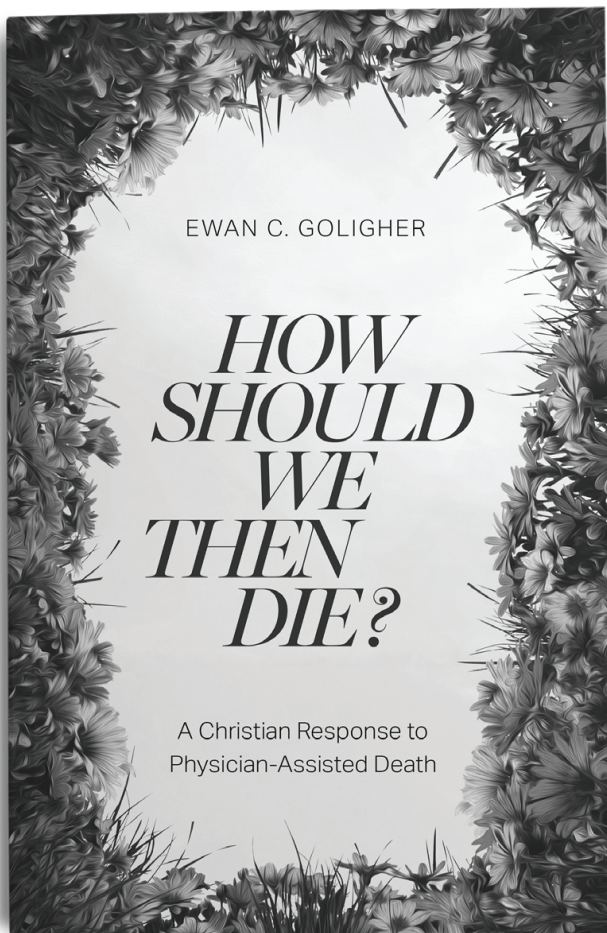
1. Why are meaning and purpose so important for human flourishing? In what ways does physician-assisted death express despair?
2. Explain the difference between self-created and discovered meaning.
 - a. What are pros and cons of self-created meaning?
 - b. What is the existential importance of discovered meaning?
 - c. Which understanding of meaning is more prevalent in our culture?
3. How does suffering challenge our sense of meaning in life?
 - a. Rephrase in your own words the quote from Tolstoy (“it is possible to live only as long as life intoxicates us”, p. 99)
 - b. Rephrase in your own words the quote from Camus (“the uselessness of suffering”, p. 100)
4. What can we learn about human meaning and purpose through natural revelation?
5. What does the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ teach us about the nature of human meaning and purpose?
6. How do faith, hope, and love enable us to escape despair in the face of suffering?

- a. What does the story of Lazarus teach us about the power of faith, hope, and love?
- b. What are some places in Scripture that refer to faith, hope, and love?

Chapter 6. Entrusting Ourselves to a Faithful Creator

1. Explain, critique, and defend each of the 10 theses.
2. Explain the statement, “to suggest that it is better for something not to exist is necessarily to declare that it does not have intrinsic value” (p. 127)
3. What does Alistair Macintyre mean by saying that “Man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal” (p. 134)? How is this relevant to the question of physician-assisted death?
4. Discuss the statement, “Christians are those who have discovered that Christ reveals the true logic behind all things” (p. 135). Is it possible to address the ethics of physician-assisted death without referring to the message of Christ in the gospel? Why and why not?

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