Lesson Nine: Terminal Illness & End of Life

Opening Prayer: Psalm 31:1-5,14-15

Biblical Examples

What can we learn from the following three biblical accounts about dealing with terminal illness?

Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:1-20)

David (2 Samuel 12:15-23)

Lazarus (John 11:1-44)

Biblical Principles

Use the following passages to explain the Christian’s view of death. Then describe how the Christian’s view of death might affect their approach to end-of-life decisions.

2 Corinthians 5:8

Ecclesiastes 7:1

Philippians 1:21-24

Use the following passages to explain the Christian’s view of life. Then describe how the Christian’s view of life might affect their approach to end-of-life decisions.

Acts 17:25-27

Psalm 31:15
Use the following passages to explain the Christian’s view of suffering. Then describe how the Christian’s view of suffering might affect their approach to end-of-life decisions.

Job 2:10

Romans 8:28

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Pastor Robert D. Bushaw writes: “A rigid rule or formula which states, ‘Keep every person alive at all costs,’ is no more adequate than the thoughtless, callous, and immoral conclusion to end the life of another with a clear conscience without any thought or moral obligation to Him who is the Source of life.”¹ Identify the two equally sinful approaches to end of life decisions.

Applying the Principles

Identify how the principles above apply to decisions regarding the following issues:

- Pursuing “miraculous” treatments
- Withholding food or water
- Discontinuing life-support
- “Do not resuscitate” order
- Benevolent crisis acquiescence (BCA) (Bushaw: “Benevolent crisis acquiescence calls for continuing painkilling drugs, but not actively treating new emergencies or complications so as to allow death to take its course when the next major crisis arises. Life support systems already begun would be continued, but new crises would be met with ‘judicious neglect.’”¹)

Closing Prayer: Luther’s Morning Prayer (CW, p. 152)