

## Independent Learning Review

### Starter Questions - **Answers**

1. Define Reincarnation **ANSWER: successive cycles of birth, death and rebirth**
2. Define Heaven **ANSWER: dwelling place of God. A place with no sin, suffering or misery**
3. Define Hell **ANSWER: a place where unrepentant sinners go after death.**
4. Define Purgatory **ANSWER: a place where souls are purified in order that they can go to heaven**
5. Define Transmigration of the soul **ANSWER: a belief that the soul will pass from one body to another**
6. What is a near-death experience? **ANSWER: a personal or paranormal experience in which somebody is very close to death**
7. Give a quote that provides evidence for Christians that there is life after death. **ANSWER: 'I am the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the father except through me'**

**Below are your tasks for the next seven days in the subject listed above.**

**Watch & Read: Unit 4 – Matters of Life and Death: Euthanasia**

Present New Information:

- Students must go to the following websites and watch the video clips:

<https://www.truetube.co.uk/film/view-classroom-euthanasia>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BozCApJNkT0>

Apply:

- Read Page 33 of Religious Studies B Revision Guide. Title: Euthanasia
- Mind map all key points
- Make a glossary of key terms and words

Read the following pages

## 4.6 Euthanasia

### Learning objectives

- To understand Christian teachings and beliefs about euthanasia.
- To understand atheist and Humanist attitudes towards euthanasia and Christian responses to these views.
- To understand Christian support for hospice care as an alternative to euthanasia.

### What is euthanasia?

**Euthanasia** is a term used to describe the act of ending a person's life, or allowing them to die, in order to relieve pain and suffering. It can also be referred to as **assisted dying**. The word euthanasia comes from the Greek word *euthantos* and means 'good' or 'easy' death. A person who undergoes euthanasia is usually extremely ill with an incurable condition. There are also other situations where someone might want their life to be ended in many cases, euthanasia is carried out at the person's request. This is called **voluntary euthanasia**. There are several circumstances that could be classed as voluntary euthanasia, such as:

- someone asking for help to end their life
- declining potentially life-saving treatment, including resuscitation
- refusing to eat or drink
- requesting medical treatment is stopped, or life support machines are switched off.

At other times, a person may be too ill to communicate their wishes and the decision is made by their next of kin and/or other relatives, health professionals or the courts. This is called **non-voluntary euthanasia**. For example, the decision by relatives to switch off a life-support machine of someone who is in a coma could result in non-voluntary euthanasia.

Some people prepare a **living will** in case they become ill and cannot communicate their wishes. A living will is a document that sets out how you want to be treated and cared for in the event of particular circumstances, but are unable to let people know this at the time. A living will is not legally binding, but it could be taken into consideration when determining treatment and care for someone who is unable to say what they want to happen.

The way that euthanasia is carried out can either be actively or passively. **Active euthanasia** is when someone such as a medical professional deliberately does something to make the patient die, such as giving them a lethal dose of drugs. **Passive euthanasia** happens when death of the patient occurs because someone such as a doctor does not do something that is necessary to keep them alive or when they stop doing something that is keeping the patient alive, such as not carrying out artificial respiration on a terminally ill patient or switching off a life-support machine.

Euthanasia is a complex moral issue and people can have very different views on the issue regardless of whether they are religious or not. Many people make a moral distinction between active and passive euthanasia. They say that there is a massive difference between deliberately killing a patient and withholding treatment to let them die. Some people, like doctors, nurses and close relatives, may prefer the idea of passive euthanasia to active euthanasia. This is because they could fulfil the wishes of a very ill patient who does not want to prolong their life and wishes to die without deliberately killing them. 'Do not resuscitate' requests are an example of passive euthanasia.

Others might argue that letting someone die as opposed to deliberately killing them might make people feel better but it is still wrong. This is because they believe that human beings, particularly medical professionals, have a responsibility to preserve and save lives whenever they can. They may also say that morally the distinction between active and passive euthanasia is meaningless because they both still involve a deliberate decision either to do or not to do something, which results in the death of another person, albeit for compassionate reasons. There are also people who say that active euthanasia is more humane than passive euthanasia, as passive euthanasia can result in a much slower and more painful death for people.



Read the following pages

## The law and euthanasia

Euthanasia can be considered as manslaughter or murder, depending upon the circumstances. It is illegal in the UK, and in most other countries in the world. Albania, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland are among the very few countries that have laws allowing euthanasia.

In September 2015 there was an attempt to change the law on euthanasia in the UK, through the presentation of the Assisted Dying Bill. This was rejected by Parliament.

## Dignity in Dying

Dignity in Dying is a national membership organisation that campaigns to make assisted dying, euthanasia, a legal option for 'terminally ill, mentally competent adults' in the UK. They believe that subject to certain safeguards, 'everyone has the right to a dignified death', which means that each individual should have:

- Choice over where we die, who is present and our treatment options
  - Access to expert information on our options; good quality end-of-life care; and support for loved ones and carers.
  - Control over how we die, our symptoms and pain relief, and planning our own death.
- (Source: <http://www.DignityinDying.org.uk/>)

Dignity in Dying maintains that there needs to be a change in the law to prevent dying people suffering against their wishes at the end of their lives and making decisions without having proper advice from healthcare professionals. It would also prevent dying people trying to take matters into their own hands, perhaps trying to persuade their families to help them. They say that people who can afford to currently travel abroad to countries where euthanasia is legal to end their lives. Approximately one person a fortnight is thought to go to Switzerland to do this.

## Different Christian teachings about euthanasia

The Bible does not specifically mention euthanasia. However, it does underpin the Christian belief in the sanctity of life, which is relevant to this issue. Most Christians are opposed to euthanasia or assisted dying. Christianity teaches that human life is precious, a gift from God which should not be violated. The value of human life is reinforced by one of the Ten Commandments, in the Bible, which states 'Thou shalt not kill.' They also believe

that God has a plan for everyone and that good and bad (trouble) and birth and death are part of that plan. Only God who created life has the authority to end life no matter how bad the circumstances might be.

Some Christians believe this idea is illustrated in the book of Job in the Bible, which describes a time of extreme pain and suffering experienced by Job and his wife. In Job 2:1-8, Satan challenges God by claiming that a man will give up eventually if he suffers enough pain. God gives Satan permission to test this theory on Job. After Job is burdened with pain all over his body, Job's wife suggests he give up and curse God for their suffering. However, Job argues that his life has always been in God's hands and, because they have received both good and bad from God in the past, he trusts in God's will. As a result, Job maintains his integrity as a servant of God and does not fall into the trap set by Satan by giving up or taking his own life.

## Sources of authority

*His wife said to him, 'Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!'*

*He replied, 'You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble? In all this Job did not sin in what he said.' (Job 2:9-10)*

The Church of England is strongly opposed to euthanasia. The Church's most recent position on this issue is set out in its opposition to the Assisted Dying Bill in 2015.

## Sources of authority

Vulnerable individuals must be cared for and protected even if, at times, this calls for sacrifice on the part of others. ... We must choose what sort of society we wish to become: one in which people are valued primarily for their utility or one in which every person is supported, protected and cherished even if, at times, they fail to cherish themselves. ... Better access to high-quality, holistic palliative care, greater support for carers and enhanced end of life services are the hallmarks of a truly compassionate society and it is to those ends that our energies must be directed.

(Rev. Dr Brendan McCarthy, The Church of England national adviser on medical ethics)

Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that euthanasia is morally wrong. Pope John Paul II referred



Read the  
following pages



Figure 4.8 Whose life is it anyway? Is voluntary euthanasia a morally correct choice?

### Sources of authority

...Humanist concern for quality of life and respect for personal autonomy lead to the view that in many circumstances voluntary euthanasia is the morally right course. People should have the right to choose a painless and dignified end, either at the time or beforehand, perhaps in a living will. The right circumstances might include extreme pain and suffering, helplessness and loss of personal dignity, permanent loss of those things which have made life worth living for this individual. ... Individuals should be allowed to decide on such personal matters for themselves. While humanists generally support voluntary euthanasia, they also uphold the need for certain safeguards. These may include counselling, the prevention of pressure on patients, clear witnessed instructions from the patient, the involvement of several doctors, no reasonable hope of recovery (British Humanist Association).

to it as a grave violation of the law of God'. However, people have a right to refuse aggressive and extraordinary medical treatments if they wish to. They may also take medicines such as painkillers that could shorten their life providing the aim is to relieve pain and not to hasten death. This is known as the **Doctrine of Double Effect**. The Doctrine of Double Effect is when something morally good, such as giving pain relief, has an unwanted side effect which is morally bad: the death of the patient.

The Roman Catholic Church sets out the Church's formal teaching on euthanasia in the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. The **Catechism** is an explanation of Catholic beliefs based on the Bible and the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church.

### Humanist and atheist attitudes towards euthanasia

Generally, Humanists support voluntary euthanasia. They believe that under some circumstances, subject to certain safeguards, it may be morally the right thing to do. Humanists do not believe in God so they do not believe that only God can decide when and how people die. Many atheists would also agree with this view. Humanists and atheists believe human beings have a fundamental right to die with dignity in a way that they have chosen.

### Christian responses to these views

Most Christians would disagree with Humanist and atheist views about euthanasia. This is because they believe in the sanctity of life. Life is a gift from God. Only God who created life can take life away. Free will does not give human beings the right to take away life, not even their own. Christians argue that everyone's life is of value to God even in the midst of pain and suffering. They also believe that stewardship means that they have a responsibility to protect the weak and vulnerable in society. Many Christians think that legalising voluntary euthanasia could mean that people feel pressured to end their lives so they are not a burden to their family; a right to die becomes a duty to die! It could also eventually lead to involuntary euthanasia being seen as acceptable.

### Hospice care

Most Christians and non-Christians who disagree with euthanasia would support hospice care as an alternative to assisted dying. The purpose of hospice care is to improve the quality of life for people who have an incurable illness and it is often provided by charities. It is a particular style of care, which aims to meet all of the medical, emotional, social, practical, psychological and spiritual needs of the person who is ill, plus the needs of the person's family and carers. Hospice care can begin when a person is first diagnosed as being terminally ill and ends when they die. It can take place at home or in another setting such as a care home or a purpose-built hospice. You may have a hospice near your school or where you live. People who disagree with euthanasia argue that hospice care can provide a suitable alternative.

Hospice care does not have to be continuous. People may feel that they can take a break from hospice care if their condition is stable and they are feeling all

right. Hospices can also provide what is known as respite care for a terminally ill person if their carers need a break or are unable to care for them for a short time. Hospice care also includes palliative care. Palliative care is medical care that provides people who are terminally ill with relief from their symptoms, pain and physical and mental stress.

The modern hospice care movement was founded by a Christian, Dame Cecily Saunders, who established St Christopher's Hospice in south west London. She also initiated the idea of palliative care.

**Read the  
following pages**

## **Task 1 – Answer all questions**

### **Think Back:**

- 1. What is a remembered life?**
- 2. Why do some people regard near death experiences as proof that there is life after death?**
- 3. How might Christians respond to non-religious arguments against life after death?**

### **This Week:**

- 4. How would you explain euthanasia to a student in Yr5?**
- 5. Why are Christians opposed to euthanasia and what might they put forward as an alternative?**
- 6. What arguments do people put forward in favour of euthanasia?**



## Task 2 – complete all questions

### Starter Questions

1. Define Euthanasia.
2. What is hospice care?
3. What is the Doctrine of Double Effect?
4. What does it mean to die with dignity?
5. What is Active Euthanasia?
6. What is Passive Euthanasia?
7. What is Voluntary Euthanasia?
8. What is involuntary Euthanasia?

### Intermediate Questions

9. What kind of safeguards do you think 'Dying with Dignity' might want to see put in place if assisted dying was made legal?
10. Why do you think some people say that making voluntary euthanasia legal in the UK would open the doors/pave the way for the legalisation or downgrading of the criminal act of involuntary euthanasia?

### Challenge Task: GCSE Exam Qs

11. Explain two reasons why most Christians are opposed to euthanasia (5marks)



**Ask a parent/carer to email me your answers to these questions.**

**Salexander@q3langley.org.uk**