

**Group Study on Palliative Care**

*What you will need:*

* A print out of this document
* A Bible

*Read aloud the following excerpt and use your Bible to look up the passages cited in the text*

Palliative care is care of the dying. Medically speaking the focus is relieving pain and improving quality of life. But palliative care also refers to a broad range of practices which attend to the social, psychological and spiritual needs of a person facing death. In many ways good palliative care is the alternative to euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, and it is this alternative that many Christians choose to promote.

Rather than offer the possibility for people to end their life prematurely, palliative care focuses on caring for the person as best they can in the lead up to death, or when managing an ongoing illness. Whereas some want to divert time, energy and resources toward making euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide available, many Christians argue that these would be better used in improving our ability in palliative care.

Many chaplains testify to the fact that facing one's own death can indeed be a spiritually fruitful time. Often family and friends are drawn closer. Sometimes there can be opportunities to make peace in conflicted relationships. Facing death can be a time where one gains perspective and can reflect on what has been important in life. The time when one faces death can be a God-given opportunity to return to him and put one's trust in Christ.

We also need to be realistic about the limitations of palliative care. There may be situations where people's pain cannot be completely managed and the suffering can seem intolerable. In such cases, palliative sedation might be considered, along with every other effort to provide truly compassionate care which honours the dignity of the human person to the very end.

*Discussion Questions*

* What is palliative care? What sort of things does palliative care offer? Are there ways in which palliative care can be improved?
* Read the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37). In the final verse, Jesus describes the Samaritan as “The one who showed mercy”. What does the Samaritan teach us about what true mercy looks like?
* Facing death can create opportunities for relationships to heal. Have you any anecdotal evidence supporting this statement?
* Saying goodbye forever is always painful. In Christ, we can say: “’til we meet at Jesus’ feet.” Does knowing that this world isn’t the end of life change the way that you feel about death?
* Do you know of anyone who works or volunteers at a Christian hospice or palliative care centre. What stories have you heard? Would you ever consider getting involved in this type of work (whether voluntary or paid)?

*Close with prayer*

*Optional further research/reading:*

* Joint statement on palliative care, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide by Australian palliative care practitioners from MJA InSight 10, 20 March 2017: <https://www.doctorportal.com.au/mjainsight/2017/10/palliative-care-euthanasia-and-physician-assisted-suicide/#ViewPollResults>
* Palliative Care Australia: <http://palliativecare.org.au>
* Website: ‘The Art of Dying Well’: <http://www.artofdyingwell.org>