

**Group Study on Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide**

*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*

Sometimes people feel like giving up on life. We can endure terrible suffering in this life and sometimes see little hope for the future.

Healthy people have no need for legal options to end their life. But what about people whose suffering feels intolerable? Some people in Western societies have begun advocating for the legal taking of life in these circumstances through euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Christians are called to show mercy and compassion to those who are suffering. However, true mercy and compassion means suffering alongside someone in their greatest hour of need, loving and serving them in every practical way and assuring them that life is still worth living, even when all seems lost. Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan provides us with a beautiful example of this mercy. True mercy costs us something (Luke 10: 25-37).

The LCA official statement on euthanasia and mercy killing says: ‘The Church rejects the practice of mercy killing or euthanasia in all its forms, because such killing is contrary to the Word and law of God’. For Christians, our life is never our own. We are creatures owing our very existence to our Creator, and so the taking of our own life is no less grave than that of another.

It's also important to note that the Church's opposition to euthanasia does not mean that Christians are obligated to unnecessarily prolong life by taking on burdensome treatments. But any act with the intent of killing or hastening someone's death must be rejected.

What the Church’s opposition to euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide *does* mean is that its members have a special obligation to love and care for people who are suffering. This includes advocating for the best possible pain relief and palliative care.

*Discussion questions*

* The parable of the Good Samaritan gives us a beautiful example of mercy. Read Luke 10: 25-37. What does mercy look like according to this parable? And how might one use this story in the context of the euthanasia debate?
* Watch Maggie Karner’s video (see further resources). Did this video change the way you feel about euthanasia? Why or why not?
* How might you be able to care for those in your life who are struggling with end of life pain? (You might also like to refer to the group study on Palliative Care).
* How is a “do not resuscitate” order different from euthanasia?

*Close with prayer*

*Further resources*

* Informative and accessible website on why to oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide (including definitions, outline of concerns, videos from experts and further resources) by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne: <http://www.cam.org.au/euthanasia/>
* 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>
* Website of Australian organisation ‘Hope: Preventing Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide’: <http://www.noeuthanasia.org.au> . ‘Hope’ is responsible for much of the advocacy against bills relating to euthanasia and assisted suicide.
* John Pless, ‘Mercy at Life’s End: A Guide for Laity and their Pastors’, LCMS Sanctity of Human Life Committee (2013) Available here: [John Pless, ‘Mercy at Life’s End: A Guide for Laity and their Pastors’, LCMS Sanctity of Human Life Committee (2013)](https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=John+Pless,+%E2%80%98Mercy+at+Life%E2%80%99s+End:+A+Guide+for+Laity+and+their+Pastors%E2%80%99,+LCMS+Sanctity+of+Human+Life+Committee+(2013)&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8)
* Two American citizens, one by the name of Brittany Maynard and the other Maggie Karner, were diagnosed with the same terminal cancer around the same time. Brittany became well known when she posted a video on Youtube announcing her intention to use Physician-Assisted suicide. Maggie, who had exactly the same cancer as Brittany, made the following clip encouraging Brittany not to take her own life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZR-qB3HaQY> . Maggie happened to be Director of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) Ministries and Chair of the LCMS Sanctity of Life Committee.

1. Euthanasia is when a physician plays a direct role in the patient’s death e.g. administers a lethal injection. This is different from physician-assisted suicide whereby a physician provides their patient with the means to end their own life. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)