

Lecture #18: Medical Ethics - Preliminaries (Lecture Outline)

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be"
(Psalm 139:14)

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.'"
(Gen 1:26-27)

1. Introduction

- o Ethics: "The study of standards of conduct and moral judgment"
- o Scripture is the only absolute standard to govern our faith and practice (*solo scriptura*)
- o Ethical questions relating to life, death, and medical treatment decisions must be addressed from a strong Biblical basis in order to reach God honoring decisions (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- o To adequately address any ethical dilemma, we must understand the situation, God's word and the person(s) involved

2. We are "Fearfully and wonderfully made"

- o Fearfully (vertical view): God fashioned us, called us into existence, and sustains our existence according to His good will and pleasure (Job 31:15; Psalm 119:73; Eccl 11:5; Heb 1:3; 11:3)
- o Wonderfully (horizontal view): We are incredibly complex creatures (body, mind, soul, spirit), and are truly beyond comprehension (Eccl 3:11; Job 38:1-42:6)

3. Our Days on Earth are Numbered by the Lord

- o God has ordained our time on earth (Deut 30:19-20; Job 14:5; Eccl 8:15; Acts 17:26)
- o We cannot change the length of our stay (Matt 6:27)
- o When life has finished its tasks, it will be taken home (Phil 1:6)

4. There is a Sanctity Associated with Human Life

- o Man uniquely reflects the image & glory of God, he's not an animal (Gen 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor 11:7; Jam 3:9),
- o Though not explicit in scripture, being made in the image of God may include:
 - o Having dominion over the earth (vice-regent of God)(Gen 1:28)
 - o Self-conscience; having moral agency (discern good & evil); appreciate beauty; create within bounds of own existence; immortal; possess a soul & unique relationship to God
 - o Man is created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:24)
- o Man is uniquely crowned with honor and glory (Psalm 8:4-6; applied to Christ in Heb 2:6-8)
- o Man's life has different dignity from life of an animal or plant (God's image); dealt with differently
- o Taking a man's life sinfully uniquely defiles the land (Gen 4:10) as does man's sin (Lev 18:1-25)
- o Man's life is to be specially protected (Ex 20:13; Num 35:22-28; Ex 21:12-36), and is only be taken by God directly or by use of His chosen means (Rom 13:1-7)
- o Man's form is the perfect representation of God in creation, with Jesus Christ the perfect representation of God in human form (Gen 1:27; Phil 2:6-7)
- o In redemption we are being recreated into God's image (Col 3:10) by the removal of the corruption that sin has brought to our nature
- o Our lives are priceless because of the infinite price paid for us (2 Cor 8:9)

5. Man's life is to be honored and protected with the dignity God has granted to it

- o Our hope is not in the perfecting of life extension techniques in this world
- o Our hope is in the crucified, buried and resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
- o Thru Him we have eternal life, without doctors (He is the Great Physician); without hospitals (it is a mansion); without the pain of death and suffering (we will have glorified bodies)
- o For us, life is not an idol, it is a gift to be used by God for His glory

Helpful Ref: o "Medical Ethics - Principles, Persons, and Problems;" John M. Frame, 1988
o "Between Life and Death - The Life Support Dilemma;" Dr. Kenneth E. Schemmer, M.D., 1988
o "Matters of Life and Death;" Francis J. Beckwith & Norman L. Geisler, 1991