

Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide - Q and A

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Preacher: Kieran Beville

[0 : 00] Before we start, let me just say on behalf of us all to thank Ciarán very, very much for a very informative presentation of assisted suicide and euthanasia.

I think it's helped us all appreciate and understand the dangers, the warnings that are there. And as I was listening, it just struck me this is a legal holocaust to some extent, what is being presented and what is happening in Holland and essentially what will come down the tracks here.

I do have a couple of questions here, which I can start with. And if there are other questions from the floor, you want to come back on anything that is said, please do.

So the first one is, what can we learn from the Christians in Holland and how they have faced the whole legislation process, how they face the ongoing issue today and what can we learn from the Christian church?

Well, interesting question. Thanks for that. Let me come at it from this angle. Hope Ireland, I mentioned them earlier, but I didn't say a whole lot about them.

[1 : 19] I mentioned that they had their inaugural conference at the RDS last June. And I think they're a very new organisation, like they were founded in 2014 by Dr. Kevin Fitzpatrick, who was a paraplegic since 1973 and he died in January of this year.

I'm getting to the answer with this now. But Hope Ireland, they're an independent disability-led single-focus organisation. They are affiliated to the Youth in Asia Prevention Coalition International.

And at their conference, they invited people from the Netherlands, from Belgium, from Luxembourg, from the USA to speak about their experiences in relation to trying to oppose these things.

What we can learn from the Christians, there's a very negative lesson to be learned from Dutch Christians. The Dutch, many churches in Holland, you can't say certain things at all.

Like, you'll never hear a sermon in most churches ever about sexual morality. Because they've gone past all that now.

[2 : 44] And a lot of the churches are liberal. Even churches that we think are conservative evangelical churches. There are Reformed churches in the Netherlands. But mostly Dutch Christians are allergic to Reformed theology.

because of their historical experience of it. Whatever that might be. So, we have to learn that in our churches, we need to continue to address ethical and moral issues.

The leaders of the churches, those entrusted with responsibility to preach and teach, must hold it before the people. Not all the time. You know, we don't want to be, like, we don't want kind of anti-homosexual sermons, you know, that are homophobic.

And we don't want to be known for just that. But we don't want to exclude it. You can't really speak about euthanasia in Holland now. Many Christians accept it.

Because it's part of their normal lives. And has been for a long time. Going back to the early 1990s, late 1980s. So, some people have grown up with that.

- [3 : 55] So, what we need to do is we need to educate people. There was a lecture given in a Canadian university by some people who oppose euthanasia.
- Before the lecture, they polled the people attending the lecture. And the majority were in favour of euthanasia. After the lecture, they polled them again.
- And found that now a majority were not in favour. They were influenced by what they heard. When the option of palliative care was presented to them, when the reality of where this kind of choice leads was presented to them, they changed their minds.
- And I think there is an opportunity to influence us as Christians to help people around us in conversations, wherever it might be, in the workplace, in the college, to influence people to understand that this is actually very bad for society and very bad for them.
- And I think that's a good starting place for us as Christians. Thank you. Another question. I guess it's driven from a liberal agenda.
- [5 : 26] Is there any economical benefit for those who practice assisted suicide in terms of costs and things like that?
- Is that an area that... It's a business. Yeah. Death is a business. And somebody asked me this during the break, and I was explaining that, say, Dignitas in Zurich, for example, is a wealthy organisation.
- They are now allowed to go into care homes to administer assisted suicide for elderly patients. And that's a recent development.
- But a lot of people who go from other jurisdictions, especially to avail of the service and Dignitas, are elderly people who live alone, tired of life, or have been just diagnosed with a terminal illness, and they're afraid, and they're afraid of pain, or afraid of...
- And they just feel life is not worth living. They go... They will sign over the deeds of their houses to Dignitas and things like that. So they do make a lot of money, and they do charge thousands for this service as well.
- [6 : 43] So there is a definite economic side to it. And a lot of the people who have been killed at Dignitas have been cremated, and their ashes were dumped in urns in a nearby lake.
- And I'm talking now of hundreds and hundreds of urns. And a nurse who worked for Dignitas reported this.
- And the lake was dredged, and these urns were found. So that's the kind of death with dignity that Dignitas are offering, dumping you in a lake, you know.
- I don't know.
- I don't know, but I know that they can avail of the service. And I just don't know the answer to that question. Sorry.
- [7 : 47] Sorry. Just for those who are elderly and can't hear so well. The question was, what happens to those who are teens and they request assisted suicide, who's going to pay for that?
- Yeah, you answered the question yourself, I think. I don't really know the answer to that. But, yeah, it's part of medical care in Holland now. It's so common, you know, that it's not hugely expensive.
- It's not like, say, Dignitas, or things like that. Everything is expensive in Switzerland, especially the Toblerone. But, but, pardon?
- The cheap and deal. Okay. Okay. Very good. Thanks for that. Bear will be down. For example, now, a woman in the Netherlands applied for medical treatment that was very expensive.
- Okay. Some new medical treatment. And she was disqualified. She was told she wasn't eligible to have this, that it was too expensive.

[9 : 04] in the post by letter. And the letter included a brochure on assisted suicide. The same thing happened to a woman in Oregon who applied for medication, which was, again, beyond her means and to treat her condition.

And she was sent a prescription, an actual prescription, for suicide pills. This is where we're at now. Who pays for 16-year-olds? I don't know.

Just don't know the answer to that. But I do know it's part of medical care, so-called, in the Netherlands. One of the criteria you mentioned, I think there were nine.

And I certainly want to get the list of them again if anybody else is afterwards. But one of them was that somebody has to be terminally ill before they are allowed to go through with it.

How do they actually assess somebody who's terminally ill? So, like, if somebody does have cancer, for example, they may be told you've got three months to live.

[10 : 09] But equally, they could say you have five years to live. That's right. So at what level or what stage? Yeah. Well, initially, the criteria was that you were terminally ill and you had six months, approximately six months to live.

But, you know, diagnosis and prognosis can be wrong. And we all know, I'm sure, people who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness and they have, they've lived much longer than the prognosis.

And we know other people who've been told they've got two years to live and they live for two weeks. So you just don't know. Good question. But now, it doesn't matter now anyway.

You don't have to be even ill, let alone terminally ill. And you don't have to have a prognosis of six months or anything like that. Yeah. Kevin, please.

Yeah. Is there any body, actually a body organisation that's put in a way to try to believe who look like they're imposing these regulations? You're saying that they're totally ignored but if we're, we're not going to know about this, we're sure they know about it too.

[11 : 32] And is there any sense of embarrassment in their government or in better professions and is there any organisation that's been put in place or was meant to be at least to monitor? Yeah, there's an over...

Sorry, I'll just repeat the question again. Is there a body or an organisation within Holland and does the same exist here to monitor and make sure that they are not going down the route that they are?

Just Holland where it's being practised? Yeah, there's an oversight committee. I kind of, I'm tempted to laugh at this, it's so ridiculous, but there are an oversight committee which consists of, there are kind of regional oversight committees that consist of doctors, like two doctors on the committee, two lawyers on the committee and a philosophical expert.

Whatever that means, you know, and they're meant to have some opinion about the whole issue, but you're not going to be appointed to a committee like that unless you approve.

Doctors don't, they don't function, they don't work, those oversight committees don't work. There have been some prosecutions, but those who've been prosecuted have got a rap on the knuckles and they've been told they haven't got sentences or custodial sentences or any sentences and they've been told just don't do that again.

[13 : 02] Lots of doctors in the Netherlands don't, when they're, it's very bureaucratic, assisted suicide and euthanasia and you have to fill in forms and ostensibly to meet certain criteria, a lot of doctors don't bother filling in the forms and they put down the underlying cause of death as something else like pneumonia or something like that rather than assisted suicide.

So even the statistics that say 5,000 people last year were terminated by euthanasia and assisted suicide and that doesn't involve deep continuous sedation which is another matter.

even those, that 5,000 that we know about, that's much less than the reality of what's happening. Yeah. Yeah.

Edie there, please. Yeah. Trish. I was wondering if you have a people with and psychiatric disorder and the response about how does that happen to people to make decisions to know how does that happen or is there an incentive to talk to people who don't want to be able to accept that there to make decisions?

Yeah. You don't want to repeat the question? No, you don't. Okay. So the question there is what about those who are struggling with a mental illness? How do they reach a decision themselves about requesting suicide and how is that monitored and is there anything in place to assess that?

[14 : 29] Well, obviously for a lot of people it's other people who make those decisions for them. people who might have an elderly parent who is suffering from Alzheimer's their distress is an issue that they present to the doctor and say look, he's only going to live a short length of time anyway can we do anything about this?

And it's accommodated. The thing about the Netherlands is that long before euthanasia was practiced or legalized it was widely practiced as I said the research was conducted we don't have this kind of research in Ireland we don't know how many people are being killed or that you know what exactly is going on the Dutch tell the truth at least you know when they were asked the doctors were asked are you killing people?

They said yes and we've been doing this for 10 years you know and we want it regulated because we don't want to be criminalized I'm not too sure that we would get the same kind of response in Ireland but those decisions obviously some people don't have the capacity to make a decision and the decision is made for them it's a kind of a personal sensitive issue for me because my elder brother he died a couple of years ago now almost and he was Down Syndrome and I have a sister who's Down Syndrome as well and I brought up this Bourbon biscuit to tell you a little funny story because the whole night needs a little bit of livening up and my mother never bought biscuits at home we had an orchard and she always baked apple tarts and Ruber tarts and all of that and it was lovely and then one time my mother went to visit my aunt who oh yeah my aunt used to give us a tin of biscuits

USA biscuits I think it was and they had these Bourbons you see and then one time in June my mother went to visit my aunt and my aunt produced this plate of biscuits and it had and Michael my brother he reached out and he picked up the Bourbon biscuit and he said ah Christmas and I never look at a Bourbon biscuit without thinking of Michael and that story and but you know Down syndrome fetuses now are being aborted because it can be detected and so there are very few of them in the Netherlands and should one be born the parents have the right to say you know this is too much suffering for us and have that life that's kind of infanticide euphemistically redescribed as euthanasia other people make those decisions for them yeah

Ralph at the back yeah yeah yeah so there's different countries like the Netherlands different states in the US other places that have gone down the road of euthanasia are there any examples of countries that have started down that road but have pulled back very good question Ralph and to use a medical term it has been suggested that the situation in Oregon is having an immunological effect that other states in America are looking at what's going on in Oregon and it's preventing them from going down that road because what has happened in Oregon is an unmitigated disaster one woman who had a stroke was her daughter wanted her to be euthanized and so the doctor gave her valium and morphine in large doses and when that didn't work he used a magnet to interfere with her pacemaker and when that didn't work he suffocated her so he was given six months a six month suspended sentence and he's now practicing medicine so people are looking on and it's preventative in that way but there's an example in

[19 : 31] Australia one of the states in Australia I think it's Queensland you can check the book I forget now they introduced assisted suicide and you know one of the doctor death people Nichike lobbied for it and it was introduced but they've changed the law they've gone back because they've seen that it was just terrible what it was you know so Australia is a good example Peter Tim yeah cheers tes You mentioned I mean, you mentioned go hard on.

Should that be the, should the response of the churches be to encourage local members to go on for a general, generic heading like that and not to use our own names of such?

Or what should we do at the square as well? Should we push harder than anything? Even if we could be very nervous on referential worship and things like that.

Yeah, sorry. So the question there is in regards to the Netherlands response to euthanasia, the church seems to be reluctant in speaking out.

So how is we, how do we as a church here in Ireland respond to that? Is it better that we together come collectively, the evangelical church underneath an organization like Hope Ireland, is it?

[21 : 12] Yeah, underneath Hope Ireland and yeah. Okay, thanks Peter. The Care Not Killing group in the UK, they're a broad coalition as well, an alliance.

They have Christians as members, like the Christian Medical Fellowship for example are members. But they're really a kind of an independent group and they, they're a single focus.

I think it's very, the experience of Care Not Killing is very interesting because they learned over a long period of time that it was better to be a single focus issue group and not to be a group that focuses on abortion, but it is a group that was better on divides against prohibits, euthanasia and assisted suicide and bioethics, embryonic research.

All that sort of thing. So, and they also felt that the use of specifically Christian language was unhelpful in kind of winning the public debate, whatever we might think about that.

so I do think a coalition a broad coalition is needed and I do think that specifically Christian language like sermon kind of language about the issue might not be the most helpful way of communicating we can still defend the ethical principles and the morality of this issue knowing our basis our biblical basis and our motivation but not necessarily to do that the Hope Ireland I'm sure you wouldn't be banned if you're able-bodied but I've I've seen pictures of them a lot of them are in wheelchairs so I'm sure it's open to people who are not they're relatively new you could get involved with an organization like that or somebody should really develop an association where you know we as evangelical Christians can comment on these issues you know it's like very often you have fuddy-duddy people brought in on Channel 4 news you know the case of Tony Tom Lincolnson who had locked-in syndrome it was very sad case and he died since but Channel 4 has an agenda you know they've had very good agendas now they they champion the cause of disabled people and but they also promote things like they had Terry Pratchett in as well and they promote this issue you know of assisted suicide in euthanasia and they and

[24 : 06] Tony Tom Lincolnson was used in that way a kind of a real worst-case scenario and they had some fuddy-duddy vicar in to talk about it and they never seem to want to get somebody you know equally matched in you know to kind of give the opposite view there is a media bias that we have to deal with you need to be media savvy some people I forget the former Archbishop of Canterbury's name Carey the first name can't won't come to me I won't call him Lord especially not today today is the anniversary of the 2000 of the 1916 rising so we couldn't call him Lord Carey but I'm tempted to say William but he's changed his mind he opposed vigorously he in the House of Lords he spoke and he opposed um euthanasia and assisted suicide but he's changed his mind now and you have that kind of equivocation coming from certain quarters which is very unhelpful yeah well it it seems to me that while there are others like Hope Ireland who are speaking out that as a church we can't afford not to speak out um ourselves individually and as churches together and I'm not sure if there's another question here's just one more and how can we convince a non-believer about the sanctity of life yeah um the secular world view has taken root hasn't it it's taken hold and we're definitely facing an uphill battle but it's the work of God and uh the Holy Spirit can prevail and we're called to be faithful in uh proclaiming the truth and communicating the truth to not necessarily through proclamation but through conversation and through the way we live and uh but you know if it's about building relationships it's about seizing the opportunities that we have to talk about the Lord and to share you know um something about the value of life I think a lot of people are looking for community belonging hope you know it's a bleak world out there without Jesus um last one Graham thank you is there a connection between abortion and euthanasia so where countries have legalized abortion does it then follow that euthanasia is legalized um abortion has been legal in the UK since 1966 it's a again a very good question because the criteria for introducing abortion was again very strict it was meant to be a kind of a therapeutic um intervention uh you know to save the life of the mother and that a side effect could be abortion uh but now you know people have driven a coach and six horses through that legislation and um what you have now is abortion on demand a form of post-sex contraception whatever the small print might say that's the reality and you can look back then to abortion and you can look at the strict criteria and how that event again was diluted and diluted down and and it has become now just a casual thing and most abortions are not performed for medical reasons they're performed for social reasons

i'm going to just hold the question time there and formally bring the evening to a conclusion and please do talk to kieran if you've got more questions do have a look at his book um at a good offer tonight for 10 euro and again on behalf of us all just to thank kieran very much for helping us in our thinking and begin the process of preparing ourselves for what is coming and certainly for all the knowledge and um yeah just your discernment kieran tonight uh certainly thank you so much indeed there's also a recording of tonight as well so if you go on to the carrigaline baptist church carrigalinebaptist.org you'll find a recording um sometime tomorrow or even tonight if ralph gets to it um so i'm going to close in prayer um