

Making Hard Decisions

Message Study Notes for 27 June 2021

Read Luke 2 verses 25 to 35.

DILEMMA 1

You are a hospital doctor. A healthy young man walks in and says several members of his family are in danger of dying because they need organ transplants. One needs a heart, one a lung, two need kidneys and one a liver. He wants you to give him a lethal injection, then take his organs and use them to save his relatives. If you don't he says he will go to a back-street doctor.

Should you let him sacrifice his life to save his family?

Should we respect someone's AUTONOMY and let them take their own lives, especially to help others?

Would your answer change if the young man had been suffering from terminal illness or wanted to commit suicide?

A Traditional Christian view says: No, only God has the right to give and take lives, with certain exceptions such as Just War.

DILEMMA 2

An empty train is approaching a junction. You are by the points. If you do nothing, the train run over a baby who crawled onto the line. If you alter the points, the train will be diverted and run over a drunken old tramp lying on the track.

Do you divert the train?

Is there a difference between killing someone and letting someone die?

Do you weigh up the values of the lives of the baby or the tramp?

Is it morally permissible to kill people occasionally?

A Traditional Christian view says: Do not alter the points. That would actively kill someone. Leave them and let God's plan run its course.

DILEMMA 3

You overhear a conversation between two charity workers. They have decided to break the law to raise funds. They plan an armed robbery on a large bank and will anonymously distribute the cash to some charities.

Do you call the police?

Should justice be achieved by whatever means?

What would be the consequences of encouraging Robin Hood-thieves to redistribute wealth by their own methods?

Do we have a duty to report crimes, or should we not get involved?

A Traditional Christian view says: Call the police; stealing is against God's moral law.

DILEMMA 4

Your neighbour wins a lifetime's supply of your favourite beer. He starts using the beer (10 cans a day) to 'water' his garden, believing it will nourish his plants. You know this will damage the plants. He says he is going on holiday for two months, and asks if you would water his plants with the 600 cans of beer. You agree, but:

Do you keep your promise?

Do we have a duty to keep ridiculous promises?

A Traditional Christian view says: Once we make a promise we should respect it.