

Life and death

What do you make of the recent court cases involving parents of critically ill babies fighting to make their doctors keep on treating them even if the doctors believe it's no longer in the child's best interest?

Who knows what is best for the child? Their parents, who love them dearly and desperately don't want to lose them, or the doctors?

It's a tough decision, and not one that I would like to have to face. But I must say that I am disturbed by some of the arguments put forward by the medical professionals in some of the recent cases. They have suggested that, "In some cases, the condition is so awful ... that the doctors must surely be permitted to withdraw life-sustaining treatment, even against the parents' wishes. To do otherwise would be inhumane. The baby's best interests must trump the parents' wishes."^[1]

In other words, sometimes a baby can be so ill or in so much pain, that it is more "humane" to allow it to die than it is to keep on treating it. Isn't this the way we treat sick animals, not humans? On what grounds can it be

considered to be in anyone's *best interest* (whether they are a newborn baby or a frail pensioner, or anywhere in between) to be allowed to die?

It seems that a key assumption behind this is that death is a release from the pain. We inscribe gravestones "Rest In Peace". Is it true that someone who was suffering terribly and then dies is at peace?

In the Bible it is clear that not everyone who dies is at peace. Jesus often spoke about what we should expect after death. He said that everyone can be divided into one of two groups, which he frequently called sheep and goats. Jesus promised that the "sheep" would receive eternal life, in a place where there would be no more crying or pain – which is fantastic. But he also warned that the "goats" would end up in a place of torment.

So, if you are in the group Jesus calls sheep, you are guaranteed peace. However, if you are not in that group, your future is bleak. In that case, you are equally guaranteed pain.

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It's not a pleasant thought, and not something we enjoy being told about. But Jesus was not afraid or ashamed to tell it.

Sheep or goat?

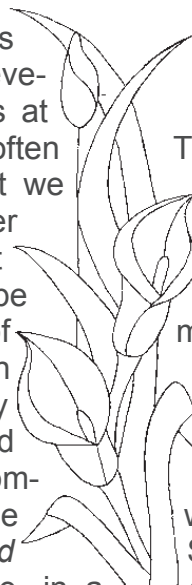
The question then is, who is a sheep and who is a goat – or, more importantly, are *you* a sheep or a goat? What is it that makes me a sheep or a goat?

Jesus explained that the "sheep" were those who were *righteous* or *upright*. So, what makes you righteous or upright? What is the standard? Is it a case of "better than most", "better than average" or "not as bad as all that"? No. God cannot accept anything less than perfect obedience.

That's tough! But again, Jesus said as much himself. He said that unless we are more righteous than the Pharisees (a religious group who were known for their fastidiousness in keeping to the letter

Continued overleaf

[1] Daniel Sokol, Imperial College Faculty of Medicine. Quoted in <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4809908.stm>



Jesus answers

Before I believed in Jesus
I didn't believe in prayer,
With all the trouble in the world,
How could God be there?

When people prayed to Jesus,
As far as I had learned,
He never really answered
Or didn't seem concerned.

And if ever something happened,
It was few and far between,
Probably just coincidence
Not by God unseen.

But then I gave my heart to God,
The full reins of my life,
The prayers I put before Him
Burst forth and came alive.

No, I didn't win the lottery,
Or get the partner of my dreams,
But recognised that "Godly touch"
On my life and all its themes.

Things begin to happen
In direct response to prayer,
Miracles and blessings,
And, let me stress, not rare.

God doesn't always answer
In a way you might expect
But rest assured He makes it known,
And upon this you reflect.

Looking back ten years with God,
The evidence is clear,
Life's circumstances thrown to the wind
Would bring about some fear.

But asking God to help me deal
With things most hard to cope,
Taking intrinsic bitter twists of life
And changing them to hope.

I can't explain the world at large,
The horrors that made no sense,
But at least I know I can pray
With God's weapons of defence.

If someone said, "List all your prayers
God has answered you."
I really can't begin to count –
Every day there's something new.

So next time someone says to you
"God doesn't answer prayer,"
Before you say, "I agree,"
Talk to Him – I dare.

Vincent Ball

Vincent comes along to our *Open House* group
which meets on Fridays.

...Continued of God's laws),
then we could not go to
heaven. But that's impossi-
ble, isn't it? Yes it is!

How is it then that there are
any "sheep", that *anyone*
gets to go to heaven? The
answer to that is the main
reason why Jesus came
here 2000+ years ago. He
didn't only come to be a
great moral teacher, or to
heal sick people. He came to
take away sin – things that

prevent people from being
accepted by God.

Throughout his life, Jesus
never did anything to dis-
please God. He was per-
fectly righteous. And yet,
because of his great love for
us, he was prepared to
suffer the consequences as
if he had not been righteous.
He took our place.

God has promised that
anyone who admits their

guilt and who asks to be for-
given – because of what
Jesus did on the cross – will
be forgiven. And that is how
we become "sheep" rather
than "goats".

Martin Biddiscombe

If you would like to talk to
someone about the issues
raised in this article, just ask.
Come along to one of our
meetings, or call one of the
numbers on the back page.

Food spoilage tests

At last! A way to know what to throw-out and what to save...

The gag test

Anything that makes you gag is spoiled.

Eggs

When something starts pecking its way out of the shell, the egg is probably past its prime.

Dairy products

- Milk is spoiled when it starts to look like yoghurt.
- Yoghurt is off when it starts to look like cottage cheese.
- Cottage cheese is spoiled when it starts to look like normal cheese.
- Normal cheese is nothing but spoiled milk anyway and can't get any more spoiled than it is already, except for Cheddar.
- Cheddar is off when you think it's blue cheese but you know you've never bought that sort.

Mayonnaise

If it makes you violently ill after you eat it, the mayo is spoiled.

Frozen food

Frozen food that has become an integral part of the defrosting problem in your freezer will probably be off, or wrecked by the time you prise it out with a kitchen knife.

Best-before dates

These are not a marketing ploy to encourage you to throw away perfectly good food so that you'll spend more on your shopping. Perhaps you'd benefit by having a calendar in your kitchen.

Meat

If opening the fridge door causes stray animals from a half-mile radius to congregate outside your house, the meat is off.

Bread

Sesame and Poppy seeds are the only officially acceptable "spots" that should be seen on the surface of any loaf of bread. Fuzzy and hairy looking white or green growth areas are a good indication that your bread has turned into a pharmaceutical laboratory experiment.

Flour

Flour is off when it wiggles.

Salt

Salt never spoils.

Canned goods

Any canned goods that have become the size or shape of a rugby ball should be disposed of. *Carefully.*

Carrots

A carrot that you can tie a knot in is not fresh.

Potatoes

Fresh potatoes do not have roots, branches, or dense, leafy undergrowth.

Raisins

Raisins should not be harder than your teeth.

Unmarked items

You know it is well beyond prime when you're tempted to discard the container along with the food. Generally speaking, containers should not burp when you open them.

General rule of thumb

Most food cannot be kept longer than the average life span of a hamster. You might find it helpful to keep a hamster in or nearby your refrigerator to gauge this.

For safety's sake

If you thought food was risky, check this out!

- Road vehicles cause 20% of all fatal accidents
- You're not much better off walking – 14% of accidents involve pedestrians
- Public transport? 16% of accidents involve air, rail or water travel
- Think staying home is safe? Think again. 17% of accidents occur there
- Don't even consider staying in bed all day – you know how many people die in their sleep.
- **However** only 0.001% of accidental deaths occur at Church, and most of these are a result of previous injury. It's clearly the safest place to be, apart from Bible studies, even fewer accidents happen there.

For your diary

You might like to make a note of these special events.

Good Friday, 14 April
Service at 10 a.m.
Speaker: M Biddiscombe

Easter Sunday, 16 April
Service at 11 a.m.
Speaker: R Burton

Big Boys' Toys, 22 April
An evening of fun but with a serious side.

Summer Barbecue
Date to be announced.

Oakleaves is published by Oakwood Chapel, Hobtoe Road, Harlow, Essex, CM20 1TH. A large print edition is available from the editor, Martin Biddiscombe (01279 439351), or e-mail us at: church@oakwood-chapel.org.uk

More information about Oakwood Chapel, our meetings and what we believe is available on our website at: <http://www.oakwood-chapel.org.uk/>

Oakwood's regular meetings

Sundays

9.00 a.m. Indian Fellowship
11:00 a.m. Morning service (crèche available)
3:30 p.m. *Jucos and Acorn Club*
5.00 p.m. *Tetris*
6:30 p.m. Evening service

Thursdays

7.30 p.m. Home prayer group
7.30 p.m. Home Bible study (monthly)

Fridays

7:45 p.m. *Open House*

Saturdays

9.00 a.m. Prayer meeting

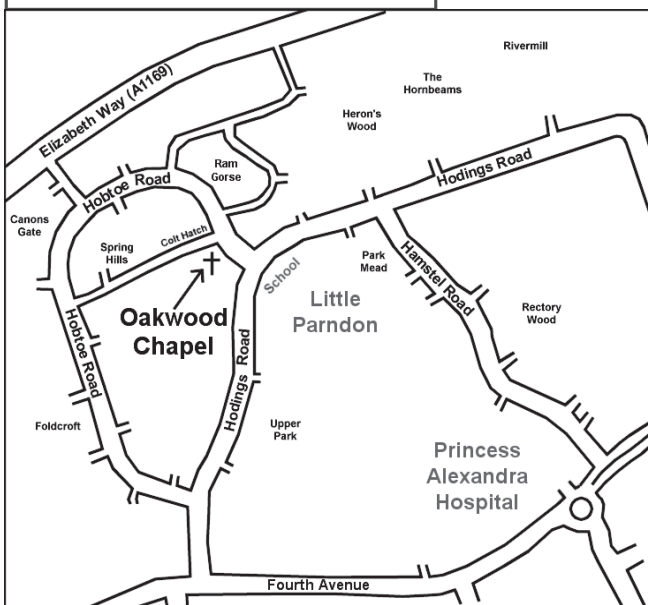
We aim to cater for everyone! A crèche is available for young children during the morning service. *Acorn Club* (for 4-7 year olds) *Jucos* (for 7-11 year olds) and *Tetris* (for 11-16 year olds) meet on Sunday afternoons.

During the week, we meet for Bible study and prayer. If you want to know more about the Christian faith, we would be glad to take you through a six part course called *Christianity Explained*. Martin Biddiscombe can tell you more.

Open House is a social evening with the chance for informal Christian discussion. Ask Mike or Sue Hillyer for more information.

If you would like to know more, please contact us! You can:

- e-mail us at church@oakwood-chapel.org.uk,
- visit our website at <http://www.oakwood-chapel.org.uk/>,
- telephone Mike Hillyer on 01279 422017, or
- telephone Martin Biddiscombe on 01279 439351.



Find us on the internet at: <http://www.oakwood-chapel.org.uk/>
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