

Honor
Capital Punishment
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TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

Exodus 20:13 (NLT)

13 "You must not murder.

Genesis 9:5-7 (NLT)

5 "And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person's life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. 6 If anyone takes a human life, that person's life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings in his own image. 7 Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth."

Proverbs 21:15 (NLT)

15 Justice is a joy to the godly,
but it terrifies evildoers.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 (NLT)

11 When a crime is not punished quickly,
people feel it is safe to do wrong.

Romans 3:21-26 (NLT)

21 But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. 22 We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. 23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. 24 Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. 25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, 26 for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Have you ever been the victim of a crime? If so, did you want the criminal to be punished? Why or why not?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- If you served on a jury in NC, would you vote to approve the death penalty for a criminal when the evidence indicates the defendant is guilty of premeditated murder?
- **Read Exodus 20:13**. Pastor Troy mentioned that the Hebrew word for murder in this verse is different from the words used in other verses that discuss capital punishment or death in war. Do you consider killing someone in premeditated revenge as different from killing someone in self defense or in war? Or is the taking of human life the same in all instances?
- **Read Genesis 9:5-7**. Discuss the timing of this verse in relation to the Mosaic Covenant. Why is that important?
- What's the importance of God referencing humans made in his image? How does that impact capital punishment?
- If you believe in the death penalty, what crimes should be considered capital crimes that are punishable by death? What crimes are capital offenses in the USA? Are there any you think should be added or deducted from that list?
- **Read Proverbs 21:15** and **Ecclesiastes 8:11**. What happens when criminals are not punished for their crimes? What happens when there are no consequences for our sins?
- **Read Romans 3:21-26**. How is God both just and the justifier? What would the world and your life look like if God's justice were arbitrary or non-existent?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Consider participating with a local ministry that works with the incarcerated, or with families of the incarcerated or their victims.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Pray over our criminal justice system, that it reflects and enacts a Biblical view of justice. Ask God for His redemption and regeneration to permeate not only the incarcerated, but also the executors of our systems, and that we all steadfastly remain focused on His perfection, as we pursue justice with grace and truth.

Question: "What does the Bible say about the death penalty / capital punishment?"

Answer: The Old Testament law commanded the death penalty for various acts: murder (Exodus 21:12), kidnapping (Exodus 21:16), bestiality (Exodus 22:19), adultery (Leviticus 20:10), homosexuality (Leviticus 20:13), being a false prophet (Deuteronomy 13:5), prostitution and rape (Deuteronomy 22:4), and several other crimes. However, God often showed mercy when the death penalty was due. David committed adultery and murder, yet God did not demand his life be taken (2 Samuel 11:1-5, 14-17; 2 Samuel 12:13). Ultimately, every sin we commit should result in the death penalty because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Thankfully, God demonstrates His love for us in not condemning us (Romans 5:8).

When the Pharisees brought a woman who was caught in the act of adultery to Jesus and asked Him if she should be stoned, Jesus replied, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). This should not be used to indicate that Jesus rejected capital punishment in all instances. Jesus was simply exposing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The Pharisees wanted to trick Jesus into breaking the Old Testament law; they did not truly care about the woman being stoned (where was the man who was caught in adultery?) God is the One who instituted capital punishment: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6). Jesus would support capital punishment in some instances. Jesus also demonstrated grace when capital punishment was due (John 8:1-11). The apostle Paul definitely recognized the power of the government to institute capital punishment where appropriate (Romans 13:1-7).

How should a Christian view the death penalty? First, we must remember that God has instituted capital punishment in His Word; therefore, it would be presumptuous of us to think that we could institute a higher standard. God has the highest standard of any being; He is perfect. This standard applies not only to us but to Himself. Therefore, He loves to an infinite degree, and He has mercy to an infinite degree. We also see that He has wrath to an infinite degree, and it is all maintained in a perfect balance.

Second, we must recognize that God has given government the authority to determine when capital punishment is due (Genesis 9:6; Romans 13:1-7). It is unbiblical to claim that God opposes the death penalty in all instances. Christians should never rejoice when the death penalty is employed, but at the same time, Christians should not fight against the government's right to execute the perpetrators of the most evil of crimes.

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