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Wesley Seminary PCRE600: Congregational Relationships Integration Paper: Biblical Theology Brandon Busch, MDIV 03 I have read and understand the plagiarism policy as outlined in the syllabus and the sections in relating to the Wesley Seminary Honesty/Cheating Policy. By affixing this statement to the title page of my paper, I certify that I have not cheated or plagiarized in the process of completing this assignment. I also certify that the work submitted is original work specific for this course and to the MA program. If it is found that cheating and/or plagiarism did take place in the writing of this paper, I understand the possible consequences of the act/s, which could include expulsion from Wesley Seminary. Issue: What is the role of the pastor in advising the dying and/or their families with end of life decisions?

Introduction This paper considers the full scope of scripture concerning our issue by looking at texts from the Old Testament and then the New Testament. Finally, I will conclude with remarks concerning our direction as the 21st century church taking into consideration both testaments and current contexts. Each testament section reveals different categories that evolve from their respective texts. Again the conclusion will take all these categories into consideration, including current contexts, and fashion a kingdom trajectory for Christ's present church. Old Testament The Old Testament contains many references and stories of death. Therefore, it is a great resource in considering the pastor's role in advising the dying and their families. This leads to the first of two main categories, death. It is important to understand, briefly, how scripture understands death. In short death is inevitable, unpredictable, and unavoidable. Yet it can be an honorable and glorious experience (Nu. 23: 10). Death is accepted as unavoidable, for the

wise and the foolish (Ps. 49: 10). Death is also unpredictable. Solomon records how “ no one has power over the time of their death” (Eccl. 8: 8a, NIV). Life is considering short, even “ fleeting”, with our days numbered only by God (Ps. 39: 4-5). It is important to remember these things when facing or dealing with death, directly or indirectly. The next category has four subcategories. This category relates more directly with our issue and is called proper response. What is the proper response toward death and suffering in the Old Testament? The first is presence. We see multiple examples of this in the Old Testament with extended periods of grief and mourning. In Job 2: 11-13, his friends come to him after Job has lost his children, his livestock, his health, and the support of his wife. Here his friends mourn with him appropriately, sit in silence, and listen. This demonstrates legitimate presence. His friends are present with him in this death and suffering. They eventually offer advice, but not after a prolonged period of presence with Job. Second is comfort. In Genesis 50: 15-21, we find Joseph comforting his brothers fears after the death of their father. Their bond of trust remains intact. In the experience of death and suffering, comfort is an initial reasonable response. After the death of David and Bathsheba’s child, David went and comforted his wife (2 Sam. 12: 24). In Job 16: 5, we hear from the sufferer himself what is needed from his friends, “ my mouth would encourage you; comfort from my lips would bring you relief. ” Third is submission. For our issue, I consider this dependence on God, fear of God, and humility. We cannot take the place of God by making judgments, explanations, and punishments. Joseph recognized this when he replied to his brothers, concerning his father’s death, “ Am I in the place of God? ”

(Gen. 50: 19). Job also came to understand this submission as we read about his journey. In the end he basically responds, ‘ I don’t know’ (Gen 40: 3-5, 42: 3). There are times when certain answers are needed. However, we must humbly realize that death and life are not in our control. This is where true wisdom resides (Prov. 1: 7). Fourth is motives. When dealing with life and death situations, like whether to continue chemo or keep the ventilator going, clarity and direction comes from understanding our motives. When Samson took his own life in order to kill the Philistines, die with honor, and glorify God, it was for a worthy cause (Judges 16: 26-30). It seems God granted his prayer, even though it took his life. Considering the circumstances of Samson, it was a fitting way to die. However, when Jonah was thrown overboard by the sailors, it wasn’t done lightly (Jonah 1: 13-16). They actually tried to get out of it, but realized there was no other way. When they finally conceded, they did not want to be held responsible for his death. It was almost a last resort. They had good motives. In 1 Sam 31, Saul falls on his own sword in an effort to avoid torture and shame keeping his honor intact, after his armor bearer refused to kill him. What matters is the reason behind our choices. In Exodus, Moses’ parents are faced with decisions concerning their baby who is alive illegally. They act out of selflessness as they execute their cunning and probable plan for sparing their son’s life (Exodus 2: 1-6). Their motive was to preserve true life, which God grants them. New Testament The New Testament reveals more knowledge about what happens after death. Certainly, the inevitability of death does not change. More however, is written directly concerning how to deal with death and suffering. It is not something for believers to fear (2 Cor.

5: 9). I have two categories that relate to our issue. First is please God. It was Paul's desire that he and others please God till the end, whether in life or death (2 Cor. 5: 9). In pleasing God, they suffered so that Christ's life was revealed in them for others benefit (2 Cor. 4: 11-12). Paul believed in patient endurance in the face of physical suffering certain of "achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (2 Cor. 4: 17). John, the revelator, writes of this endurance as well. On the island of Patmos, in his persecution, he writes, "your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus" (Revelation 1: 9). Here we see a certain acceptance of suffering and inherent death, all the while continuing to please God in life. The second is prayer. James writes concerning persecution and sickness. He begins his letter with a charge concerning facing trials. He ends with the believers 'escape'. It is in prayer. The believers are to pray for one another, especially, when one is sick (Jms. 5: 14-15). It is important not to underestimate calling on God in faith for healing, forgiveness, direction, and comfort. In the face of inevitable circumstances God is sovereign. Kingdom Trajectory As a pastor and church, the circumstances around death have changed. When scripture was written there was no life support. If a person was brain dead, they were dead, period. There was cancer or chemo. However, the body of scripture certainly offers insight for our issue. As pastor's we should recognize death's certainty and life's brevity. This ought to inform our interactions with those connected to our issue. The most important things we can give them may not be direction or direct advise. These intangibles are presence, comfort, and submission to God, pure motives, prayer, and patient endurance. Scripture

would indirectly advise us to persevere in life, as we are able, glorifying and pleasing God. In case of medical intervention, there needs to be a probable plan for life continuation. Like with Moses' parents, say there was a medicine or procedure available that would keep Moses alive as a prolonged infant, safe and concealable in his parents home; some kind of medicine that kept him from growing yet healthy. I am certain this would not have been considered an option. Their desire and plan was to keep him alive for an opportunity at full life, even if it meant losing their parental rights.