

AMAZINGLY COMPLEX

by Jeff Gibbs

TERMINAL ILLNESS, LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEMS, FINANCIAL RUIN, EXTENDED SUFFERING IN BODY AND MIND—ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS AND MORE FACE US OR OUR LOVED ONES. We are living longer, but until Jesus returns, death awaits us all. Health care's sword has two edges: Amazing technology also creates impossibly complex situations. Ask four people about questions on dealing with the end of life, and you might get five answers.

As we live together in the Church, we should acknowledge that these things can be complex. No one — not you or I or anyone — will always have the right answers, clean and simple, for every situation.

It does, however, matter greatly what questions you ask. Here are three questions that Christians can and should be asking themselves — and not only in relation to the end of life. These questions relate to basic aspects of Christian identity; they can also help guide our decisions as life draws to its end.

Question 1: *To whom does my life belong?* Christians (and others) speak rightly of life as a gift from God. There is, however, a follow-up question: To whom does that gift belong? Although God freely gives life to me and to all creatures, He retains ownership; life belongs to Him. This is true on at least two counts. First, God creates my life and sustains it (through means). Second, God has redeemed my life from the devil; He purchased me and my life, and now He owns me. God owns His servants and all people, even those who don't acknowledge Him in this way. This leads to the second question.

Question 2: *Am I in charge of my life?*

In some ways, of course, the answer is “yes.” When people “take charge of their own decisions,” we call that maturity! In the most important sense, however, I am not in charge. I am not the master of my fate. My wishes and desires, no matter how heartfelt, are not what matter most. God's will for me is what matters most. And His will, because I am His, is this: I am to love Him with my whole being, and I am to love my neighbor as myself.

Question 3: *Am I alone?* For some, this is the greatest fear of all. The answer is both a resounding “No” and an urgent “May it never be!” No — even in the darkest moments, Christ is with me and His Word comforts and teaches me. “May it never be — as the body of Christ, may we never leave one another alone!” Rather, we rejoice with those who rejoice, and we weep with those who weep. May God enable us as members of Christ's body not to abandon our brothers and sisters when they face hard decisions at the end of life but to draw near to support and encourage them. *LW*

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**GOD CREATES
MY LIFE AND
SUSTAINS IT.**