

## **The Big Debate**

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My wife and I were recently discussing some of our debate experiences. She was on her High School debate team and performed very well. My school did not have a debate team, but our English teacher decided to expose us to the process. We were given a group of topics for debate. We were to choose a topic and whether we were for or against the chosen subject would determine what team we were on.

As the list of topics was read to the class, one subject was “euthanasia.” I thought to myself that I didn’t know why anyone would want to debate that. After all, I was certain that youth in Asia were no different than youth in America. Certainly, they spoke a different language and had a different culture, but I was sure that young people over there were really very similar to us.

As the debate began concerning the subject, I was glad I had not chosen it. It quickly became apparent to me that what was being debated was actually the morality of mercy killing. Interestingly enough, this is a debate still being conducted by society. Once I figured out the subject, I immediately knew which side I was on.

I have often wondered as I have watched debates by politicians and others how many people are truly influenced by debates. Most of us already have our opinions formed and do not feel a need for facts to influence our way of thinking. In other words, “My mind is made up; don’t confuse me with the facts.”

The problem with debating is that we are rarely able to see all aspects of the issue. We can see clearly from our own perspective, but have difficulty seeing it from someone else’s position. Even if we do see their side, we usually have strong emotional attachments to our own position, making it more difficult to let go of it.

Another challenge is that many times, we simply do not understand what the real issue is. Just like discussing euthanasia, we may form an opinion without really knowing what we are talking about. We are like the Saturday Night Live character who comes on to give a rebuttal to a previous editorial. We get deep into the argument only to learn that we are discussing the wrong subject. We then say, “Never mind.” Perhaps this is why the Bible says in James 1:19 that we should be “quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” (NIV) After all, the old saying reminds us that it is better to be silent and thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in Church on Sunday.