

A TALKING POINTS BOOK BY
VAUGHAN ROBERTS

ASSISTED SUICIDE

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

This series does not aim to say everything there is to say about a subject, but to give an overview and a solid grounding to how Christians should start to think about the issue from the Bible. We hope that as you discuss this book, and the Bible passages that it is based on, you will gain in confidence to speak faithfully, compassionately and wisely to others.

Below is an extensive list of questions. Please pick and choose the ones that suit your group, and the time you have available. If you are leading a group, try to keep constantly in people's minds that this is not simply a discussion about a political or moral "issue"—but that these are about choices being made by real people who are, perhaps, suffering deeply, and need our love compassion, and above all the gospel message of hope.

TO START

- **Share your stories:** What are your experiences of people who have had an illness, or are of advancing years, and have thought about how they might "end it all"?
- What stage are you at in your own life? Do you have elderly parents or relatives who you have the responsibility to care for? Or do you have other dependants who may think that taking their lives is a positive option?
- Before you started reading this book, what were your thoughts about what the Christian view of assisted suicide was or should be?

- Look at the quotes on page 12. How do you react to each of them? Do you find yourself agreeing or disagreeing with any of them?

CHAPTER 1: A COMPLEX PROBLEM

- How do you react to the three stories that the chapter begins with? Do you empathise with the situations these people found themselves in?
- Look at the definitions on pages 18-19. Are there any you don't understand—or are there words and ideas that you have heard used differently?

CHAPTER 2: A GROWING PROBLEM

- **Thinking about death.** In your experience are people open to talking about death, or embarrassed by the mere mention of it? How do you feel about discussing your own death?
- Have you ever seen a dead person, or been with someone when they died? What were your thoughts and feelings?
- *How would you like to die?* If you asked people that question, what might they answer? How would you answer it?
- If there was a national vote to allow assisted suicide, how do you think most people would vote? How would you vote?

CHAPTER 3: THE RIGHT TO DIE

- What do you think of the arguments in favour: pain; freedom; quality of life; dependence and dignity; and cost?

ASSISTED SUICIDE

- Which of these do you think is the strongest in purely rational human terms?
- Which of these arguments do you react most strongly against as a Christian? Can you justify your reaction from the Bible?

CHAPTER 4: THE CASE AGAINST

- **We are designed, and therefore dignified, and also dependent on God.** How is this Christian view completely at odds with the views of others? Is this how you see yourself?
- How does this view change the way we see everyone—including those who are disabled, incapable, or infirm?
- **We are dependent on each other.** How is this Christian view completely at odds with the views of others? Is this how you see yourself in your relationships with others?
- How does this change the way we think about assisted suicide and other end-of-life questions?
- **Suffering is not the ultimate evil.** Is this idea new to you? How would others you know who are not Christian react to this suggestion? How would you argue positively for this view with them?
- What experiences have you had that confirm this truth?
- Which of the practical arguments at the end of the chapter are you most moved by? In conversation with others do you think we should use these practical arguments first, or only after expressing the Christian position with the other arguments in the chapter?

CHAPTER 5: FACING DEATH

- “More than anyone else, Christians should be able to think and speak about death and dying with hope,

confidence, meaning and purpose” (p53). Is that true for you? If you got into a conversation with someone who was dying, or caring for someone who was dying, what are your fears about how well or badly you would handle the conversation?

- **Suicidal thoughts:** Have you ever contemplated suicide—perhaps just imagining it? What did you do with those thoughts? How would you help/advise/talk with someone who was a Christian who has such thoughts?
- **Caring for others:** Who in your church is caring sacrificially for a dependant? What particular needs do carers have? How might the fellowship be better involved in supporting them?
- **Engaging with our culture:** Do you know the current state of play in the law, and any proposed changes where you live? How might you get involved in the debate or support those who are representing a Christian voice in the discussion? As we get involved, how can we honour Christ in the way we conduct ourselves, as well as the truths we put forward?
- **Be realistic about death and dying.** Are you? Do you talk about these things with others—with your children and parents? Or is the subject of death and dying off the table for some reason? How can you start to talk about it?
- **Believe the good news about life beyond death.** Do you? We can all be plagued by doubts. How can we address those doubts in ourselves, and with each other?
- **Share the good news of life beyond death.** How do you feel about sharing the good news of Jesus with someone who is dying—a relative or a friend? Share any experiences you have had in doing this. How can we do that sensitively, but with the right kind of urgency?

TO FINISH

- What's the big thing that has impacted you from reading *Assisted Suicide*?
- How will you think about and pray for those who are contemplating assisted suicide?
- What extra help and information do you think you need to be more confident about what you believe on this subject?

PRAY

- Ask God to help you understand the issue and the people better.
- Pray that your church fellowship would be supportive of those caring for the elderly and infirm.
- Pray for any people you may know who are approaching death, and for their families and friends who are seeking to give Christian care and counsel to them.

Printable copies of this discussion guide are available at:
www.thegoodbook.co.uk/talking-points-assisted-suicide
www.thegoodbook.com/talking-points-assisted-suicide

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TRANSGENDER

There's been huge cultural change in the last few decades. Same-sex marriage would have been unthinkable 20 or 30 years ago. Now it's almost universally accepted in the Western world. Suddenly the issue of transgender is the next big social, cultural issue that is dominating the headlines.

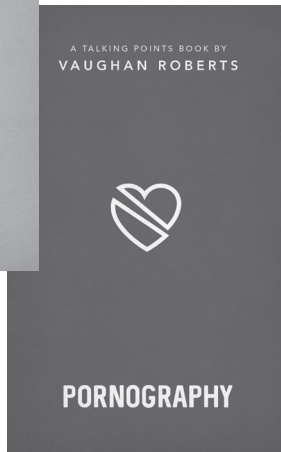
Vaughan Roberts surveys the Christian worldview and seeks to apply the principles he uncovers to the many complex questions surrounding gender identity. This short book gives an overview and a starting point for constructive discussion as we seek to live in a world with different values, and to love, serve and relate to transgender people.

Talking Points is a series of short books designed to help Christians think and talk about today's big issues, and to relate to others with compassion, conviction and wisdom.

"In this brief book on a complex subject Vaughan Roberts combines the traditional Christian understanding of gender and the body with a very careful, loving, understanding stance toward transgender people. The two almost never go together, and that's why this book is so good!"

Tim Keller, pastor, author and Vice-President of
The Gospel Coalition

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