

Ethical Consideration for the Death Penalty

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The philosophy “eye for an eye” is commonly used to describe the reasoning for the death penalty. I believe the death penalty is one of the most controversial issues surrounding the Christian church today. I know growing up, it was hard concept to understand when a Christian would say it is perfectly okay to issue the death penalty and disregard a human’s life but fight so passionately to abolish abortion because “a human life is a human life.” I personally have struggled with this same concept of whether someone should be penalized for his or her horrific crimes by murdering the criminal. For the longest time, I thought it was financially rewarding to put a criminal to death instead of paying for life in prison, however, I’ve discovered over time that the death penalty actually cost citizens more money because of the constant trials, appeals, and research that goes into someone being put on death row.

As someone who is extremely interested in public office, I have had to continue my constant battle of whether or not I believe the death penalty is ethically acceptable especially since capital punishment is still legal in the State of Florida. In 2013 alone, Florida executed seven individuals by lethal injection. (DC STATE FL) When I think about the possibility of redemption and forgiveness, it is hard for me to imagine the possibility of killing someone. How could I be a public official and agree to take someone else’s life? According to Ethics for the Public Service Professional, “The purpose of personal ethics is to make individuals morally better tolerable. Political ethics, on the other hand, while also serving to guide the actions of individuals, it does so only with respect to their institutional roles and only to the degree necessary for the greater good of the institution or society.” (Dutelle) This is the only consideration when thinking if it is possible to hand down the death penalty to an individual that may deserve it. Is it

better for the community as a whole and am I willing to put my personal ethics or emotions aside for the greater good of the community? As someone who is interested in office, I have always been a firm believer that the best politicians or public servants, best serve their community when they allow their own beliefs or ethics drive their decision-making process. My personal beliefs and ethics would likely determine my decision-making process if I had to determine if someone deserved the death penalty.

As previously mentioned, when I occasionally considered the death penalty as a possibility, it was simply under the assumption that the death penalty would be more fiscally conservative than a sentence of life in prison. How could sending someone to prison for 50 years cost less than killing someone after ten years? According to deathpenalty.org, citizens of California alone could save the state \$1 billion dollars over five years by simply eliminating the death penalty and utilizing life in prison. (deathpenalty.org) Additionally, the article continues, by stating that California tax payers spend on average \$90,000 more a year per inmate on death row than someone who has a sentence of life in prison. This was my simple notion for thinking that the death penalty would save millions by killing someone forty years before a natural death. However, over the years when I discovered this not to be the case, that was no longer a reason for considering the death penalty.

As mentioned, the constant debate among Christians on whether the death penalty can be an ethical consideration is still ongoing. As a Christian myself, I believe the old saying that originated in the old testament of the bible “an eye for an eye” is outdated. (Exodus 21:24 English Standard Version) Jesus himself addresses “an eye for an eye” in the New Testament as not being relevant and turning the other cheek. (Matthew 5:38

English Standard Version) I believe no matter how horrific the crimes committed are, forgiveness should still be demonstrated. I know, easier said and done, and I have never been put in a situation where I have had to make those decisions. However, I do believe and hope that I would practice what I preach. While I understand the importance of the decision-making process and making decisions based on the betterment of the community at large, I believe in this situation, I must demonstrate a higher level of personal ethics. The death penalty is wrong and as a future political office holding individual, I would uphold the notion that individuals spend life in prison for their crimes.

Work Cited

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