



What Different Religions Teach About Life and Death

KS4 RELIGIOUS STUDIES

ETHICS

PHILOSOPHY

Ages 13-16



4 min read

Understanding Religious Perspectives on Life and Death

When we talk about **euthanasia** (helping someone who is suffering to die) and **abortion** (ending a pregnancy), we're discussing some of the most sensitive topics in the world. Different religions have different answers to these questions because they disagree about when life begins and how sacred life is. Let's explore what some major world religions teach.

Christianity and the Sanctity of Life

Most **Christian** churches teach that life is a gift from **God** and should not be ended deliberately. The **Catholic Church** strongly opposes both abortion and euthanasia. However, some **Protestant churches** take slightly different positions—they might accept abortion in certain circumstances, such as when a mother's life is in danger.

Think of it like... a precious gift from a friend that you wouldn't throw away, no matter what.

Islam's Teaching on Life

Islam teaches that life is sacred and belongs only to **Allah** (God). Most Islamic scholars agree that abortion should not be performed except to save the mother's life. Similarly, euthanasia is forbidden because Muslims believe only God can decide when someone dies.

Judaism's Complex Approach

Jewish teaching emphasizes saving life above almost everything else. **Orthodox Judaism** and other Jewish branches may permit abortion to protect a mother's health. Regarding euthanasia, there are different views—some rabbinical authorities allow it in very specific circumstances where someone is actively dying and suffering.

Buddhism and Compassion

Buddhist philosophy centers on reducing suffering and avoiding harm. However, Buddhists view this issue complexly. Most traditions discourage both abortion and euthanasia, but they recognize situations where compassion might lead to difficult choices. The intention behind an action matters significantly in **Buddhist ethics**.

Think of it like... trying to be kind to others, but being thoughtful that your actions might have consequences you didn't expect.

Hinduism's Perspective

Hinduism teaches the concept of **karma**—that our actions have spiritual consequences. Most Hindu teachers believe that deliberately ending life, including abortion and euthanasia, creates bad karma. However, if continuing a pregnancy would harm the mother, some Hindu authorities permit abortion.

Why These Differences Matter

These religions don't just have different rules—they have different reasons based on what they believe about the nature of life, the soul, and what happens after death. Understanding these perspectives helps us respect people's deeply held beliefs, even when we disagree with them. In countries with diverse populations, governments often have to balance these religious beliefs with laws that everyone must follow.