

## **From the News: A Discussion for Upper Grades**

*Teenagers need to see that a deep and growing faith is important in daily life. Current events are an excellent tool for kids to flex their faith muscles and see how they feel about issues and how God might want them to feel differently than they do. Newspapers and magazines should be a regular part of your non-curriculum resources if you teach middle or high school.*

*Reproduce the story below and discuss students opinions and Scripture verses.*

## Forever Young?

SEATTLE – A conversational medical treatment has stirred passionate debate about whether parents can ethically use medical interventions to alter the growth and development of mentally or physically impaired children.

Ashley, 9 suffers from static encephalopathy, a type of brain damage she experienced as an infant that left her with the mental ability of a 3-month-old baby.

Ashley can't walk, talk, or keep her head up, and she's fed through a tube. Her doctors expect her to have a normal lifespan. After consulting with Ashley's medical team and a medical board of ethics, her parents had doctors perform procedures to keep Ashley child-sized for life.

Ashley had her reproductive organs removed and undergoes hormone treatments to limit her growth. Her parents say the procedures will make Ashley more comfortable, improve her quality of life, and make it easier for them to care for her. Her parents say Ashley's treatments will allow them to care for her at home rather than placing her in an institution when she reaches adult size.

"I don't think there was any question in our minds that the parents were acting in Ashley's best interests," says Dr. Dough Diekema of Seattle Children's Hospital. But some parents disagree with Ashley's parents' choice.

"Just to put them through surgery for what seems like your won convenience seems severe," says Ellie Stein, the mother of two children with similar disabilities.

Medical ethicist Chris Futner worries that some parents may use the Ashley Treatment to justify other procedures for kids with disabilities. "Our society has a tendency to want to solve big social problems with easy technological fixes. It's a very tempting way out of the problem."

*What decisions do your parents currently make for you? Do you think those decisions are in your best interest or in your parents' best interest? Or is it sometimes difficult to know? Explain. If you were to become severely disabled, what decisions would you want your parents to make about your quality of life? Explain. Do you agree or disagree with Ashley's parents' decision? Explain. If you were Ashley's parent, what would you choose? Why? What do you think Ashley would decide? What do you think God would want in this situation?*

*Related Scriptures: 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 16:25; Romans 8:18; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5; 1 Peter 4:19.*