### Why Capital Punishment is Right

1. **God instituted capital punishment**
   
   God instituted capital punishment. Genesis 9:6 states, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.” Exodus 21:12-17 states “v12 He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. v13 But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint you a place to which he may flee. v14 If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily, you are to take him even from My altar, that he may die. v15 And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. v16 And he who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death.” Leviticus 24:17 states, “And if a man takes the life of any human being, he shall surely be put to death.” Ecclesiastes 3:3 states that there is “A time to kill...” Human life is sacred to God. Those who purposely take a human life are to forfeit their own. There are other crimes as well that God says deserve the death penalty. Capital punishment was not to be carried out by the decision of an individual but by the government. It was the government’s responsibility to keep law and order. Capital punishment was for the good of society. If murderers, rapists and kidnappers were allowed to go free, society deteriorates, much like we see today.

   (Rebuttal: To be consistent, should people today be put to death for cursing their parents? I don’t think so!)

2. **It deters crime**
   
   Capital punishment is a deterrent to crime. It does not stop all crime but it does make many people think twice before committing certain crimes. Some folks say that capital punishment is not a deterrent to crime but the fact is, those who are put to death will never again commit the same crime. One of the main problems in society today is repeat offenders. Often violent criminals who get out of prison commit the same crimes for which they were put in prison.

   (Rebuttal: Capital punishment does not deter crime.)

3. **Capital punishment saves money**
   
   The cost of keeping prisoners in jail for extended periods is more than the cost of sending a person to college. Billions of dollars could be better spent on other social ills or helping non-criminals go to college than on feeding, clothing and housing criminals who

### Why Capital Punishment is Wrong

1. **Capital punishment violates the 10 commandments**
   
   The ten commandments are found in Exodus 20. The sixth commandment in verse 13 (King James Version) states, “Thou shalt not kill.” In this commandment God tells people that it is wrong for one human being to kill another. Capital punishment is killing and is thus wrong.

   (Rebuttal: The Hebrew word for kill is ratsach. It is better translated “murder.” The sixth commandment is better rendered, “Thou shalt not murder,” as in the New American Standard Version of the Bible. Murder is the unlawful taking of human life. Killing may be lawful under certain circumstances.)

2. **Capital punishment violates Jesus’ teaching**
   
   In Matthew 5:21-22, Jesus states, “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder,’ and ‘whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.” In these verses Jesus condemns killing. In passages like Matthew 6:12-15 He teaches forgiveness. When the woman who was caught in adultery was brought to Jesus, He did not say that she should be put to death, even though under the law that was the penalty for adultery. Instead Jesus stressed forgiveness, John 8:3-11. People are not to put others to death but instead to forgive them for the wrongs they have done. Capital punishment may have been appropriate during Old Testament times, but under Jesus’ new teaching, it is not appropriate.

   (Rebuttal: On an individual basis we must forgive each other. No person is allowed to take the law into his own hands and put someone to death. But that does not negate the need for capital punishment by the government for the good of society. Jesus’ teaching does not do away with the Old Testament law, it simply fulfills it, Matthew 5:17,18. Jesus taught in John 8:3-11 that the law was still valid.)

3. **Vengeance is God’s not man’s**
   
   Romans 12:19 states, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” This verse clearly states that vengeance is up to God. Capital punishment is a form of vengeance and is thus wrong. If God wants to put someone to death, let Him do it. It is wrong for humans to do it.

   Acts 5:1-10 is an example where God carried out
should be given the death penalty.
(Rebuttal: Capital punishment is inhumane.)

4. Capital punishment keeps society clean
Capital punishment keeps society safe and clean by eliminating criminals who commit certain crimes. In countries where capital punishment is used swiftly and regularly, the crime rate is much lower than in countries like the United States. Saudi Arabia and Singapore are two examples of countries which do not hesitate using capital punishment for violent criminals. Their crime rates are extremely low.
(Rebuttal: Such countries are oppressive.)

5. It creates fear of God and respect for authority
Capital punishment creates a reverence for God and respect for authority. In countries where capital punishment is done swiftly there is much more respect for authority. Because people are sinners, if they see that certain crimes are not punished swiftly, they become more bold in their own sin. Crime then goes up.
(Rebuttal: Capital punishment is barbaric. It makes murderers of those who carry it out.)

6. The Ten Commandments do not forbid capital punishment
Some people argue that the ten commandments in Exodus 20 forbid the use of capital punishment because the sixth commandment is translated in some Bibles, “You shall not kill.” A better translation is, “You shall not murder.” The word for kill refers to those who would take a human life unlawfully. It would apply to one neighbor killing another. In many other passages, God makes it clear that capital punishment carried out by the government is appropriate and necessary.
(Rebuttal: If God wants to put people to death, let Him do it. There are examples in the Bible like “Ananias and Sapphira,” where God put people to death. Humans must not take the life of another.)

7. Romans 12:9 does not forbid capital punishment
Romans 12:9 states, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” Some people try to use this verse to support the idea that only God has the right to put people to death. Such an interpretation twists the verse out of context. The verse is speaking to individuals, not governments. If someone murders someone else’s mother, the son of the mother does not have the right to kill the murderer. Instead he must leave justice up to God. In the case of murder, God works through the government to bring justice. In other lesser cases, like one person beating up another at school, the person who gets beat up should not take revenge on the person who beat him up. Instead he should work through the school authorities or let God deal with the problem.
(Rebuttal: Romans 12:19 applies to governments as well.)

8. Capital punishment is unfair
Capital punishment is unfair. If a person murders someone and has enough money to hire the right lawyers can get off. Poor people who can’t hire the right lawyers can not.
(Rebuttal: Our system is not perfect and there are those who wrongfully elude the death penalty. Just because a system is not perfect is not reason to do away with it.)

4. It stoops to the violence that it seeks to eliminate
Capital punishment whether by hanging, lethal injection, or electric shock makes man stoop to the level of violence that it seeks to eliminate. Two wrongs don’t make a right.
(Rebuttal: Capital punishment is violent, but it is God’s way of keeping society free from certain types of criminals.)

5. Capital punishment does not deter crime
Studies have shown that capital punishment does not deter criminals.
(Rebuttal: It certainly does deter crime. Those who are put to death will never commit their crime again. Many of our violent crimes are committed by repeat offenders. Capital punishment would eliminate many of these repeat-criminals. Capital punishment also sends a strong message to those who might be thinking of committing similar crimes. Capital punishment will not deter all criminals, but it will deter some. Some is better than none.)

6. Capital punishment does not affirm life
Those who believe in the sanctity of life must not revert to capital punishment which destroys life. People, especially Christians, must affirm life by opposing capital punishment.
(Rebuttal: Capital punishment affirms life. It makes the statement that those who take the life of another person will forfeit their own. Capital punishment is one of the best ways to affirm life. When a criminal who has murdered someone is not put to death, this shows lack of respect for the life of the person who was murdered. When a person takes another person’s life, his horrendous sin should cost him his own life. Those who see the consequence of murder will understand that life is indeed sacred.)

7. Violent criminals can be rehabilitated
Many violent criminals can be rehabilitated to become contributing members of society. Putting them to death removes this possibility.
(Rebuttal: It is true that some violent criminals have been rehabilitated but many are also repeat offenders.)

8. Capital punishment is unfair
Capital punishment is unfair. If a person murders someone and has enough money to hire the right lawyers can get off. Poor people who can’t hire the right lawyers can not.
(Rebuttal: Our system is not perfect and there are those who wrongfully elude the death penalty. Just because a system is not perfect is not reason to do away with it.)

© 1996, The Institute Of Disciple Making