**Case Summary: Snyder v. Phelps (2010)**

Read the following case summary and respond to the questions below:

Albert Snyder wanted to protect the families of dead soldiers. That’s why he brought a lawsuit against the Westboro Baptist Church. Although he was seeking millions of dollars, he always claimed that his lawsuit wasn’t about the money.

The Westboro Baptist Church is based in Topeka, Kansas. For the past 20 years, its members have picketed at the funerals of dead soldiers. The members of Westboro Baptist Church believe that they have been called to spread the message that God is punishing troops for America's tolerance of homosexuality. In March 2006, seven Westboro protesters, including church leader Fred Phelps, flew more than 1,000 miles to attend the funeral of Snyder's son, Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder, 20, who had been killed in Iraq. Some of their signs said things like "Thank God for 9/11," "You're Going to Hell," and "Thank God for Dead Soldiers." The picketing took place on public property approximately 1,000 feet from the church where the funeral was held and lasted for 30 minutes before the funeral began. Albert Snyder saw the protestors before the funeral but did not learn what was written on the signs until he watched the news that night.

Snyder felt like the protestors ruined his son’s funeral, and he became depressed. Snyder told TIME magazine, "To me, what they did was just as bad, if not worse, than if they had taken a gun and shot me, At least the wound would have healed."

Snyder (the plaintiff) filed a lawsuit against Phelps, his daughters, and the Westboro Baptist Church (the defendants). His claims included intentional infliction of emotional distress and invasion of privacy. A jury awarded Snyder millions of dollars. The defendants appealed on grounds that the signs were protected as free speech under the First Amendment. An appeals court upheld the verdict but reduced the amount of damages. The defendants appealed to the United State Supreme Court.

1. What else would you like to know about this case? Develop at least three questions about the facts of this case.

2. What groups do you think would support the plaintiffs in this case? Why?

3. What groups do you think would support the defendants in this case? Why?

4. Should the fact that this is an emotionally charged case affect the outcome? Why or why not?

5. How would you rule in this case? Why?