

436 SUICIDE A PERMANENT SOLUTION TO A TEMPARY PROBLEM

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Text: Acts 16:27-28

INTRODUCTION: ca, 31,000 per year in the USA while suicide is one of the leading causes of death across the world, especially in the 15-35 year age group. As per WHO estimates, nearly one million people will commit suicide in 2001. This amounts to an average of one death every 40 seconds and an attempt every three seconds.

A. Suicide is not a new phenomenon.

B. There are at least five/six people in the Bible who committed suicide:

1. Samson- Judges 16:30 Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.
2. King Saul- 1 Chron. 10:4 Then Saul said to his armorbearer, "Draw your sword , and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and abuse me." But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it. And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died.
3. Saul's Armor- bearer- 1 Chron. 5 And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died.
4. Athithophel- 2 Sam. 17:23 Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father's tomb.
5. Zimri- 1 Kings 16:18 And it happened, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house down upon himself with fire, and died,
6. Judas Iscariot- Matt. 27:5 5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

C. Still others wished to die:

1. Ecc 2:17 Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.

2. Ecc 4:1-2 Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, But they have no comforter--On the side of their oppressors there is power, But they have no comforter. Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead, More than the living who are still alive.
3. Jona 4:3 "Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"
4. Jona 4:8 -9 And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!"
5. Job 7:15 -16 So that my soul chooses strangling And death rather than my body. I loathe my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone, For my days are but a breath.
6. Job 3:20-22 "Why is light given to him who is in misery, And life to the bitter of soul, Who long for death, but it does not come, And search for it more than hidden treasures; Who rejoice exceedingly, And are glad when they can find the grave?"
7. Rev 9:6 In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

D. Man indeed is a strange creature. Some men hold on to life while others take their own life.

E. We hear of suicide all around us:

1. Heavens Gate cult just recently- 39.
2. Books such as Illusions and others teach reincarnation, if you are not happy end your life and start again.
3. Dr. Death- Jack Kevorkian (SP) 130 or so.
4. TV shows and movies M*A*S*H theme song was "Suicide is Painless."

F. Exact numbers are hard to come by but it is est. that 8 of every 100 teens attempts suicide each year.

BODY:

I. WHO COMMITES SUICIDE:

- A. All walks and types of people.
- B. More Rural than Urban.

- C. More Protestants than Catholics or Jews.
- D. More single than married.
- E. More Divorced than Widowed.
- F. Depressed people commit suicide. Not all depressed people end their own lives, but nearly all those who end their own lives are depressed.
- G. The suicidal person is in a state of panic, they see only one way out.
- H. The presence of any of the following factors increases the statistical probability that a person will actually kill themselves.
 - 1. Male-men attempt suicide less frequently but success more than females.
 - 2. Teens or older age (2nd cause of death in teens).
 - 3. A specific plan.
 - 4. The necessary means to carry out that plan (gun, drugs, etc.)
 - 5. Prior suicidal behavior.
 - 6. Recent, severe losses or medical problems.
 - 7. Alcoholism.
 - 8. Lack of a strong support system (Family, church etc.)
 - 9. Mental illness.
 - 10. Poor communication with others.
 - 11. History of suicide in family or friends.
 - 12. Perhaps they key word is “CHANGE”.

II. A CRY FOR HELP

- A. Suicide is seldom a sudden, unpremeditated act.
- B. Before suicide most people send out cries for help, such as:
 - 1. Obvious suicidal threats: The old belief that “People who talk about killing themselves don’t” is false. All threats should be taken seriously.
 - 2. Covert suicidal threats:
 - a. “life is empty” Life is worthless or meaningless”.
 - b. “I wish I could go to sleep and never wake up.”
 - c. I feel trapped and powerless.
 - 3. It is important to remember that only about 5% of suicidal people have decided unequivocally to end their lives.
 - 4. Depression: “All deeply depressed people are potential suicides” Karl Menninger.
 - 5. Crushing losses and grief.
 - 6. Preoccupation with death.

7. Suddenly happier, calmer.
8. Loss of interest in things one cares about.
9. Visiting or calling people one cares about.
10. Making arrangements; setting one's affairs in order. Giving things away.
11. Psychological disturbances and chronic illnesses.
 - a. Some mental ill persons are suicidal, but most suicidal persons are not mentally ill.
 - b. Those in chronic pain or suffering from an incurable illness, especially if they have fear of dependency, helplessness or financial disaster.

III. CAUSES “What causes a person to take their own life?”

- A. At its deepest level, the suicidal person’s problem is a theological problem.
- B. Suicide is often the tip of the iceberg of deep problems.
- C. One of the basic problems underlining suicide is love starvation.
- D. Experts list various factors that seemingly contribute to suicide:
 1. Changing moral climate.
 2. High divorce rate- Less than 38% of teens live with both parents.
 3. Abuse of drugs and alcohol.
 4. Glorification of violence and suicide.
 5. Pressure to be successful.
 6. A drop in church attendance- Penn state Sociologist Steven Stack, noted the time that the suicide rate for teens has tripled, church attendance has been cut in half. “Religion regulates individuals. If people have rules or moral codes to follow, they are less likely to have disrupted lives and be less prone to suicide.”

7. Notice this letter written to the Orlando Sentinel by a young person about teen suicide. “Much has been made in the news about the shocking increase in the suicide rate among teenagers. But let’s face the facts: If you were reared to believe that certain standards of character, behavior and faith were necessary to become a useful citizen, and then one day you were suddenly aware that your mother, father or other adults you admired were having illicit love affairs; your friends at school were taking and selling drugs; your sports heroes were arrested for rape, assault and trafficking in narcotics; your father was indicted for child molesting; two of your pals were in jail for killing a gas

station attendant while committing a robbery; your favorite ball player had signed a contract for 4 million dollars for five years and he could barely read or write; that theaters and TV movies show maniacs who attack their victims with chain saws and guns; you too might be confused. Your teenage sons and daughters are not naïve or stupid—they just are more sensitive.

IV. HELPING.

A. Those Who Are Suicidal.

1. Most people live for all sorts of things; and if they lose something on one front, they pick it up on another. But suicidal people are quite deficient in any capacity to keep themselves afloat on the basis of inner resources. Dr. Paul Walters Jr. Stanford University.
2. It boils down to finding the person something to live for.
3. Appeal to them to at least postpone it until they have tried another way.
4. Ask the person if s/he is thinking of harming themselves. You will not give anyone any ideas.
5. If you have promised not to reveal what they have told you. Do so anyway, you have a higher responsibility to help them.
6. Delay, delay, delay.

B. Helping the Family Of One Who Has Committed Suicide.

1. The family is a completed suicide almost always needs extended care and counseling.
2. They must deal with swirling feelings of unhealed shame, guilt and rage toward the dead person.
3. The family's shame, denial and self-protective hiding often prevent them from being open to help.
4. Here are some suggestions:
 - a. Acknowledge the death the same as you would the death of any friend. Don't pry for information about circumstances.
 - b. Acknowledge their pain.
 - c. Show you are, "Weep w/ them that weep."

- d. Offer the gift of self.
- e. Give them permission to be angry. Letting it out helps.
- f. Avoid asking questions or making statements that will cast blame on survivors.
- g. Give them permission to talk about the loved one.
- h. LISTEN
- i. Encourage them not to judge yesterday with the knowledge of today.
- j. Stay in touch, telephone, visit on painful days, like birthdays anniversaries, etc.
- k. Watch for signs of unhealthy, morbid grief.
- l. Encourage them to get help if they need it.

INVITATION:

THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED BY STUDENTS AFTER HEARING PRESENTATIONS ON DEPRESSION & SUICIDE AWARENESS CONDUCTED BY SAVE'S (Suicide Awareness Voices of Education SPEAKERS BUREAU: www.save.org)

Why do people kill themselves?

Most of the time people who kill themselves are very sick with depression or one of the other types of depressive illnesses, which occur when the chemicals in a person's brain get out of balance or become disrupted in some way. Healthy people do not kill themselves. A person who has depression does not think like a typical person who is feeling good. Their illness prevents them from being able to look forward to anything. They can only think about NOW and have lost the ability to imagine into the future. Many times they don't realize they are suffering from a treatable illness and they feel they can't be helped. Seeking help may not even enter their mind. They do not think of the people around them, family or friends, because of their illness. They are consumed with emotional, and many times, physical pain that becomes unbearable. They don't see any way out. They feel hopeless and helpless. They don't want to die, but it's the only way they feel their pain will end. It is a non-rational choice. Depression is often a treatable illness.

Depression, plus alcohol or drug use can be lethal. Many times people will try to alleviate the symptoms of their illness by drinking or using drugs. Alcohol and/or drugs will make

the disease worse! There is an increased risk for suicide because alcohol and/or drugs decrease judgment and increase impulsively.

Can a suicidal person mask their depression with happiness?

Yes, they can. But, most of the time a suicidal person will give clues as to how desperate he/she is feeling. They may be subtle clues though, and that's why knowing what to watch for is critical. A person may "hint" that he/she is thinking about suicide. For example, they may say something like, "Everyone would be better off without me." Or, "It doesn't matter. I won't be around much longer anyway." We need to "key into" phrases like those instead of dismissing them as just talk. It is estimated that 80% of people who died of suicide, mentioned it to a friend or relative before dying. Other danger signs are having a preoccupation with death, losing interest in things one cares about, giving things away, having a lot of "accidents" recently, or engaging in risk-taking behavior, like speeding or reckless driving, or general carelessness. Some people even joke about completing suicide - it should always be taken seriously.

Is it more likely for a person to commit suicide if he/she has been exposed to it in their family or has had a close friend die of suicide?

We know that suicide tends to run in families, but it is believed that this is due to the fact that depression and other related depressive illnesses have a genetic component. And that if they are left untreated (or mistreated), they can result in suicide. But, talking about suicide or being aware of a suicide that happened in your family or to a close friend does not put you at risk for attempting it, if you are healthy. The only people who are at risk are those who are vulnerable in the first place - vulnerable because of an illness called depression or one of the other depressive illnesses. The risk increases if the illness is not treated.

Why don't people talk about depression and suicide?

The main reason people don't talk about it is because of the stigma. People who suffer from depression are afraid that others will think they are "crazy". Society still hasn't accepted depressive illnesses like they've accepted other diseases. Alcoholism is a good example - no one ever wanted to talk openly about that, and now look at how society views it. They talk of the effect it has had on their lives and different treatment plans. Most everyone is educated on the dangers of alcohol and on alcohol prevention. As for suicide, it's a topic that has a long history of being taboo - something that should just be forgotten, kind of swept under the rug. And that's why people keep dying. Suicide is so misunderstood by most people, so the myths are perpetuated. And the taboo prevents people from getting help, and prevents society from learning more about suicide and depression. If everyone were educated on these subjects, many lives could be saved.

Why do people attempt suicide when they appear to have been feeling so much better?

Sometimes people who are severely depressed and contemplating suicide don't have enough energy to carry it out. But, as the disease begins to "lift" they may regain some of their energy but will still have feelings of hopelessness. There's also another theory that people just kind of "give in" to the anguished feelings (the disease), because they just can't fight it anymore. This in turn, releases some of their anxiety, which makes them "appear" calmer.

If a person's "mind is made up", can they still be stopped?

Yes! People who are contemplating suicide go back and forth, thinking about life and death. They don't want to die, they just want the pain to stop. Once they know they can be helped, that there are treatments available for their illness, it gives them hope. We should never "give up" on someone, just because we think they've made their mind up!

Common Misconceptions About Suicide

The following are common misconceptions about Suicide from the NAMI ADVOCATE "People who talk about suicide won't really do it."

NOT TRUE

Almost everyone who commits or attempts suicide has given some clue or warning. Do not ignore suicide threats. Statements like "you'll be sorry when I'm dead," "I can't see any way out," -- no matter how casually or jokingly said may indicate serious suicidal feelings.

"Anyone who tries to kill him/herself must be crazy."

NOT TRUE

Most suicidal people are not psychotic or insane. They must be upset, grief-stricken, depressed or despairing, but extreme distress and emotional pain are not necessarily signs of mental illness.

"If a person is determined to kill him/herself, nothing is going to stop him/her."

NOT TRUE (only about 5%)

Even the most severely depressed person has mixed feelings about death, wavering until the very last moment between wanting to live and wanting to die. Most suicidal people do not want death; they want the pain to stop. The impulse to end it all, however overpowering, does not last forever.

"People who commit suicide are people who were unwilling to seek help."

NOT TRUE

Studies of suicide victims have shown that more than half had sought medical help within six months before their deaths.

"Talking about suicide may give someone the idea."

NOT TRUE

You don't give a suicidal person morbid ideas by talking about suicide. The opposite is true --bringing up the subject of suicide and discussing it openly is one of the most helpful things you can do.

V. PREVENTING THROUGH THE CHURCH.

- A. Where custom and tradition accept or condone it, many persons will take their own lives; where it is sternly condemned by the rules of the church and state, suicide will be an unusual occurrence.
- B. While psychiatrists might suggest many reasons to live, the only permanent answer is Christ and the Church.
- C. Notice how the Church takes care of the causes mentioned earlier.
 1. A Stable moral standard. Stability in an unstable world.
 2. Stable home life emphasized. Marriage for life. Using the Bible as a pattern to be a better husband or wife.
 3. Abstinence from alcohol and other drugs. "There is no way to measure how much better off the world would be today if throughout history the teachings of the Bible relative to this subject had been emphasized by all men. All the havoc that alcohol causes in men's lives, all the sorrow it causes in families, all the despair that lies at the bottom of a bottle would disappear if alcohol were abstained from.
 4. Violence in its proper place.
 5. Independent actions are encouraged. It is Okay not to do what everybody else is doing.
 6. Hope instead of despair.
 - a. 1 Pet. 5:6-7 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.
 - b. Matt. 11:28-30 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

VI. BIBLICAL REASONS WHY SUICIDE IS WRONG.

- A. It destroys the body which is not our own but God's.
1. 1 Cor. 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's..
 2. 1 Cor. 3:17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.
- B. It Violates the 6th Commandment "Thou Shalt do No Murder."
1. Matt. 19:18 He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, " `You shall not murder,' `You shall not commit adultery,' `You shall not steal,' `You shall not bear false witness,'
 2. Suicide is premeditated- self- murder.
- C. It breaks the second greatest commandment- Matt. 22:39 And the second is like it: `You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'
- D. It rejects and refuses God's promise to help in the time of trouble.
1. Psa. 50:15. **Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."**
 2. Psa. 55:22 **Cast your burden on the Lord, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.**
 3. Psa. 9:9 **The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, A refuge in times of trouble.**
- E. It exhibits the Ultimate in selfishness. Who is left to bear the burden, stigma, shame and horror of suicide?
1. 1 Cor. 10:24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.
 2. 1Cor. 13:4-5 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;.
- F. It cancels Eternal Life- This is reason alone to teach people that suicide is the "Wrong way out."

1. Gal. 5:21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God..
2. 1 Jn. 3:15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him..
3. Rev. 21:8 "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

G. Shows a lack of faith.

1. 2 Tim. 4:6-8 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing..
2. 2 Tim. 4:18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

CONCLUSION:

- A. The further away from God and His plan, the more danger of such happening.
- B. Why not let God take over your life??