

Monday, August 15, 2011 – Is Suicide ever the Answer to Life’s Problems?

Romans 12:1-2 - I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, [which is] your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, and ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The story is told of a young man who sat on the bank of a river in Louisiana and contemplated ending his life. He came from what most would consider to be a strong family background, had high morals, and did not use illegal substances. He had a very likable personality, was a successful athlete, and had done well enough academically that he graduated from high school and began taking college courses. Yet, there he sat. He thought about all of the pain he could leave behind with just one quick pull of the trigger. He thought about relationships, he thought about his future on earth and in the afterlife. From the outside, most casual observers thought he “had it all together.” However, from within him sprang the desire to end his life and thereby end the pain that had become its focal point.

Sadly, we live in a day and age in which many are taking suicide as a way of leaving this life. Consider the following statistics:

- The World Health Organization estimates that each year approximately one million people die from suicide, which represents a global mortality rate of 16 people per 100,000 or one death every 40 seconds.
- In the US, the Center of Disease Control and Prevention reports that suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death for all US Americans, and is the third leading cause of death for young people between 15 and 24 years of age.
- Suicide rates in the United States are highest in the spring. April and May are peak months for the outbreak of suicides. Various suggestions can be given as to why this might be, but in the words of a daughter whose father took his life during the spring, “You’ve made it through another winter, but your world is no warmer.”
- Although suicide is a serious problem among the young and adults, death rates continue to be highest among older adults ages 65 years and over.
- Males are four times more likely to die from suicide than are females. However, females are more likely to attempt suicide than are males.
- It is estimated that more American war veterans have committed suicide than the fifty eight thousand people that were killed in wartime conditions.
- A suicide is more likely to occur at home during the early morning and early evening hours. Statistics show that suicides happen most often on Friday and

Monday, when the pressures of another lonely weekend or a dreaded work week loom largest.

The term suicide (Latin suicidium) comes from the root sui caedere which means “to kill oneself.” It is defined as the killing of one’s self with premeditation or predetermination while in the possession of a sound mind. Suicide, by those contemplating it, is based upon the proposition that it will end all of one’s problems. Suicide has a long history. The theme song to the wildly popular series M*A*S*H specifically mentioned, in the lyrics, suicide as a practical alternative to living:

“Through early morning fog, I see visions of the things to be; those pains that are withheld from me. And I can see that suicide is painless; it brings on many changes, and I can take or leave it, if I please. The game of life is hard to play; I am going to lose it anyway. The losing card I’ll someday play, for this is all I have to say: that suicide is painless, it brings on many changes, and I can take or leave it if I please...”

Contrary to popular belief, life is not a game. Life is precious. As recorded in **Genesis 1:26-27**, life is a gift from God. We are made in His image. Since man is not the author of life, he is not free to determine when life should be terminated. Life is the result of Jehovah God. Paul declared in **Acts 17:24, 25; 28**, **“The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;**

25 neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things...for in him we live, and move, and have our being...” In the Old Testament, Moses wrote: **“Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).**

There are several cases of suicide mentioned in the Scriptures, and all of them are viewed in an unfavorable light (**1 Samuel 31:4, 5; 2 Samuel 17:23; 1 Kings 16:18; Matthew 27:5**). Self-destruction is a violation of biblical truth.

So how do those who find themselves in such distressed conditions move past the feelings complete hopelessness? Let us consider the following:

1. We need to be reminded of just who we are in God’s scheme of things.
 - 1.1. The Bible asserts the glory of man as being created in God’s image! (**Gen. 1:27**)
 - 1.1.1. We are made in God’s image; we are His; He loves us so much that He sent His only Son to die for us! The point being is, **“What then shall we say**

to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). There is nothing so catastrophic that God’s love can’t help us through.

1.1.2. Christ acknowledges and affirms that human beings are the highest and noblest creatures in the universe.

1.1.3. Jesus understood that the human being is worth more than the sum total of the non-human universe when He asked, **“What is man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Matt. 16:26).**

1.2. The glory and dignity of mankind is beautifully expressed in **Psalms 8:3-9.**

1.2.1. **When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him but little lower than God, And crownest him with glory and honor. Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, Yea, and the beasts of the field, The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Jehovah, our Lord, How excellent is thy name in all the earth!**

2. To be a human being is “wonderful,” in the most literal sense of that term.

2.1. There are no “ordinary” persons, no unimportant or insignificant individuals.

2.2. Every single example of man-kind is endowed with the awesomeness of a personality.

2.3. Because we are made in God’s image, we have the highest of potentials and the grandest of destinies. But we only reach this destiny if we seek our fulfillment in our Creator.

2.4. Only God can help us repair the damage of sin.

2.5. God calls us to be, in Him, all that we were intended and created to be.

2.6. To be human is to be capable of:

2.6.1. Having true fellowship with God - **1 John 1:1-4.**

2.6.2. Sharing His own nature - **2 Peter 1:4.**

3. Joy and hope must be a cornerstone in our lives!

3.1. In the hours leading up to His death, Christ’s despair was so great that His sweat became as big drops of blood upon the ground (**Luke 22:44**).

3.1.1. Notice what Christ spent His time doing during this time of great despair; praying for His disciples (**John 17**).

3.1.2. An important key is for us to **focus on others instead of ourselves (vs. 15-16).**

3.1.3. Occupy your mind with thoughts of other people who need to be loved and served. (**John 15:12-13, 17**).

3.2. Search for sources of joy in the scriptures

3.2.1. Acts 2:44-48 – READ

3.2.1.1. Those guilty of the death of Christ found joy in the forgiveness given to them.

3.2.1.2. **Verse 46-47 – So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people**

3.2.1.2.1. They rejoiced in the temporal blessings God had given them; both those who gave and those who received. **They rejoiced TOGETHER.**

3.2.2. Acts 4:32-37 – READ

3.2.2.1. Joy of giving and sharing

3.2.2.2. **Verse 32 – Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.**

3.2.3. Acts 8:35-39 – READ

3.2.3.1. Joy at the preaching of and obedience to Jesus

3.2.3.2. We can have the joy of being risen up as a new person to live for new things.

4. Joy in Life

4.1. Rejoice in the Lord

4.1.1. **Philippians 4:4-8 – Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.**

4.2. Take to heart that you are loved, wanted, and constitute a source of joy to others.

4.2.1. Never let Satan convince you that you are not needed, loved, cared about or that you are a burden to others.

4.2.1.1. **John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...**

4.2.2. And regardless of what wrongs we commit

4.2.2.1. **Romans 5:8 – But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

4.3. Keep in mind our Glorious Future

4.3.1. **Philippians 3:20 - For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:**

4.3.2. **1 Thes. 4:13-18 - But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.**

4.3.2.1. Heaven, a place of unspeakable riches and beauty, is mere moments from being our eternal abode

4.3.3. **Revelation 21:4 – And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.**

4.3.3.1. No more pain, no more sorry, no more stress and strain of this world.

4.4. Rejoice that your name is written in heaven

4.4.1. Humans loved to be recognized and acknowledged

4.4.2. What greater joy could one have than to know that heaven recognizes them and claims them as its own

4.4.3. **Revelation 3:5 – He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.**

4.5. Take to heart that happiness can be and is yours

4.5.1. **Philippians 4:4 – Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!**

4.5.1.1. Claim it!

4.5.1.2. You have the choice to rejoice or not.

4.5.2. We can be happy because we are right with the Lord

4.5.3. We can rejoice always...How?

4.5.3.1. **Romans 8:28 – And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose**

4.5.3.2. Peter, Paul, John all rejoiced in the trials, tribulations and persecutions of life.

4.6. Never forget that the Lord is ever near.

4.6.1. **Philippians 4:5 – ...The Lord is at hand**

4.6.2. The Lord is always close to those that are his.

4.6.2.1. **Hebrews 13:5-6 – Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"**

4.6.2.2. **Acts 17:27 – that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us**

4.6.2.3. I will not always be able to be there for my children, but they can always know the Lord is there for them.

4.6.2.4. He is close enough to see, hear, understand and to extend a helping hand through the strength derived by his Word and the power of prayer

4.7. Let the scriptures speak about Joy

4.7.1. **Psalms 97:1-12 – READ**

4.7.2. **Revelation 3:7-12 – READ**

Where is your joy and happiness found? Is it found in temporal things or spiritual things? Christ reminds us in **Matthew 6:19-20**, "**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.**" Life, if we put stock in the things of this world, will surely disappoint.

If you aren't a Christian, you can't possess the joy we've talked about because this joy is found only in the Lord. If you are a Christian, is the joy you should be experiencing waning or gone? Do you look back on your travels and only see one set of footprints? You can be reconciled to God and again walk step in step with him.

Warning Signs of Suicide

- Ideation (thinking, talking or wishing about suicide)
- Substance use or abuse (increased use or change in substance)
- Purposelessness (no sense of purpose or belonging)
- Anger
- Trapped (feeling like there is no way out)
- Hopelessness (there is nothing to live for, no hope or optimism)
- Withdrawal (from family, friends, work, school, activities, hobbies)

- Anxiety (restlessness, irritability, agitation)
- Recklessness (high risk-taking behavior)
- Mood disturbance (dramatic changes in mood)

Additional Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking about suicide.
- Looking for ways to die (internet searches for how to commit suicide, looking for guns, pills, etc.)
- Statements about hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness.
- Preoccupation with death.
- Suddenly happier, calmer.
- Loss of interest in things one cares about.
- Visiting or calling people one cares about.
- Making arrangements; setting one's affairs in order.
- Giving things away, such as prized possessions.

A suicidal person urgently needs to see a doctor or mental health professional.

In an emergency, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK