Suicide: The Impact on Believers

SUMMARY

The increasing number of suicides in our nation is extremely disturbing.

In fact, more people are killed by suicide than by automobile accidents. Among young people ages fourteen to twenty-four, it’s the third leading cause of death, and one child out of every sixty-five thousand aged ten to fourteen takes his or her own life. Even our military is affected. More men and women die from suicide than from fighting the opposing forces. Chances are you know of someone who has either thought about committing suicide or has succeeded in doing so. Maybe you have even considered it.

In spite of all the blessings, prosperity, and opportunities we enjoy in this country, many people are suffering from such devastating situations that they decide to end it all by taking their own lives. Depression is usually the root cause, yet despite all the doctors and medication, the suicide rate continues to rise. Countless people are living on the edge of life and death, overwhelmed by despair, hopelessness, and loneliness.

SERMON POINTS

As Christians, we need to be sensitive to the people around us.

If they joke about suicide or threaten to kill themselves, we must take them seriously because they may be in the beginning stages of putting their thoughts into action.

Why do people commit suicide?

First of all, we need to understand the reasons why people choose to take their own lives.

- Commitment to a cause. An obvious example of such a commitment is a suicide bomber who believes he’s doing what pleases God, and as a result, expects to be ushered into paradise.
- Love pact. Sometimes when a couple has been together for many years, and one of them becomes terminally ill, they may decide to end their lives together rather than face the prospect of living without one another.
- Meaningless life. When a person feels there is no purpose in life, he may not desire to live.
- Feelings of hopelessness. If someone can’t see any way a bad situation will ever improve, he might think the only way out is death.
- Physical pain. Those who suffer from prolonged and unbearable pain may decide they can’t take it anymore. They feel like the only way to end the pain is to die.
- Emotional pain. Feelings of betrayal, rejection, and isolation could lead some people to give up on life.
- Vengeance. When a person feels betrayed or rejected by another, he may kill himself in an attempt to punish the other person.

Who is affected by suicide?

- The person. Obviously, the one who kills himself is affected because his life ends.
- The family. Spouses, children, and parents are devastated when someone they love commits suicide. Many times they don’t understand what motivated it and are left wondering if they did anything wrong or could have done something to prevent it.
- The community. The pain of suicide reaches beyond the family to others who might have known the victim.
What is the biblical perspective on suicide?

Since the sixth commandment clearly tells us we are not to commit murder, those who kill themselves have disobeyed the Lord. Although the Bible records seven instances of suicide, it in no way condones it.

- **It’s a form of escape.** The basic reason for suicide is to escape pain or difficulty.
- **It’s an expression of unbelief.** A person who ends his own life doesn't believe God will help him through his problem.
- **It implies that the Lord is not loving or faithful.** Although God's character and promises never change, those who kill themselves are claiming that He wasn't faithful to help them adequately.
- **It’s an expression of ingratitude toward God.** Life is a gift from the Lord, and the one who cuts it short doesn’t appreciate that gift and all the wonderful plans God had for his life.
- **It is an expression of self-hatred.** Anyone who takes his own life shows that he doesn’t like himself.
- **It usurps God’s power.** Only God has the right to determine life and death. When a person kills himself, he’s usurping God's authority. Furthermore, that person misses all that God wanted to do in his life. His purpose for allowing trouble and pain is to purify, correct, and teach—not to destroy. He doesn’t want anyone to run from suffering and hardship, but to stand firm and be trained by it. He even promises believers that He will cause “all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28).
- **It’s an expression of selfishness.** Those who take their own lives are thinking about themselves, not their loved ones who will be left behind to deal with the pain and confusion.
- **It hurts the cause of Christ.** If a believer commits suicide, the unbelieving world will conclude that his God wouldn’t help him.

Is suicide the unpardonable sin?

There is an unforgivable sin, but it’s not suicide. Matthew 12:32 says, “Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.” Since the Holy Spirit is the one who convicts a person of sin, reveals the truth of the gospel, and helps him believe in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, anyone who continually rejects His promptings cannot be saved. That is the unforgivable sin—not suicide. A Christian who kills himself will still go to heaven; however, he will lose eternal rewards because of his action.

Although the pain and suffering of this life are sometimes difficult to bear, trying to escape the situation through suicide is short-sighted thinking. Every believer needs to develop a heavenly, eternal mind-set because one day we will all stand before the Lord to give an account for our lives. That's why we have to fill our minds with God's Word. Without that foundation, we are powerless to handle all that life throws at us.

How can Christians help those who are considering suicide?

Since suicide is so prevalent, we as believers need to know what to say to help those who are considering this option. Remind them of the following truths:

- God knows all about their circumstances, and He’s committed to helping them through it.
- The Lord is willing to walk with them step by step through their pain, disappointment, or loneliness.
- They must invite Jesus into their lives as Lord and Savior. Then He will forgive all their sins and become their friend and partner in life, helping them through the difficult pain they are suffering.

RESPONSE

- What can you do when someone you love is overcome by feelings of meaninglessness?
- Everybody knows somebody who has taken their own life. What should the Christian response be to the survivors?