

INTRODUCTION

Suicide is the #2 killer among teenagers in America today, second only to traffic accidents. Thirty years ago about 1500 young people took their own lives each year. Today that number is 5000. What changes in society do you think have caused this increase?

Most people who attempt suicide feel it is the only solution to their problems. What problems do you think drive most suicide victims to despair and desperation?

SCRIPTURE ON THE ISSUE

The Bible records five suicides. Read the references and identify the reason each person killed himself.

1 Samuel 31:1-6	Saul - Armor Bearer -
2 Samuel 17:23	Ahithophel -
1 Kings 16:15_18	Zimri -
Matthew 27:1-5	Judas -

1. What feeling was common among all five?

2. What conclusions do you draw from the passages below regarding human life?

Genesis 1:26 -

Genesis 1:27 -

Genesis 2:7 -

Genesis 3:15 -

Genesis 9:5,6 -

Deuteronomy 32:39 -

1 Samuel 2:6 -

Psalms 31:14,15 -

3. How would you summarize how God feels about human beings taking life into their own hands?

4. Read 1 Kings 19:1-5. Elijah feared for his life and wanted to die. He felt depressed. What did the Lord do for him to help him overcome his desire to die?

5. Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-27. Why did Paul have reason to be depressed?

6. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-9. Paul had a weighty problem, and he asked God to remove it. What was God's answer to Paul?

DEALING WITH THE ISSUE

7. Discuss the following two views and the arguments used to justify them:

View 1 - "Suicide is a sin against the fifth commandment: 'You shall not murder.' It is an act of defiance against God, telling Him He's doing a lousy job of running your life."

View 2 - "Suicide is not a sin because the victim isn't hurting anyone but himself. Luther's explanation of the fifth commandment says, '... that we do no hurt or harm our neighbor ...' "

8. Murdering another human being is a sin, but it is not an unforgivable sin. The murderer who repents of his sin and believes he has forgiveness through Jesus possesses salvation. Why does the sin of suicide leave the matter of the person's salvation in doubt?
9. Christian suicide victims sometimes convince themselves that there is no hell, or they believe they will be better off in hell than in their present life. How would you respond to a person who has these beliefs?

WATCHFUL EYE AND LISTENING EARS

It is very difficult to know if a person who talks about suicide is seriously contemplating it, or if he is just being dramatic. It is extremely valuable for us to know general signs that indicate a person might be suicidal and also specific critical signs that indicate that action needs to be taken.

General signs:

- constantly depressed
- changes in eating habits
- changes in sleeping habits
- disinterest in everything
- consumption of large amounts of alcohol or drug use
- general feelings of hopelessness

- general feelings of worthlessness
- general feelings of "being stuck," and unable to "get out"

Critical signs:

- puts things "in order" (visits each friend/family member one last time)
- after extended period of depression, now elated (as a result of decision)
- obsessed with death
- does self-destructive things in public (slits wrists, etc.)
- states a date/time for suicide

HELP FROM JESUS

Suicide is physical death, and it could very possibly mean eternal damnation. Our greatest concern for a person who is contemplating suicide or has failed in an attempt is to help him or her recognize what is behind the attempt. Sometimes it is mental disorder. Sometimes it is spiritual disorder. Sometimes it is both. The common thread behind mental and spiritual "disorder" is a feeling of hopelessness and worthlessness.

10. How would you use the passages listed below to restore hope?

Deuteronomy 31:8 -

Hebrews 13:8 -

Romans 8:18 -

Romans 8:26-39 -

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 -

James 1:12 -

1 Corinthians 10:1 -

1 Peter 5:7 -