

Suicide Prevention

Hope When Life Seems Hopeless

I. DEFINITIONS

A. What Are the Forms of Suicide?

Just to hear the word [suicide](#) evokes a myriad of feelings ranging from shock and sadness to bewilderment and [grief](#). The initial response to [suicide](#) is often, "Oh no, why would anyone commit such an impulsive, irreversible act? [Suicide](#) has snuffed out a precious life forever!" Yet in reality, [suicide](#) is many-sided . . . not always instantaneous . . . intentional . . . or even self-inflicted. However, most important is to understand God's heart on life and [death](#)—on your life and [death](#).

[Deut 30:19](#)

- **Suffering Suicide**

- [Suffering suicide](#) is a **deliberate act** of killing oneself in an extreme state of despair.¹

Biblical Example:

Judas hanged himself in remorse after his betrayal of Jesus.

[Matt 27:3,5](#)

- **Successive Suicide²**

- Successive [suicide](#) is the **deliberate act** of slowly killing oneself by prolonged, self-destructive behavior. ("You're killing yourself with your drinking.")
- Successive [suicide](#) usually involves a **deliberate denial** of the dangerous

consequences resulting from self-indulgent behavior.

- Some examples are smoking, alcoholism and misuse of other drugs and prescriptions. Scripture describes the foolish one who brings about his own [death](#) by continuing to indulge in destructive behavior against the advice of others.

Prov 14:12

- **Supported [Suicide](#)**
 - Supported [suicide](#) (also called assisted [suicide](#)) is a **deliberate plan** of killing oneself to avoid a painful or undesirable future and is acted out with the assistance of another person.
 - Supported [suicide](#), though premeditated, is **not self-inflicted**, but executed by someone else.

Biblical Example:

King Saul requested his soldier to kill him with a sword in order to avoid the consequences of his military defeat.

1 Sam 31:4

- **Symbolic [Suicide](#)³**
 - Symbolic [suicide](#) is a deliberate act of killing oneself influenced by a ritualistic custom or a sense of honor that is characterized by excessive identification with another person, family or nation.
 - Some cultural examples are hara-kiri, kamikaze pilots, suttee and [suicide](#) bombers.

Biblical Example:

After King Saul committed [suicide](#), his armor-bearer likewise took his own life.

1 Sam 31:5

- **Spiritual Suicide⁴**
 - Spiritual [suicide](#) is an act of killing oneself by making a deliberate decision to disobey the revealed will of God.
 - Spiritual [suicide](#) results when anyone **disbelieves** the claims of Christ. (In the 19th chapter of Matthew, the rich young ruler failed to receive eternal life because of disbelief.)

Biblical Example:

Adam and Eve willfully chose to disobey God's command and ate from the tree of [knowledge](#). This act resulted in [death](#) to themselves and all their descendants.

Gen 2:16-17

B. What Are the Feelings Related to Suicide?⁵

Although Scripture does not specifically use the word **suicide**, it does describe the spiritual and emotional state of those who committed [suicide](#), as well as those who desired to take their own lives.

- **Fear of torture and [death](#)**—KING SAUL

1 Sam 31:4

- **Fear of being left behind and murdered, or misplaced loyalty**—SAUL'S ARMOR-BEARER

1 Sam 31:5

- **Fear of [revenge](#) for igniting mutiny against David**—AHITHOPHEL

2 Sam 17:23

- **Fear of humiliation**—ABIMELECH (assisted [suicide](#))

[Judg 9:54](#)

- [Revenge](#) **toward oppressors**—SAMSON

[Judg 16:29-30](#)

- **Fear of [revenge](#) and being murdered**—ZIMRI

[1 Kings 16:18-19](#)

- **Severe guilt and remorse for betraying Jesus**—JUDAS

[Matt 27:3-5](#)

- **Fear of severe punishment**—PHILIPPIAN JAILER (suicidal intent)

[Acts 16:27-28](#)

Since [fear](#) is such a powerful catalyst, when you first have thoughts of [suicide](#), take this proverb to heart:

[Prov 29:25](#)

C. What Are the Fables about Suicide?⁶

What you believe about [suicide](#) can be critical. Your thoughts about [suicide](#) will shape your response if you have suicidal feelings. You need [wisdom](#) to discern what is false in these fables. [Wisdom](#) will help you understand and apply God's truth.

[Prov 13:14](#)

Fable:

"[Suicide](#) is the unpardonable [sin](#)."⁷

Fact:

Nowhere in the Bible is [suicide](#) presented as the unpardonable [sin](#). The unpardonable [sin](#) is the unwillingness to yield to the convicting [work](#) of the [Holy Spirit](#), which leads to [salvation](#) through Jesus Christ.

[Mark 3:29](#)

Fable:

"The tendency to commit [suicide](#) is inherited."⁸

Fact:

No evidence exists of a genetic or biological tendency toward [suicide](#). However, [suicide](#) can be a "learned behavior" that is passed down through family environment.

Fable:

"Everyone who commits [suicide](#) is mentally ill."⁹

Fact:

No, not the majority. Of those who commit [suicide](#), 25 percent are mentally ill.

Fable:

"People who talk about killing themselves never do."¹⁰

Fact:

Take any threat of [suicide](#) seriously. Of those who take their own lives, 80 percent have warned someone.

[Prov 18:15](#)

Fable:

"Never talk about [suicide](#) with deeply depressed people—it could give them ideas."¹¹

Fact:

You can assume that most depressed or very anxious persons have given some thought to taking their lives. For a person considering [suicide](#), having someone to talk with can be a powerful preventive.

[Prov 16:21](#)

Fable:

"Christians who commit [suicide](#) lose their [salvation](#)."¹²

Fact:

According to the Word of God, once you have believed in and relied on Christ as your Savior, you have a promised guarantee of eternal life.

[Eph 1:13-14](#)

Fable:

"A deeply committed believer would never commit [suicide](#)."¹³

Fact:

The [hopelessness](#) that can accompany severe [stress](#) can also strain a person's [faith](#). Like the godly prophet Jeremiah, even the most sincere believer can become engulfed in suicidal despair. When he was being tormented and his life was threatened, Jeremiah lamented:

[Jer 20:14-18](#)

Fable:

Once people attempt [suicide](#), they will always be weak and unable to face difficulties in life."¹⁴

Fact:

A suicidal crisis usually lasts only for a brief duration when compared to a person's whole life. Most people learn from their lowest moments. Those who turn to the Lord for [love](#) and [acceptance](#), he rescues from destruction.

[Isa 38:17](#)

Actually we are each born from the seed of Adam—doomed to continue in [sin](#) and destined for [death](#). But we no longer have to be slaves to this self-destructive tendency. In Christ we have a new inheritance and a legacy that provides power over [sin](#) and purchases for us eternal life. (See ***Biblical Counseling Keys*** on *Identity* and the book *Seeing Yourself Through God's Eyes*.)

Rom 8:1-2

CHARACTERISTICS

Three Stages of Potential Suicide¹⁵

#1 Downcast: *Early Stage*

- Dejection
- Change in eating and sleeping habits
- Avoidance of family
- Decline in work or school performance
- Anxiety
- Inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Boredom
- Lack of interest in the future

Ps 43:5

#2 Distressed: *Advanced Stage*

- Depression
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Rapid mood swings
- Physical problems, self injury, anorexia
- Self-pity
- Excessive absences from work or school
- Apathy
- Neglect of personal appearance

Job 30:24

#3 Despairing: *Danger Stage*

- [Hopelessness](#)
- Abusing alcohol/drugs
- Deep remorse
- Isolation or morose behavior
- Previous [suicide](#) attempts or threats of [suicide](#)
- Giving away personal possessions
- Organizing personal affairs; making a will
- Sudden change from [depression](#) to cheerfulness (indicating being at peace with the decision to commit [suicide](#))

[Ps 88:14-15](#)

B. Picture of Painful Thinking

Rarely does a person commit [suicide](#) on [impulse](#). Friends and family often think the loss of their loved one resulted from an isolated moment of despair. Yet [suicide](#) usually occurs after a long process of destructive, deductive thinking.

[Ps 13:2](#)

- **Suicidal Thinking**
 - "There is nothing left in life I care about. It is pointless to go on living."
 - "I can't face the future. The only thing to do is escape."
 - "Things will never change. [Death](#) would be better than this."
 - "My life is completely out of control. I have to get the upper hand."

- "It won't really hurt anyone else. Actually, I'll be doing everyone a favor."
- "I've done all that can be done. There is only one thing left to do."
- "Soon it will be all over, and then I will have peace!"

Those who have lost [hope](#) finally come to the conclusion that [death](#) is the only logical solution to their problems. This is a lie. [Satan](#) is the father of lies and the author of such futile thinking. Ultimately [suicide](#) is a deliberate choice to believe Satan's twisted reasoning that taking your own life is the most reasonable way out.

[John 8:44](#)

Note: If you are experiencing any of these physical problems, be sure to consult your health care professional.

CAUSES

A. The Great Escape¹⁶

[Suicide](#) is the desperate attempt to get out of what seems to be an intolerable situation. It becomes the way of escape from the pain of living.¹⁷

Excessive Loss

- Loss of spouse
- Loss of [employment](#)
- Loss of finances
- Loss of desired goals
- Loss of a romance
- Loss of intact family
- Loss of reputation

- Loss of [friend](#) to [suicide](#)

Social Isolation

- Lack of involvement in social activities
- Lack of [acceptance](#) by family and friends
- Lack of meaningful relationships
- Lack of [relationship](#) with God
- Feeling unloved
- Feeling insignificant
- Feeling abandoned

Critical Illness

- Chronic pain
- Major surgery
- Chronic [depression](#)
- [Terminal illness](#)

Abusive Background

- Sexual abuse
- Physical [abuse](#)
- Mental and [emotional abuse](#)
- Satanic involvement

Psychological Disorder

- Clinical [depression](#)
- Multiple Personality Disorder (Dissociative Identity Disorder)
- Chemical imbalance
- Neurotic attempt to get attention
- Unbalanced desire for [revenge](#)

Excessive Guilt

- Extreme remorse over [sin](#)
- Legalistic religion
- Unnatural sexual deviations
- [Perfectionism](#)
- [Shame](#) of feeling defective
- [Failure](#) to meet unrealistic expectations

If you feel trapped in torment, you must refuse to focus on [suicide](#). The true escape is to see the Lord as your Savior. Release all your pain to the Redeemer—each hurt, each pain, each care—and He will release you.

[Ps 25:15](#)

B. Root Cause

Wrong Belief:

"Life is hopeless. I see no purpose to go on living."

Right Belief:

Since I choose to walk by [faith](#), not by sight or feelings, I'm placing my [hope](#) in the Lord, knowing He has His purpose and plans for my life.

[Jer 29:11](#)

STEPS TO SOLUTION

A. Key Verses to Memorize

[Ps 62:5-6](#)

B. Key Passage to Read and Reread

When you feel that you're drowning in the depths of despair, know that other godly people have felt the same sense of [hopelessness](#). For example, the prophet Jeremiah emotionally "hit bottom," yet he also had the [wisdom](#) to look up to the Lord and find [hope](#). These are his honest words:

[Lam 3:19-24](#)

C. How to Find Hope When You've Lost All Hope

When you are weary . . . when life isn't worth living . . . when you've lost all [hope](#), what do you need to know? You need to know the Burden-bearer—you need to know Jesus. He wants to be the Shepherd of your soul. His compassionate comfort extends to all those who have lost all [hope](#).

[Matt 11:28](#)

When you are weary, how do you receive this rest within your soul? Allow these four truths to set you free:

Seven Scriptural Reasons to Say No to Suicide¹⁹

Reason #1:

[Suicide](#) rejects God's offer of inner peace.²⁰

[Phil 4:6-7](#)

Reason #2:

[Suicide](#) rejects God's sovereignty over the length of your life.

[Ps 139:13,16](#)

Reason #3:

[Suicide](#) rejects God's right to be Lord over your life.

1 Cor 6:19

Reason #4:

Suicide rejects God's commandment not to murder.

Deut 5:17

Reason #5:

Suicide rejects God's ability to heal your hurts.

Jer 17:14

Reason #6:

Suicide rejects God's plan to give you hope.²¹

Jer 29:11

Reason #7:

Suicide rejects God's power already in you to make you godly.

2 Peter 1:3-4

Crisis Card

- When in crisis ***I will pray:***

Ps 31:1-3; pray Ps 31:1-9,14-24.

- When in crisis ***I will recite Scriptures aloud:***

Ps 57:1; also read Ps 27 and 28:1.

- When in crisis ***I will claim God's promises:***

Ps 119:50

- When in crisis ***I will listen to Christian praise music and Scripture songs:***

Ps 30:4-5

- When in crisis ***I will consider how special it is to be a child of God:***

1 John 3:1

- When in crisis ***I will question myself:***
 - "Why do I feel the need to hurt myself?"
 - "What do I think I will accomplish through this?"
 - "According to God, is this the truth or a lie?"
 - "Are my actions and desires reflecting my true identity in Christ or are they coming out of my past experiences?"
 - "What effect would harming myself have on those who care about me?"

Ps 51:6

- When in crisis ***I will make positive affirmations:***
 - "I'm worth being treated with goodness and kindness—I am a child of God."
 - "God loves me and has a purpose for my life. I am also loved by others."
- "Because God has a plan for me, I will treat the body He gave me with kindness and respect."
 - "Even though I can't see the future, I will walk by faith, not by sight."