



*“First seek the counsel of the LORD.”*  
(1 Kings 22:5 NIV)

# Suicide Prevention

## Hope When Life Seems Hopeless

*June Hunt*

“I just want to die. ...”

This aching admission has been spoken too many times—and with tragic results. These five words reveal a soul mired in the depths of despair. All hope is gone ... and all too soon, so is life itself.

No group is exempt from wanting to walk down this dark path of “escape.” Male and female ... young and old ... rich and poor—all are found among these fatal statistics. Yet most people contemplating suicide don’t really want to die—they *just want the pain to stop*. Their burden seems too heavy to bear.

If you’re struggling ... if you’re desperate ... if you’re contemplating taking your life, realize this: The Lord longs to heal your heart and restore your hope. In absolute honesty, go to God about your pain. Say to Him ...

*“I am suffering and in pain.  
Let your saving power protect me, O God.”*  
(Psalm 69:29 GW)

## I. DEFINITIONS

Does life seem impossible? For over a million people each year who die of suicide, the answer is *yes!* And that figure is *more than all the casualties of homicide and war combined!*<sup>1</sup>

Think about this statistic—seriously: On average, one person dies by suicide every 40 seconds somewhere in the world, while up to 20 others are attempting the same act.<sup>2</sup> That’s an extraordinary number of people desperately choosing death!

Have your desires been dashed by the pain of depression and despair? Have your hopes been smashed by hurt and heartache? Have you searched without success for a lasting solution?

Honestly, are you struggling with thoughts of suicide? Have you begun to believe the lie that self-inflicted death would be better than God-given life?

Realize, the Lord looks upon you with tender compassion and genuine concern. He cares about your every need. You can learn how to experience the meaningful life He has planned for you. He has a perfect plan for you ... a plan to free you from the shackles of suicidal thinking ... a plan based on truth, not on lies. Jesus desires to free you from destructive thoughts and choices. He said ...

*“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*  
(John 8:32)

### A. What Are Different Types of Suicide?<sup>3</sup>

Just to hear the word *suicide* evokes a myriad of feelings ranging from shock and sadness to guilt and grief. The initial response after suicide is often: *Oh no! Why would anyone resort to such an irreversible act?*

We feel a sense of tragic loss when we discover that suicide has snuffed out one more life ... forever. To help someone fight the persistent desire to “end it all” (a desire called suicidal ideation), there is much we need to understand about suicide. Since God is our Creator, we need to know God’s heart on life and death—and that means *our own life and death*. Throughout the Bible, life and death are presented in different contexts ... but never does God say we are to pursue death. ...

*“I have set before you life and death ...  
Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.”*  
(Deuteronomy 30:19)

## THE 5 SIDES OF SUICIDE

### • Suffering Suicide

— *Suffering suicide* is a deliberate act of killing oneself while in an extreme state of despair.<sup>4</sup> (In Latin, *sui* means oneself and *cide* means to kill.)

— *Suicidal sufferers* are afflicted with “tunnel vision”—the only option they see is death. They cannot see any hope that their painful life will be any different in the future.

**Biblical Example:** Judas hanged himself in remorse after betraying Jesus.

*“When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse ... Then he went away and hanged himself”* (Matthew 27:3, 5).

- **Supported Suicide**

- *Supported suicide* (also called “assisted suicide”) is a deliberate choice of killing oneself with the assistance of another person.
- *Supported suicide* (sometimes referred to by terms like “euthanasia” or “mercy killing”) is an attempt to avoid a painful or undesirable future.

**Biblical Example:** The evil king Abimelech asked his soldier to kill him with a sword in order to avoid the humiliation of military defeat. This hurried request to his armor-bearer was for “assisted suicide.” *“Draw your sword and kill me, so that they can’t say, ‘A woman killed him.’ So his servant ran him through, and he died”* (Judges 9:54).

- **Symbolic Suicide**

- *Symbolic suicide* is a deliberate act of killing oneself while being influenced by a ritualistic custom or a sense of honor due to an excessive identification with a certain person, family, or nation.
- *Symbolic suicide* is found in different cultures and enacted in different ways. Types of symbolic suicide include hara-kiri, suttee, and copycat suicides.

**Historical Examples:**

- *Hara-kiri* (*hara* means belly and *kiri* means cutting) is the Japanese ritual of “honorably suicide” by ripping open the abdomen with a knife (disembowelment) in response to bringing dishonor on one’s family.
- *Suttee* (also *Sati*) is the Hindu custom of a widow cremating herself on her husband’s funeral pyre to demonstrate her ultimate act of fidelity. This practice can be either voluntary or compulsory, depending on where the widow lives. Today in India, suttee is forbidden by law, although some widows still choose this suicidal act ... and still others are pressured to do so.

**Biblical Example:** After regaining his supernatural strength, Samson—one of Israel’s judges—pushed against the temple’s two central pillars ... knowing he would be killed. But he also knew the collapse would kill the Philistines—the enemy of God and His people.

*“Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, ‘Let me die with the Philistines!’ Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived”* (Judges 16:29–30).

- **Shared Suicide**

- *Shared suicide* is the deliberate act of 2 or more people who kill themselves based on a prior commitment to do so.
- *Suicide pacts* are previously arranged deaths that typically take place at the same time, for the same cause, using the same method.

**Historical Example:** In AD 70 after Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, the Jews were taken captive and many were dispersed to other nations. However, around 960 zealots escaped to Masada, a fortress situated on a massive isolated rock 900 feet high. In AD 73 the Jews of Masada knew their stronghold could not withstand the overpowering Roman siege. Rather than allow their wives and children to be tortured, abused, or sold as slaves, they chose to die of mass suicide.<sup>5</sup>

Knowing that these Jewish zealots were well acquainted with the Psalms, no doubt they could identify with these words. ...

*“The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow”* (Psalm 116:3).

- **Slaughter Suicide**

- *Slaughter suicide* is the deliberate act of killing one or more people while committing suicide simultaneously or immediately following the act of murder.
- *Slaughter suicide* is called “homicidal suicide,” which includes killings committed by groups such as kamikaze pilots and suicide bombers.

**Historical Examples:**

- *Jihad suicide bombers* seek to fulfill the Islamic directive in the Qur’an against all non-Islamic people: “Fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war) ... Fight those who believe not in Allah.” (Surah 9:5, 29) Those who die as jihadists are “guaranteed” their place in paradise (along with 70 of their relatives), bypassing the normally required time in hell, and they are given 72 virgins to enjoy.
- *Kamikaze* (“divine wind”) *pilots* in Japan carried out their suicide missions during World War II by flying their war planes into enemy targets such as ships and ammunition depots. These pilots believed they were guaranteed a place with their ancestors and believed their highest service was to die for the Emperor who was regarded as God. (In 1945, following the Japanese defeat, the Emperor pronounced on radio, “I am no longer to be considered a deity.”)

**Cultural Example:** On Tuesday April 20, 1999—in celebration of Hitler’s birthday—two sadistic high school students in long, black trench coats killed 13 people at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. After the hate-filled massacre—especially targeting Christians—they both committed suicide. Known as cruel bullies, these two killers lived out this Scripture ...

*“The bloodthirsty hate a person of integrity and seek to kill the upright”* (Proverbs 29:10).

## BULLYCID

**QUESTION: “What is ‘bullycide’?”**

**ANSWER:** *Bullycide* refers to a person who dies of suicide because of the torment, fear, and humiliation associated with being bullied. Immature children are notorious for picking on one another. However, today’s bullies are far more cruel than in previous generations because, in addition to bullying their victims at school and in other social settings, home provides no haven of refuge for those being bullied. These bullies use their cell phones and computers to attack their human targets at all hours of the day and night. It’s virtually impossible for victims to find a sense of safety anywhere unless they isolate themselves and abandon the use of phones and computers. With no reprieve from the constant barrage of bullying, these victims feel so belittled and besieged that eventually they ...

- Lose their ability to function normally
- Experience mental and emotional symptoms similar to those who are being terrorized
- Suffer plummeted self-worth and impaired resilience
- Endure such degradation and scorn that some believe suicide is their only viable option
- Could opt for killing their bullies rather than themselves—or even both

Unless some observant, wise person recognizes their symptoms and intervenes in their lives in a powerful, caring way, there is little hope for these strugglers. Parents, educators, and coaches need to take action on behalf of those being bullied. This biblical passage could not be more relevant ...

*“Rescue those being led away to death;  
hold back those staggering toward slaughter.  
If you say, ‘But we knew nothing about this,’  
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?  
Does not he who guards your life know it?  
Will he not repay everyone according  
to what they have done?”*  
(Proverbs 24:11–12)

## **B. What Are Copycat Suicides?**

“Copycats” are people who imitate the behaviors of others ... and sometimes this imitation extends to the realm of suicide. The intent of a copycat is to make the ultimate sacrifice—believing that one’s own self-imposed death will bring honor to another person’s life.

- **Copycat suicides** are intentionally self-inflicted deaths due to the desire to imitate others who have killed themselves. Copycats most often commit suicide following the death of people in 3 categories: friends, family, and the famous (specifically friends/classmates, siblings/parents, heroes/idols).
- **Celebrity suicides** spawn multiple suicide attempts because the copycat feels such a strong sense of identification with the celebrity—even a part of the celebrity’s fame. After the celebrity’s death, copycat suicides tend to occur at specific intervals:
  - Within the first 3 days
  - On the 1 week, 1 month, or 1 year anniversaries
  - On the same day of the month (such as the 4th or 11th)
- **“Cluster suicides”** involve a group of people who so identify with someone’s suicide that they feel compelled to identify with that person in death. These suicides take place together in a group or separately at the same time.
  - They may fantasize hovering over and watching their own funerals.
  - They may idealize their deaths as “honoring” the one whom they are imitating.
  - They may romanticize how much their own suicides would affect others ... imagining the tears of those left behind, their words of guilt and regret, the sorrow of how much they will be missed.

Tragically, copycats fail to realize that the far greater way to honor someone is through life, not death ... by living in a way that honors the memory of the one who has died, not by dying in a way that brings only a brief moment of fame. Be aware of those who are immature and impressionable ... those who don’t have a secure sense of their own identity ... those who lack judgment by fantasizing about and romanticizing suicide. In general, the Bible addresses this basic tragedy. ...

*“Fools die for lack of sense.”*  
(Proverbs 10:21)

## A DANGEROUS GAME

### QUESTION: “Is Russian roulette based on a desire to commit suicide?”

ANSWER: Sometimes *yes*, sometimes *no*. Russian roulette is a life-threatening game in which players spin the cylinder of a revolver loaded with just one bullet before placing the muzzle to their heads and pulling the trigger. Typically, this deadly game is presented as a dare to challenge the bravery of others (who are usually “loaded” with alcohol!). However, a despondent, suicidal person could go through the motions of Russian roulette in a foolish attempt to “tempt fate” ... or “test God.” ...

*“Some became fools through their rebellious ways  
and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.*

*They ... drew near the gates of death.”*

(Psalm 107:17–18)

### C. What Are Some Facts and Fables about Suicide?

Consider him Australia’s *Dr. Death*.

Not only has Dr. Philip Nitschke conducted *how-to-commit suicide* classes, he developed the “peaceful pill”—a drug he claims will serenely usher in death—a drug he designed to be on grocery store shelves. And even more chilling is one of the markets targeted for his death drug: *troubled teens* ... known to be highly impressionable and immature. He states ...

My personal position is that if we believe that there is a right to life, and then we must accept that people have a right to dispose of that life whenever they want. ... And someone needs to provide this knowledge, training, or resource necessary to anyone who wants it, including the depressed, the elderly bereaved, the troubled teen.<sup>6</sup> [*sic*]

What you believe about suicide is critical. Your thoughts about suicide will shape your response. You need wisdom to discern what is false and what is true about self-imposed death. The wisdom of God’s Word will help you know how to have the right response. ...

*“The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life,  
turning a person from the snares of death.”*

(Proverbs 13:14)

**#1 Fable:** “Never talk about suicide with deeply depressed people—it could give them ideas.”<sup>7</sup>

**Fact:** Asking about what someone is feeling doesn’t create suicidal thoughts. You can assume that most depressed or very anxious people have given some thought to taking their lives. Demystify the subject by talking about suicide. Ask questions such as:

- “What do you think about suicide?”
- “Do your friends talk about it?”
- “Do you know anyone who has died of suicide?”
- “Would you ever take your own life?”

For a person considering suicide, having someone to talk with can be a powerful preventive. The Bible says ...

*“The wise in heart are called discerning, and gracious words promote instruction”* (Proverbs 16:21).

**#2 Fable:** “People who talk about killing themselves never do it.”

**Fact:** Of those who took their own lives, approximately 75% gave clues or warnings to friends or family. Take any threat of suicide seriously. Someone who talks about suicide gives others the opportunity to intervene. God’s Word says ...

*“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2).*

**#3 Fable:** “More suicides occur during the winter holidays.”

**Fact:** This is a long-standing myth; however, suicides are actually lowest in December. In general:<sup>8</sup>

- Suicide rates are below average in the winter and above average in the spring, peaking in April.
- For youth, suicide rates are higher in the summer.
- For middle-aged adults age 36 and up, suicide rates rise again in the fall.
- In general, suicide risks decrease as social interactions increase. Becoming aware of the most frequent occurrences of suicide will help you discern when a struggler is at risk.

*“The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out” (Proverbs 18:15).*

**#4 Fable:** “Talking about the method of someone’s suicide with all the gory details and the emotional impact on loved ones will help prevent others from committing suicide.”

**Fact:** Presenting precise details of a suicide, including the heartbreaking reaction of the family, can spark an explosion of copycat suicides. Most people in the media and school officials have learned that suicide can be contagious; therefore, they curtail details of *what* happened and instead focus on *why* it happened as a preventative. “Suicide contagion”<sup>9</sup> refers to suicidal behavior on the part of vulnerable people who can be easily influenced to commit suicide because of a previous attempt or another’s death. The Bible often gives warning about the misuse of our words. ...

*“There is ... a time to be silent and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7).*

**#5 Fable:** “Everyone who commits suicide is mentally ill.”

**Fact:** No, not everyone. Of those who kill themselves, approximately 90% are afflicted with a diagnosable psychiatric disorder.<sup>10</sup> However, look at the life of Elijah ... he was terrified and wanted to die. ...

*“Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. ... [He] prayed that he might die. ‘I have had enough, LORD,’ he said. ‘Take my life’” (1 Kings 19:3–4).*

**#6 Fable:** “Suicide is inherited.”

**Fact:** No one is destined to die of suicide. Just because one family member dies by suicide doesn’t mean that other family members will do the same. However, be aware:

- Based on statistical data, those with depressed family members are 2 times more vulnerable to depression than those who have no family history of depression. Likewise, “50% of manic-depressives have at least one parent with the disorder.”<sup>11</sup> Untreated depression can lead to suicide.
- Suicide can also be a “learned behavior” that is passed down through family environment. For example, the Bible reveals in numerous places that the sins of our fathers can be repeated by successive generations. ...

*“He committed all the sins his father had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God” (1 Kings 15:3).*

**#7 Fable:** “Suicide is the unpardonable sin.”

**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. ...

*“Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin”* (Mark 3:29).

**#8 Fable:** “Christians who take their own lives lose their salvation.”

**Fact:** According to the Word of God, once you have believed in and relied on Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have the promised *guarantee* from the Spirit of God, who is deposited in you, that you will inherit heaven and live eternally in the presence of God. ...

*“You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession”* (Ephesians 1:13–14).

**#9 Fable:** “Deeply committed believers would never want to commit suicide.”

**Fact:** Temporary hopelessness can accompany severe stress and can strain a person’s faith. Likewise, physical illnesses, such as a brain tumor, can change thought processes in the brain, resulting in “suicidal ideation.” Even the most sincere believer can become engulfed in suicidal despair. When the godly prophet Jeremiah was tormented and his life threatened, he lamented ...

*“Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed! ... Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?”* (Jeremiah 20:14–18).

**#10 Fable:** “Once people attempt suicide, they will always be weak and unable to face difficulties in life.”

**Fact:** In the context of a person’s whole life, a true crisis usually lasts for only a brief duration of time. Most people learn valuable life lessons during their lowest moments. God rescues from destruction those who turn to Him for His love and acceptance. This is clearly seen in the life of Isaiah. ...

*“Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back”* (Isaiah 38:17).

### SUICIDAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE

**QUESTION:** “My doctor told me I’m ‘committing suicide’ because of my drinking. Could that be true?”

**ANSWER:** Yes, suicide includes the *deliberate act* of slowly killing oneself by prolonged, self-destructive behavior. Suppose your doctor says, “Your alcoholism is killing you,” yet you still keep drinking. Although you know alcohol is destroying your liver, by definition you would be committing suicide. Regardless of the overindulgence (for example, illegal drugs, prescription medications, and alcohol), Scripture describes those who bring about their own death by continuing in self-destructive behavior. ...

*“Be careful, or your hearts will be  
weighed down with carousing,  
drunkenness and the anxieties of life,  
and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap.”*  
(Luke 21:34)

## D. What Is God's Heart on Suicide

Have your circumstances become so difficult and daunting ... or have you suffered such a substantial life-altering loss that you have come to the conclusion that your life is not worth living? If you've lost all desire to live and all hope of life being good again, your heavenly Father knows what you are feeling. And in the midst of your despair He desires that you call out to Him.

God delights in answering those who take refuge in Him, in showing them the wonders of His great love and in saving them ... even from themselves. ...

*"I call on you, my God, for you will answer me;  
turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.  
Show the wonders of your great love,  
you who save by your right hand  
those who take refuge in you."  
(Psalm 17:6–7)*

God's heart is always that we choose life ... life that derives from His Life living in us and being expressed through us. The death He wants us to choose and experience is death to the destructive power of sin in our lives that we might live the abundant life He has planned for us to live.

### 12 SCRIPTURAL REASONS SUICIDE BREAKS GOD'S HEART<sup>12</sup>

- **Reason #1: Suicide rejects God's offer of inner peace that will guard your heart and mind.**

*"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6–7).

- **Reason #2: Suicide rejects God's sovereignty over the length of your life.**

*"You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ... Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be"* (Psalm 139:13, 16).

- **Reason #3: Suicide rejects God's right to be Lord over your life.**

*"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own"* (1 Corinthians 6:19).

- **Reason #4: Suicide rejects God's commandment to not murder.**

*"You shall not murder"* (Deuteronomy 5:17).

- **Reason #5: Suicide rejects God's ability to heal your hurts.**

*"Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed"* (Jeremiah 17:14).

- **Reason #6: Suicide rejects God's provision of rest and hope.**

*"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him"* (Psalm 62:5).

- **Reason #7: Suicide rejects God’s power already within you to make you godly.**  
*“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:3–4).*
- **Reason #8: Suicide rejects God’s plans for your future.**  
*“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11).*
- **Reason #9: Suicide rejects God’s commitment to work in your circumstances for your good.**  
*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).*
- **Reason #10: Suicide rejects God’s overall goal to conform you to the character of Christ.**  
*“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters” (Romans 8:29).*
- **Reason #11: Suicide rejects God’s right to have you offer yourself up in worship to Him**  
*“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship” (Romans 12:1).*
- **Reason #12: Suicide rejects God’s desire to have you function within the body of Christ.**  
*“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Romans 12:4–5).*

## II. CHARACTERISTICS

He's soared to the heights—and plunged to the depths.

He's known exhilaration—and felt exhaustion. Tony Dungy coached the Indianapolis Colts to victory in Super Bowl XLI, a feat doubly honored because he was the first African-American coach to win football's premier event watched by millions around the world. But Dungy has also experienced loss ... painful loss ... grievous loss ... and not just the kind played on the football field.<sup>13</sup>

The coach's oldest son, Jamie, took his own life. ...

"I just wish he would have made it to 20," said Jamie's sister.<sup>14</sup> Tiara believed that teenage rebellion played a large role in her brother's suicide. Once he began defying parental guidance, he also started veering off the path ... the straight path that had provided stability.

Of course, that guidance would have made much more sense as he matured, but ... Jamie died at age 18. And the parental advice Jamie once sought and heeded became marred by the mixed messages he received from the world. Jamie would have escaped his early death had he heeded this wise counsel ...

*"Listen, my son, accept what I say,  
and the years of your life will be many."  
(Proverbs 4:10)*

### A. What Is the Path of Potential Suicide?

Every sheep needs a shepherd. ... It's a life-and-death matter. When a sheep crosses a stream, if its wool coat becomes saturated with water, the top-heavy sheep topples over. The sheep is said to be "cast down." Without the aid of a shepherd, this sheep literally cannot stand up. Soon the sheep will die.

If you become so heavy-laden that you fall with the weight you are carrying, you too need the Shepherd—you need a strong hand to help you up—for it, too, could be a matter of life or death for you. The psalmist, who clearly understood tragedy and despair, wrote these graphic words ...

*"Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."  
(Psalm 42:11)*

Be aware of the 3 stages of being "cast down."<sup>15</sup>

### 3 STAGES OF POTENTIAL SUICIDE

#### #1 Downcast: Early Stage

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

*"I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall.  
I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me."  
(Lamentations 3:19–20)*

## #2 Distressed: Advanced Stage

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

*“Trouble and distress have come upon me ...  
Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress;  
my eyes grow weak with sorrow,  
my soul and body with grief.”  
(Psalm 119:143; Psalm 31:9)*

## #3 Despairing: Danger Stage

- Hopelessness
- Deep remorse
- Abusing alcohol/drugs/people/possessions  
(30% of suicides involve alcohol.)
- Isolation or morose behavior
- Giving away personal possessions
- Suicidal threats or previous attempts
- Organizing personal affairs: making a will, paying off debts
- Sudden change from depression to cheerfulness  
(being at peace with the decision of suicide)

*“The cords of the grave coiled around me;  
the snares of death confronted me.”  
(2 Samuel 22:6)*

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

## RISK VS. CRISIS

**QUESTION: “What is the difference between a ‘suicide risk’ and a ‘suicide crisis’?”<sup>16</sup>**

**ANSWER:** A “suicide risk” refers to an evaluation to determine the degree to which a person could be suicidal based on a set of factors (for example, age, gender, mental health, family history, previous attempts).

A “suicide crisis” refers to a specific situation where suicide may be imminent for a limited period of time. The 3 primary indications of a *suicide crisis* are: (1) a precipitating event (for example, loss of loved one, career, health), (2) intense emotions (for example, excessive anger, bitterness, rage), (3) changes in behavior (for example, saying good-byes, buying a gun, making a will, withdrawing socially). Those who are in such a crisis typically feel ...

*“No one is concerned for me.  
I have no refuge; no one cares for my life.”  
(Psalm 142:4)*

## B. What Is the Portrait of Painful Thinking?

Rarely does a person choose the act of suicide on an 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 thinking and clouded conclusions are left unchecked. These faulty thoughts lead to a denial of truth and a disconnection with people. A common thought is, *No one understands me, no one feels the way I do.*

Everyone has struggled with discouragement. ... Everyone has wrestled with their thoughts, even God's appointed king, David. ...

*“How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?  
How long will my enemy triumph over me?”  
(Psalm 13:2)*

### SUICIDAL THINKING OF THE SUFFERER

- “There is nothing left in life that I care about. It’s 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.”
- “I don’t amount to anything. I may as well end it all.”
- “My life is completely out of control. I’ll have to get the upper hand.”
- “It won’t really hurt anyone else. Actually, I will 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!”
- “I can’t go on living like this. Life is hopeless.”
- “I’m too depressed to go on. When I’m gone I won’t have to deal with it.”
- “You’ll be sorry when I’m gone.”
- “I need Jesus in my life. I’ll go to heaven and be with Him forever.”
- “I can take a small amount of ‘this’ to see how it feels; then I can add more.”
- “Everyone will understand. I have suffered long enough.”
- “Everyone has given up on me, so I’m giving up on me!”
- “If I continue with this negative behavior, they’ll be glad to see me go.”
- “It made him famous; maybe it’ll make me famous too!”
- “It hurts so much! I am really going to do it ... but please stop me.”
- “If I continue to talk about it, it will not be a surprise and will not hurt them as much.”
- “You say I talk about suicide just for attention. I will show you!”

Those who have lost hope finally come to the conclusion that death is the only logical solution to their problems. But this is a lie. *Suicide is never the answer—getting help is the answer.* God knows the pressure you are under. Let that pressure press you closer to the Shepherd of your soul. You, and all other sufferers, can verbally claim these words ...

*“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed;  
perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned;  
struck down, but not destroyed.”*  
(2 Corinthians 4:8–9)

## HELPING A SUICIDAL PARENT

### **QUESTION: “What could help a parent reject suicide?”**

**ANSWER:** Most parents take seriously the role of “provider/protector” for their children. Therefore, this logical series of questions could help bring a suicidal parent out of the emotional abyss.

- “What ages are your children?”
- “Do you love your children?”
- “Do you *really* love your children?”
- “How *much* do you love them?”
- “Tell me what you love about your children.”
- “Do you care about their hearts?”
- “How would they feel if you were gone?”
- “Do you really want your children to grow up without a father/mother?”
- “How do you imagine your children would feel if you weren’t there for their significant events—graduations, weddings, birth of grandchildren?”
- “Do you really want your children to feel abandoned for the rest of their lives?”
- “While suicide seems the way to get rid of your pain, it actually transfers your pain to those who love you. So ... would you be willing to let your fatherly/motherly love protect your children from that pain?”

Realize that those who die by suicide weigh their loved ones down with the heaviest burden of pain possible, leaving them wounded and scarred ... with the possibility of becoming bitter and deeply discouraged. The Bible says ...

*“Do not embitter your children,  
or they will become discouraged.”*  
(Colossians 3:21)

Read this verse every day, pray for God’s healing, and focus your mind on the reality that ...

*“Children’s children are a crown to the aged,  
and parents are the pride of their children.”*  
(Proverbs 17:6)

### C. What Is the Profile of Suicidal Males and Females?

Within China's "one child per family" law, the vast number of aborted babies are female. China is one of only two nations where more women commit suicide than men.<sup>17</sup> A culture that discriminates and devalues women has, without question, contributed to the unusually high number of female suicide deaths in China. For centuries, traditional Chinese culture has elevated the status of men at the expense of women. Even today, while some of these prejudices are beginning to pass away, the unnaturally high ratio of male to female births indicates a preference for male children as well as the continuing practice of sex-selective abortion.

In China, many well-educated women with doctorate degrees find it difficult to find a job in China's male-centric marketplace. Likewise, not only are women considered inferior to men, but also a high percentage of wives find themselves victims of domestic violence.<sup>18</sup>

Tendencies for males and females generally differ when it comes to suicide.<sup>19</sup>

<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attempt suicide 3 times less often</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attempt suicide 3 times more often</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nearly 4 times more likely to die by suicide</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More likely to experience nonfatal suicide attempts</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tend to use more violent means (guns, hanging, driving off bridges, jumping off buildings)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tend to use less violent means (overdose of pills, carbon monoxide, poison, cutting)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 16% of U.S. suicide deaths occur in people age 65 and older (Retired men have the highest rate.)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As a woman has more children, her risk of suicide decreases.<sup>20</sup> (Frequent stressors that contribute to suicide are losses and crises in social and family relationships.<sup>21</sup>)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seek help less often</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seek help more often</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experience suicide as the 7th leading cause of death</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experience suicide as the 16th leading cause of death</li></ul>

Those of both genders who choose death over life have given up hope of being delivered from their despair. If only they knew the truth that King David knew. ...

*“The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;  
he delivers them from all their troubles. ...  
The LORD will rescue his servants;  
no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.”*  
(Psalm 34:17, 22)

## HELPING A SUICIDAL HUSBAND

### **QUESTION: “What could help a husband reject suicide?”**

**ANSWER:** One approach is to encourage him to think through the logical, probable impact of suicide on his wife by asking him a progression of questions.

- “Have you thought about how you would take your life?”  
—“I’d probably shoot myself.”
- “Then what would happen?”  
—“I guess someone would find me.”
- “Then what?”  
—“They’d probably call the police.”
- “Then what?”  
—“The police would contact my wife.”
- “Then what would happen?”  
—“My wife would go to pieces!”
- “So, why haven’t you done this before now?”  
—“I don’t want my wife to go to pieces. I don’t want to devastate her.”

If you can get the struggler to reason through the devastating repercussion on his wife by using this series of questions, then you are well on your way to helping him save his life. You are in a position to help him find a real solution to his painful situation. You could also compassionately share these verses ...

*“Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.  
He who loves his wife loves himself. ...  
Each one of you also must love his wife  
as he loves himself.”  
(Ephesians 5:28, 33)*

The husband doesn’t have the right to destroy what is considered one body in God’s eyes. ...

*“They are no longer two, but one flesh.  
Therefore what God has joined together,  
let no one separate.”  
(Matthew 19:6)*

## **D. What Characterizes Suicidal Teens?**

Every creation of God is unique—a one-of-a-kind masterpiece. That’s one reason most people are shocked to learn that suicide is the 6th leading cause of death among children who are 5–14 years old.

Tragically, suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for 15–24-year-olds.<sup>22</sup> Teenagers who are emotionally vulnerable to suicide react excessively to mild stress and react longer than usual after the stress has lessened. They feel more deeply than other teens and then hold on to those feelings for a longer period of time. This means any negative thoughts of low self-worth or self-hatred become an explosive powder keg for destructive behavior.

The hope and help God offers can be found in 2 Samuel 22:7 ... “*In my distress I called to the LORD; I called out to my God. From his temple he heard my woe; my cry came to his ears.*”

The following list characterizes teens who are more vulnerable to suicide than the average teen, although many teens are vulnerable to fleeting thoughts of suicide. ...

- **Behaviors**

- *Impulsive* (using drugs or alcohol, acting out sexually, going on gambling or spending sprees, binge eating or not eating, engaging in other risk-taking behaviors on a dare or without weighing the consequences)
- *Self-injury* (transferring unmanageable emotional pain into manageable physical pain, using physical pain to displace emotional numbness, or incurring bodily injury to cause the brain to naturally release mood-elevating endorphins in order to feel better)

- **Emotions**

- *Moody* (switching rapidly between feeling angry, sad, calm, fearful, or happy with little provocation)
- *Reactive* (having little control over lengthy, extreme emotional responses of anger, agitation, frustration, sadness, hopelessness, or happiness)

- **Relationships**

- *Unpredictable* (switching from being loving to loathsome, smothering to snubbing, clinging to caustic, distant to demanding, hospitable to hostile, responsive to rejecting, and sensitive to stoic)
- *Unstable* (continually feeling misunderstood, emotionally empty, needlessly anxious, and either fearful of abandonment or scared of enmeshment)

- **Thoughts**

- *Illogical* (forming beliefs about God, people, and situations not based on reality; the imagined fear of being alone, unloved, or abandoned; and dissociating under extreme stress)
- *Distrustful* (questioning the truthfulness of others, espousing black-and-white thinking, expecting to be betrayed, deserted, and left all alone)

- **Spirituality**

- *Legalistic* (trying to earn God’s approval, viewing Him as uninvolved and removed emotionally, spiritually, and physically)
- *Conflicted* (perceiving God as either friend or foe, judge or just, vacillating between loving Him and fearing Him or accepting Him and rejecting Him)

- **Self**

- *Poor Self-image* (having no clear sense of self apart from others, taking on the values and characteristics of companions, emulating a peer group, comparing all aspects of self to others, and being highly sensitive to others)
- *Low Self-esteem* (feeling lost and lonely when not around others; having self-doubt and self-hatred; being indecisive and insecure; unable to identify or express personal feelings, wants, desires, goals, likes, and dislikes, but highly aware of others feelings, etc.)

Vulnerable adolescents are highly emotional, and unless they learn to manage their impulsive overreactions, they are likely to be controlled by them. The challenge these adolescents face is formidable ... but definitely not impossible.

The One who created every part of them longs for them to totally rely on Him ... so that He can pour His peace into them. Only the God of hope can fill the heart with such inner peace that it will naturally overflow with lasting hope. The Bible says to us all ...

*“May the God of hope fill you with all joy  
and peace as you trust in him,  
so that you may overflow with hope  
by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*  
(Romans 15:13)

### SELF-INJURY AND SUICIDE

**QUESTION: “Are ‘cutters’—those who intentionally and repeatedly cut themselves—trying to commit suicide?”**

**ANSWER:** Usually not. Typically, those who practice repeated self-harming behaviors—cutting, burning, biting, scratching, reopening barely healed wounds, etc.—have no intention of dying. Instead, they are seeking relief from their overwhelming emotional pain. They temporarily feel a release of tension and/or shame when they self-injure.

- Many strugglers engage in self-harm for additional reasons, such as to self-punish, to stop dissociation (DID), to receive special attention, or to experience euphoria when endorphins are released during self-injury.
- Strugglers who harm themselves *may become suicidal if the self-injury* no longer provides short-term relief from their pain. Since self-injury can be a prelude to suicide, a professional should determine the degree of risk.

These strugglers need to know on a very deep level that they don’t have to shed their blood to relieve their emotional pain ... because Jesus has already given his life for them. The Bible says ...

*“You were redeemed ...  
with the precious blood of Christ,  
a lamb without blemish or defect.”*  
(1 Peter 1:18–19)

### III. CAUSES

Anger ... sadness ... despair ... grief ...

Of all the emotions associated with suicide, *hopelessness* is the most predominant—the painful feeling that signals for far too many that *it's time to give up*. To those who have lost hope, the faulty assumptions are: My future holds no promise. ... My wrongs won't be forgiven. ... My dreams won't come true. ... So goes the fatalistic thinking of the hopeless.

But God has a message to those who feel so miserable: “Put your hope in Me, the One who is sovereign over all of your future ... the One who can forgive your mistakes ... the One who has a purpose and a plan for you.” As long as there is still breath in your body, there is still time for God to dramatically turn your life around. The Bible says ...

*“Anyone who is among the living has hope.”*  
(Ecclesiastes 9:4)

#### A. Who Is Most Vulnerable to Suicide?

It's a grim statistic ... that should move every one of us into action when we hear someone seriously alluding to suicide. According to the World Health Organization, more than 800,000 people around the world die by suicide daily. And in the United States alone more than 39,000 people take their own lives yearly.<sup>23</sup> While these statistics are staggering, there are many more reported suicide attempts.

Actually, suicide is a secondary response, meaning suicide is a behavior that is a response to a deeper problem. Therefore, we need to be aware of how to help suicidal people handle their deeper problems. Realize ... one day God may call on you to step in and stop a person on the verge of suicide. ...

*“Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. ... Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more.”*  
(1 Thessalonians 4:9–10)

- Suicide attempts are more likely within the 1st year after an unsuccessful attempt.<sup>24</sup>
- Suicide rates are higher in sparsely populated areas.<sup>25</sup>
- Suicide rates are higher among those who are single, separated, divorced, or widowed.<sup>26</sup>
- Suicide rates are highest among white men over 75 years of age.<sup>27</sup>
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for people 15 to 29 years of age.<sup>28</sup>
- Suicide occurs more often among nonreligious people than among those who have a strong belief in God.<sup>29</sup>

## FEWER SUICIDES AMONG CHRISTIANS

### **QUESTION: “Why are incidents of suicide so much lower for those who are committed to Christ?”**

**ANSWER:** Those who hold to Christian ethics and a biblical worldview and who are connected to and involved with traditional Christian churches have ...

- A social and spiritual faith-based support system
- A more direct way to cope with high stress
- A greater sense of purpose in life
- A positive hope for the future
- A conviction that suicide is wrong
- A belief that God is at work in their lives even in the midst of their trials

One reason for the lower numbers of suicides is that those in the family of God are told to ...

*“Encourage one another and build each other up.”*  
(1 Thessalonians 5:11)

### **B. What Do Sufferers Want to Escape?**

The most predominant method of suicide in the United States is the use of firearms. Among Asian countries, poisoning by pesticides is prevalent, along with the emergence of a new method called “charcoal-burning.” (Charcoal is burned in a sealed-off, confined area, and victims die from carbon monoxide poisoning.) Ingesting drugs is common in Nordic countries and in the United Kingdom. The most often practiced form of suicide worldwide, however, is hanging.<sup>30</sup>

How staggering to grasp this truth: For all the multiple millions who have ever taken their lives, not once has suicide been the will of God. *Not once!* God longs to help, to heal, and to make whole again the broken lives and shattered hearts. The desire of the Lord is to restore lives through His love and give comfort and compassion. Every struggler can pray these words from the Psalms ...

*“May your unfailing love be my comfort ...  
Let your compassion come to me that I may live.”*  
(Psalm 119:76–77)

Shooting, hanging, and drug overdoses have traditionally been the most common methods of suicide. Now a dangerous new trend has emerged that also *puts others at risk*. Producing and inhaling the highly poisonous hydrogen sulfide gas, made from a combination of household products, can endanger people throughout an entire building.<sup>31</sup>

Such desperate acts raise the question, “Why?” What could possibly lead people to endanger the lives of others? What are they so determined to escape? Suicide is a desperate attempt to get out of what seems to be an intolerable situation. It appears to be a way of escape from the pain of living.<sup>32</sup> But the Bible says ...

*“Our God is a God who saves;  
from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death.”*  
(Psalm 68:20)

## THE GREAT ESCAPE

The following is an acrostic of the word ESCAPE.

### E—EXCESSIVE LOSS

- Loss of employment
- Loss of finances
- Loss of goals
- Loss of intact family
- Loss of loved one to suicide
- Loss of reputation
- Loss of romantic love
- Loss of spouse

### S—SOCIAL ISOLATION

- Feeling abandoned
- Feeling insignificant
- Feeling unloved
- Feeling unnecessary
- Feeling unaccepted by family
- Feeling uninvolved in social activities
- Feeling unimportant to others
- Feeling disconnected from God

### C—CRITICAL ILLNESS/IMPAIRMENT

- Chronic pain
- Chronic depression
- Debilitating illness
- Major surgery
- Physical disability
- Terminal illness

### A—ABUSIVE BACKGROUND

- Alcohol/drug abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Mental abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Spiritual abuse
- Satanic/ritual abuse

## P—PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS\*

Over 90% of people who die by suicide have a mental disorder.<sup>33</sup>

Untreated depression can significantly increase the risk for suicide.

- Chemical imbalance
  - Postpartum Depression
  - Substance-Induced Psychotic Disorder
- Clinical depression
  - Unipolar Depression
  - Bipolar Depression
- Dissociative disorders
  - Dissociative Identity Disorder (Multiple Personality Disorder)
  - Amnesia disorders
- Anxiety disorders
  - Panic disorders
  - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Neurosis (mental and emotional instability without hallucinations or delusions)
  - Borderline Personality Disorder
  - Eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia)
- Psychosis (break with reality with hallucinations and/or delusions)
  - Schizophrenia
  - Delusional disorders

\*A disorder is a psychological condition whereby normal activities of daily living are impaired.

## E—EXCESSIVE GUILT

- Extreme remorse over sin
- Failure to meet unrealistic expectations
- Legalistic religion
- Perfectionism (performance-based acceptance)
- Shame or feeling defective
- Unnatural sexual deviations

If you feel trapped in torment, you must refuse to focus on suicide. Your true escape is to see the Lord as your Savior. As you release all of your pain to the Redeemer—each hurt, each pain, each care—He will, in turn, release you from being entrapped in suicidal desires. ...

*“My eyes are ever on the LORD,  
for only he will release my feet from the snare.”  
(Psalm 25:15)*

## SUICIDE AND MUSIC

**QUESTION: “What is the influence of music on those who are suicidal?”**

**ANSWER:** One of the most powerful influences in the lives of young people is music. Typically, they will hear a popular song played thousands of times—heard both consciously and subconsciously. Throughout the years, popular lyrics have highlighted themes of love, romance, and rejection. But today, the lyrics have expanded beyond a loss of love to a loss of *life*, where the very act of suicide is romanticized.

- One early example is the theme song titled “Suicide is Painless” from the hit movie and TV series *M\*A\*S\*H*, which is now in worldwide syndication.
- Many young, impressionable strugglers have been highly influenced by blatant suicidal messages sung by more sensationalistic musicians.

The Bible warns us about listening to wrong messages. ...

*“Nothing in their mouths is truthful.  
Destruction comes from their hearts.  
Their throats are open graves.  
They flatter with their tongues.”*  
(Psalm 5:9 GW)

### C. How Does Fear Relate to Suicide?

When someone we know has been suicidal, we typically feel a strong sense of sadness. In fact, our feelings can run the gamut of emotions from frustration to fear ... from hurt to helplessness. The emotional impact can be overwhelming.

Likewise, those who contemplate suicide also experience different types of emotions prior to their attempts. Although Scripture does not specifically use the word *suicide*, it does describe the emotional state of those who choose suicide.

Most suicides are caused by a psychiatric disorder—a physical condition in the brain—but other causes can be based on severely stressful situations. While emotions vary, a common contributor to a “suicidal crisis” is a sense of overwhelming fear of a situation—a dreaded expectation of impending doom. Those who feel such emotions today can easily identify with these words from Scripture ...

*“Fear and trembling have beset me;  
horror has overwhelmed me.”*  
(Psalm 55:5)

The Bible describes many people so overcome with fear that they resort to suicide. These suicidal scenarios reveal ...

- **Fear of extreme pain, abuse, or torture**

**Example:** King Saul, was afraid of torture following his military defeat.

*“Saul said to his armor-bearer, ‘Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and abuse me.’ But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it”* (1 Chronicles 10:4).

- **Fear of being left behind**

**Example:** King Saul’s armor-bearer was terrified following the death of his leader.

*“When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died”* (1 Chronicles 10:5).

- **Fear of repercussions**

**Example:** Ahithophel had ignited mutiny against David.

*“When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed ... He put his house in order and then hanged himself”* (2 Samuel 17:23).

- **Fear of humiliation**

**Example:** King Abimelech was afraid that a mere woman would kill him.

*“Draw your sword and kill me, so that they can’t say, ‘A woman killed him.’” So his servant ran him through, and he died” (Judges 9:54).*

- **Fear of retaliation and murder**

**Example:** Zimri had committed many evils.

*“When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he ... set the palace on fire around him. So he died, because of the sins he had committed, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD” (1 Kings 16:18–19).*

- **Fear of severe punishment**

**Example:** The Philippian jailer, thinking he had failed at his job, feared he would be killed.

*“The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, ‘Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!’” (Acts 16:27–28).*

Since fear is a powerful catalyst, when you first have thoughts of suicide, take this proverb to heart ...

*“Fear of man will prove to be a snare,  
but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.”  
(Proverbs 29:25)*

## D. What Is the Root Cause of Suicidal Thinking?

Life seems dark ... hopeless ... purposeless ... for suicidal strugglers. But the Lord plans for each person to experience His light of life. God created everyone with an inner need to feel significant ... yet the desire to live slowly burns out within a heart that no longer sees a reason to live. As the candle of hope is extinguished, that inner sense of purpose is snuffed out by overwhelming despair. One day, however, you too can say what the psalmist said to God. ...

*“You have delivered me from death  
and my feet from stumbling,  
that I may walk before God in the light of life.”  
(Psalm 56:13)*

### 3 GOD-GIVEN INNER NEEDS

In reality, we have all been created with three God-given inner needs: the needs for love, significance, and security.<sup>34</sup>

- **Love**—to know that someone is unconditionally committed to our best interest

*“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12).*

- **Significance**—to know that our lives have meaning and purpose

*“I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me” (Psalm 57:2 ESV).*

- **Security**—to feel accepted and a sense of belonging

*“Whoever fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge”  
(Proverbs 14:26).*

## THE ULTIMATE NEED-MEETER

**Why did God give us these deep inner needs, knowing that people fail people and self-effort fails us as well?**

God gave us these inner needs so that we would come to know Him as our Need-Meeter. Our needs are designed by God to draw us into a deeper dependence on Christ. God did not create any person or position or any amount of power or possessions to meet the deepest needs in our lives. If a person or thing *could* meet all our needs, we wouldn't need God! The Lord will use circumstances and bring positive people into our lives as an extension of His care and compassion, but ultimately only God can satisfy all the needs of our hearts. The Bible says ...

*“The LORD will guide you always;  
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land  
and will strengthen your frame.  
You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.”*  
(Isaiah 58:11)

The apostle Paul revealed this truth by first asking ... *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”* and then by answering his own question in saying it is *“... Jesus Christ our Lord!”* (Romans 7:24–25).

All along, the Lord planned to meet our deepest needs for ...

- **Love**—*“I [the Lord] have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness”* (Jeremiah 31:3).
- **Significance**—*“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’”* (Jeremiah 29:11).
- **Security**—*“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged”* (Deuteronomy 31:8).

The truth is that our God-given needs for love, significance, and security ... can be legitimately met ... in Christ Jesus! Philippians 4:19 makes it plain ... *“My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”*

### • **WRONG BELIEF:**

*“I feel like my life is hopeless—I just want to die. I see no purpose in living.”*

### **RIGHT BELIEF:**

*“I’m choosing to walk by faith, not by sight. Instead of letting my feelings control me, I’m letting Christ control me. I’m placing my hope in the Lord, knowing He has a plan and purpose for my life.”*

*“The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands”* (Psalm 138:8 ESV).

## SPIRITUAL SUICIDE

### **QUESTION: “Is it possible to commit ‘spiritual’ suicide?”**

**ANSWER:** Yes. Spiritual suicide is an act of killing any possibility of having a life-giving relationship with God by making a continuing deliberate decision to disobey the revealed will of God throughout life and even at one’s death.

- In the Old Testament, the prophet Ezekiel boldly proclaimed the consequences of rejecting God’s grace, but also provided hope for a change in direction. ...

*“The one who sins is the one who will die. ... But if a wicked person turns away from all the sins they have committed and keeps all my decrees ... that person will surely live; they will not die. ... But if a righteous person turns from their righteousness ... will they live? ... Because of the unfaithfulness they are guilty of ... they will die”* (Ezekiel 18:20–24).

- In the New Testament, Jesus confronted the self-righteous Pharisees with the cost of unbelief in Himself as God’s Son and Messiah. ...

*“‘You do not know me or my Father’ ... ‘If you knew me, you would know my Father also.’ ... ‘I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come’”* (John 8:19, 21).

## **E. What Is the Source of Hope When You’ve Lost All Hope?**

In the life and death battle for every person on earth, Satan criticizes while Jesus calls. Satan criticizes to dash hope and to destroy, while Jesus calls to restore hope and to heal.

Jesus calls Himself *“the good shepherd,”* compassionately nurturing His sheep and sacrificing for them, even to the point of laying down His own life on their behalf. Jesus describes Satan as *“the thief,”* whose only concern is killing, stealing, and destroying. Jesus said ... *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy ... I am the good shepherd ... and I lay down my life for the sheep”* (John 10:10, 14–15).

When you are weary ... when it seems 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 who need rest and to all those who have lost all hope. Jesus said ...

*“Come to me,  
all you who are weary and burdened,  
and I will give you rest.”*  
(Matthew 11:28)

## 4 POINTS OF GOD'S PLAN

### #1 God's Purpose for You ... is *Salvation*.

- What was God's motivation in sending Jesus Christ to earth?  
To express His love for you by saving you! The Bible says ...  
*"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him"* (John 3:16–17).
- What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth?  
To forgive your sins, to empower you to have victory over sin, and to enable you to live a fulfilled life! Jesus said ...  
*"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it to more abundantly"* (John 10:10).

### #2 Your Problem ... is *Sin*.

- What exactly is sin?  
Sin is living independently of God's standard—knowing what is right, but choosing what is wrong. The Bible says ...  
*"If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them"* (James 4:17).
- What is the major consequence of sin?  
Spiritual death, eternal separation from God. Scripture states ...  
*"Your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God ... For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23).

### #3 God's Provision for You ... is the *Savior*.

- Can anything remove the penalty for sin?  
Yes! Jesus died on the cross to personally pay the penalty for your sins. The Bible says ...  
*"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).
- What is the solution to being separated from God?  
Belief in (entrusting your life to) Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father. Jesus says ...  
*"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ... Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved"* (John 14:6; Acts 16:31).

### #4 Your Part ... is *Surrender*.

- Give Christ control of your life—entrusting yourself to Him. ...  
*"Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross [die to your own self-rule] and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?'"* (Matthew 16:24–26).
- Place your faith in (rely on) Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and reject your "good works" as a means of earning God's approval. ...  
*"It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8–9).

The moment you choose to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior—entrusting your life to Him—He comes to live inside you. Then He gives you His power to live the fulfilled life God has planned for you. If you want to be fully forgiven by God and become the person God created you to be, you can tell Him in a simple, heartfelt prayer like this:

**PRAYER OF SALVATION**

“God, I want a real relationship with You.  
I admit that many times I’ve chosen to go  
my own way instead of Your way.  
Please forgive me for my sins.  
Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross  
to pay the penalty for my sins.  
Come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior.  
Change me from the inside out and make me  
the person You created me to be.  
In Your holy name I pray. Amen.”

**WHAT CAN YOU NOW EXPECT?**

If you sincerely prayed this prayer, look at what God says about you! ...

*“Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.”*  
(Isaiah 40:31)

## IV. STEPS TO SOLUTION

The intense battle being waged for your mind, body, soul, and spirit extends beyond a distinct line in the sand drawn between two camps. One side fights for life ... bringing hope to the hopeless and engaging every resource available toward suicide prevention. The other side fights for death ... enticing, even assisting, people in taking their own lives and falsely promising both a peaceful exit and a peaceful eternity.

The International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) is on one side of the camp, and Dignitas, a Swiss assisted suicide clinic, is on the other. The clinic's founder, Ludwig Minelli, describes suicide as a "very good possibility to escape."<sup>35</sup>

When you line up your thinking with God's thinking, however, you will "escape" a wrong mind-set that would keep you in bondage. Then you can say with the psalmist ...

*"You, LORD, have delivered me from death,  
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling."  
(Psalm 116:8)*

### A. Key Verses to Memorize

Those struggling with life-threatening thoughts do not feel connected to others. They feel all alone—even alone in the midst of a crowd.

If you are now a struggler, these feelings are indeed painful, but they don't reflect God's hope for your heart. Repeat the truth of His hope every day—morning, noon, and night!

*"Yes, my soul, find rest in God;  
my hope comes from him.  
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;  
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken."  
(Psalm 62:5–6)*

### B. Key Passage to Read

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.

This passage is a step-by-step plan. ...

#### THE REMEDY TO RESTORE YOUR HOPE LAMENTATIONS 3:19–24

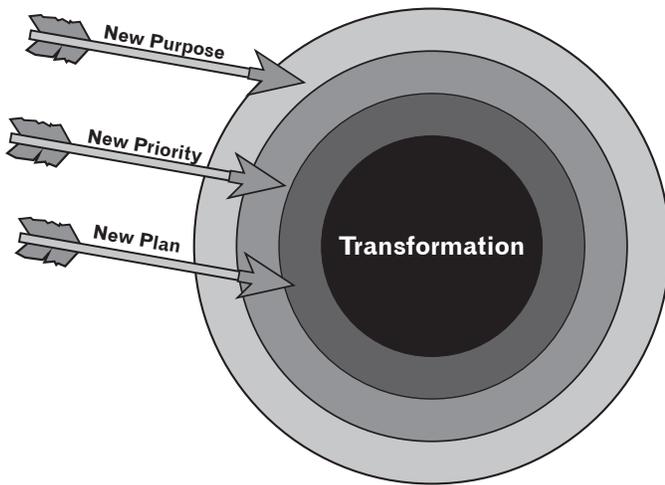
- Remember the facts of your affliction. .... v. 19  
*"I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall."*
- Remember the feelings of your pain. .... v. 20  
*"I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me."*

- Recall the times when you had hope. .... v. 21  
*“Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope.”*
- Review the reward of God’s love. .... v. 22  
*“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.”*
- Recite the fact of God’s faithfulness. .... v. 23  
*“They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”*
- Rest in His fullness—He is your hope. .... v. 24  
*“I say to myself, ‘The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.’”*

When Jeremiah’s thoughts led him to the deep, dark bowels of despair, he made a conscious choice to focus his mind on the love, compassion, faithfulness, and sufficiency of God. Therefore, he waited ... he rested ... in Him. The same choice is available to you today.

### C. How to Have a Transformed Life

#### REACHING THE TARGET: TRANSFORMATION!



**THE FREEDOM FORMULA**  
**A New Purpose**  
 + **A New Priority**  
 + **A New Plan**  
 —————  
**A Transformed Life**

**Target #1—A New Purpose:** God’s purpose for me is to be conformed to the character of Christ.

*“Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29).*

—“I’ll do whatever it takes to be conformed to the character of Christ.”

**Target #2—A New Priority:** God’s priority for me is to change my thinking.

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).*

—“I’ll do whatever it takes to line up my thinking with God’s thinking.”

**Target #3—A New Plan:** God’s plan for me is to rely on Christ’s strength, not my strength, to be all He created me to be.

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13 NKJV).*

—“I’ll do whatever it takes to fulfill His plan in His strength.”

## MY PERSONALIZED PLAN

I will equip myself ahead of time by following and keeping this plan with me at all times and giving a copy to trusted friends and family members.

When I first begin to feel my heart sinking, I will reach out for my lifeline! ...

*“Guard my life and rescue me;  
do not let me be put to shame,  
for I take refuge in you.”*  
(Psalm 25:20)

**When in crisis, I will focus** on God. ...

- I will pray:

*“In you, LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me”*  
(Psalm 31:1–3; pray verses 1–9, 14–24).

- I will recite Scriptures aloud:

*“Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed”* (Psalm 57:1; also read Psalm 27 and 28).

- I will claim God’s promises:

*“My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life”* (Psalm 119:50).

- I will consider how special it is to be a child of God:

*“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”* (1 John 3:1).

**When in crisis, I will listen** to Christian praise music and Scripture songs. ...

*“Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people; praise his holy name. ... Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning”* (Psalm 30:4–5).

- I will listen to Christian music rather than to heavy metal, acid rock, rap, hip hop, or sad, depressing music.
- I will focus on the words and their meaning for me as someone seeking to live a victorious life in Christ.
- I will memorize the words and sing them out loud with a heart of praise.
- I will sing unto the Lord and think about His great love for me and His power operating in my life to change and transform me into the likeness of Christ.

**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 what I am telling myself 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?”

*“Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place”* (Psalm 51:6).

**When in crisis, I will make** positive affirmations. ...

- “My life is worth living because God’s Word assures me that I am His child.”
- “God loves me and has a purpose for my life.”
- “Because God has a plan for me, I will treat the body He gave me with respect.”
- “Since I can’t see the future, I will walk by faith and focus my attention on the trustworthiness of God and His Word.”

*“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things”* (Philippians 4:8).

**When in crisis, I will review** encouraging words. ...

- I will read aloud positive letters and notes from friends and family.
- I will review positive thoughts of why it’s worth it to heal.
- I will recall those who believe in me and in my growth.
- I will remember what others have said about why there is hope for me.
- I will rehearse God’s promise ...

*“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged”* (Deuteronomy 31:8).

**When in crisis, I will not ...**

- Act on impulse
- Do any harmful act or anything even potentially harmful to myself, to others, or to property
- Drive my automobile if there is a possibility of my driving recklessly
- Act rashly

*“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV).

**When in doubt as to whether an action is harmful, I will ask** myself ...

- “Would God approve of this?”
- “Would the people I love approve of this?”
- “Would the people who care about me approve of this?”

If the answer is *no*, then I must not do it! If I would hurt innocent people whom I care about, then I must not do it! No rationalizations, no excuses ... just do not do it!

*“You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised”* (Hebrews 10:36).

**When in crisis, I will ...**

- Make a list of names and phone numbers of people I can call for help.
- Make copies of my list and put them in strategic places (bedside table, medicine cabinet, file cabinet, desk drawer, car).
- Give my list to several caring people.
- After going through the previous steps—if I am still in a crisis—I will reach out and call others who will be helpful and truthful. (They can help me regain perspective.) I will continue to go down my call list until I have reached someone.
- State directly, “I am calling because I am in an emotional crisis.” I will honestly discuss the feelings and events that led to the crisis and will explore possible solutions.
- Continue to make phone calls, including repetitions, until the crisis is resolved, no matter what time of day or night.

Friend: \_\_\_\_\_

Relative: \_\_\_\_\_

Friend: \_\_\_\_\_

Relative: \_\_\_\_\_

Friend: \_\_\_\_\_

Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Crisis Hot Line: \_\_\_\_\_

Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) \_\_\_\_\_

*“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:  
If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.  
But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.”  
(Ecclesiastes 4:9–10)*

**If still in crisis after completing these steps ...**

- I will ensure my physical and emotional safety by going to a safe environment where I am not alone.
- I will make arrangements to be with a friend or supportive person.
- I will go to a public place where harming myself is difficult.
  - If all else fails, I will go to a hospital emergency room and tell them, “I am at risk of harming myself.” I will make it clear, “I do not want to check in—I simply want to sit in the waiting room for a little while so that I won’t act on my impulses.”

— If I have diligently and honestly worked through these steps and I’m still in trouble, then I’m truly in a crisis situation that may require hospitalization for my protection.

*“Listen to advice and accept discipline,  
and at the end you will be counted among the wise.”*  
(Proverbs 19:20)

I will say to myself, “I can make it safely through a crisis. In God’s eyes I am valuable, and my life and safety are important!”

No matter your painful ordeal, no matter the hurt that you feel, God knows. ... God hears. ... God cares. ...

*“You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted;  
you encourage them, and you listen to their cry ...  
He will respond to the prayer of the destitute;  
he will not despise their plea.”*  
(Psalm 10:17; 102:17)

#### **D. How to Evaluate the Extent of the Suicidal Struggle**

To determine the degree of despair, asking pertinent questions will give you much insight into the suicidal struggle.

#### **SUICIDE ASSESSMENT**

Initially begin with these questions about painful thoughts. ...

#### **THE THOUGHTS**

“Do you ever think that life is not worth living?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Do you wish you could go to sleep and not wake up?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Do you think about dying ... or wish you were dead?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Are you thinking about harming yourself?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Tell me more about what you are thinking.” \_\_\_\_\_

“When was the first time you had those thoughts? What was happening then?” \_\_\_\_\_

“How long have you been thinking about taking your life?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Have you ever thought of suicide as the ultimate revenge toward someone you resent?” \_\_\_\_\_

“What has been happening in your life recently?” \_\_\_\_\_

“What do you fear the most?” \_\_\_\_\_

“How strong have these suicidal thoughts been?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Have you talked with anyone about these thoughts?” \_\_\_\_\_

Job, the man God called blameless, said in the midst of his painful ordeal ...

*“I have no concern for myself; I despise my own life.”*  
(Job 9:21)

### THE METHOD

“Do you have a plan now?” \_\_\_\_\_

“How would you hurt yourself?” \_\_\_\_\_

“When do you think you would do it?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Where would you do it?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Do you have access to the gun/knife/intended weapon?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Where is it? Is it locked up? Who can get to it?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Have you already swallowed any pills/poison?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Have you written a suicide note?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Are you taking steps to fulfill your plan at this time?” \_\_\_\_\_

In his despair, Job even said ...

*“I prefer strangling and death, rather than this body of mine.”*  
(Job 7:15)

### FAMILY SUICIDAL HISTORY

“Do any of your family members suffer from a psychological illness?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Have any of your family members been suicidal?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Have any of your family members taken their own lives?” If yes,

“Who? ... When?” \_\_\_\_\_

“What were the circumstances?” \_\_\_\_\_

“Had they received a psychiatric diagnosis?” \_\_\_\_\_

“What impact did that have on you?” \_\_\_\_\_

After a family member dies of suicide, their loved ones sometimes fear that they too will be suicidal. These words spoken by Job could reflect that same fear. ...

*“What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.  
I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.”*  
(Job 3:25–26)

## PERSONAL SUICIDAL HISTORY

- “Have you attempted suicide in the past?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “How many times?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “When was the first time you attempted suicide?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “What was happening at that time?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “What did you do?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “When did you do it?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “How close did you come to ending your life?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “What happened after you did that?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “At that time, how much did you want to die?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “At the time, how certain were you that you would die?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Afterward, did you feel glad or sad that you were alive?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “At the time(s), were you drinking or using drugs?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “At the time(s), what was your mood?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Has anything changed since you tried to end your life?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Tell me about any other times you felt suicidal.” \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

In severe pain, Job thought back to the past. ...

*“Why was I not hidden away in the ground like a stillborn child,  
like an infant who never saw the light of day?”*

(Job 3:16)

## MEDICAL HISTORY

- “How old are you?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “When was the last time you received a medical checkup?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “What was the result of the checkup?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Have you recently had a baby?” (Checking for postpartum depression. If yes, ask about depression after the birth of any other children.) \_\_\_\_\_
- “Did you tell the doctor that you felt suicidal?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Have you ever been to a psychologist or psychiatrist?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Did you receive a diagnosis?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Were you prescribed medications?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Are you taking your medication exactly as prescribed ... or not really?” \_\_\_\_\_

Job describes the lack of meaning in his life. ...

*“I despise my life; I would not live forever.  
Let me alone; my days have no meaning.”  
(Job 7:16)*

### SPIRITUAL HISTORY

- “What is your religious background?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Describe your spiritual journey.” \_\_\_\_\_
- “How would you describe God? Jesus?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “What spiritual beliefs are important to you?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Where are you spiritually?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “How do you see your relationship with God?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Are you a member of a church? ... an active member of a solid, biblically based church?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Are you involved in a small group Bible study?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Have you shared your struggle with anyone there?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “Is there someone at your church with whom you feel you could share this? Who?” \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- “Would you be willing to share this?” \_\_\_\_\_
- “What would make you more hopeful about the future God has planned for you, less likely to take your life, and more encouraged to keep on living?” \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- “Do you think God cares whether you live or die?” \_\_\_\_\_

Though he can't seem to find the Lord, Job realizes he is not lost to the Lord. ... He realizes the Refiner is testing him so that he will come forth as gold. ...

*“He knows the way that I take; when he has tested me,  
I will come forth as gold. My feet have closely followed his steps;  
I have kept to his way without turning aside.  
I have not departed from the commands of his lips;  
I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.”  
(Job 23:10–12)*

### E. How to Be Willing to Be Willing

Even if at times you don't want to live, all you need is the willingness to be made willing. The next time you feel despairing and disconnected, pray, “Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me” (Psalm 51:12).

Through His Spirit within you, God can empower you to choose life. Turn to Him to find the outpouring of His hope and healing—the outpouring of His compassion and comfort that you cannot generate on your own. Afterward, He will use you to rescue and help others who are struggling as you are today. See your life from God’s point of view. Those who have suffered much will be used much by God. The Bible states it this way ...

*“The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort ...  
comforts us in all our troubles,  
So that we can comfort those in any trouble  
with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”  
(2 Corinthians 1:3–4)*

### **LORD, MAKE ME *WILLING* ...**

- **To Be Broken:** “Oh God, I feel like I’m at the end. My heart is broken with despair.”
  - **God’s Promise:** *“My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise”* (Psalm 51:17).
  - My Prayer:** “Thank You, God, that I have reached the end of my own self-effort and I can bring You my broken heart.”
  
- **To Be Yielded:** “I see no hope or no one to help me. My mind is made up—death is the only answer.”
  - **God’s Promise:** *“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life”* (Proverbs 13:12).
  - My Prayer:** “Thank You, God, that I can put my hope in You, the One who can fulfill my longings and give me life.”
  
- **To Be Willing:** “I’m afraid to go on. I don’t have the will to face the future.”
  - **God’s Promise:** *“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand”* (Isaiah 41:10).
  - My Prayer:** “Thank You, God, that through Your strength, I will turn from fear to faith—I can face the future You have for me.”
  
- **To Be Assured:** “God, I feel completely alone. Nothing relieves this terrible loneliness.”
  - **God’s Promise:** *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze”* (Isaiah 43:2).
  - My Prayer:** “Thank You, God, that because of You I am never alone. Thank You for being with me even when I don’t feel that You are walking with me.”
  
- **To Be Guilt Free:** “I’ve committed too many sins. I can’t be forgiven, and I don’t deserve mercy.”
  - **God’s Promise:** *“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy”* (Proverbs 28:13).
  - My Prayer:** “Thank You, God, that as I confess my anger, resentment, and all of my sins, You will cleanse me.”

- **To Be Accepting:** “I don’t have the strength to accept these miserable circumstances.”
  - **God’s Promise:** “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” (Philippians 4:13 ESV).
  - My Prayer:** “Thank You, God, for giving me the strength to accept life as it now is ... and to let go of the *whys*.”
- **To Be Hopeful:** “Secretly, I am afraid to have hope. What if I begin to hope, but nothing really changes?”
  - **God’s Promise:** “*We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who he has given to us*” (Romans 5:3–5).
  - My Prayer:** “Thank You, God, that I can choose to put my hope in You. I will not trust in things as they seem to be, but will totally trust in You with gratitude for the unseen power of Your love.”

## F. How to Forgive

Is your sense of hopelessness caused by unforgiveness? Have you ever said: “I have been so wronged. I know I *should* forgive, but how can I simply let my offender off the hook? I just *can’t!*”? If these thoughts are driving your depression ... if these words have passed your lips or even crossed your mind, be assured you are not alone. That is precisely why you need to know that you can let go of the hurt and the heartache. You can learn ...

### HOW TO HANDLE “THE HOOK”

- Start by making a list of all the offenses caused by your offender.
- Imagine right now a meat hook around your neck and a burlap bag hanging from the hook in front of you. And imagine all the pain caused by the offenses against you—each offense on the list—dropped like rocks into the burlap bag—the bigger the offense, the bigger the rock. So, now you have 100 pounds of heavy rocks—rocks of resentment—hanging from the hook around your neck ... weighing you down in despair.
- Ask yourself, *Do I really want to carry all that pain with me for the rest of my life?* Are you willing to take the pain from the past and release it into the hands of the Lord?
- If so, right now, take all the pain and release it to Jesus.
- Take the one who offended you off of *your* emotional hook and place your offender onto *God’s hook*. The Lord knows how to deal with your offender ... in His time and in His way. God says ...

*“It is mine to avenge; I will repay.”*  
(Deuteronomy 32:35)

### PRAYER TO FORGIVE YOUR OFFENDER

“Lord Jesus, thank You for caring about  
how much my heart has been hurt.  
You know the pain I have felt because of (list every offense).  
Right now, I release all that pain into Your hands.  
Thank You, Jesus, for dying on the cross for me  
and extending Your forgiveness to me.  
As an act of my will, I choose to forgive (name).  
Right now, I move (name) off of my emotional hook to Your hook.  
I refuse all thoughts of revenge.  
I trust that in Your time and in Your way  
You will deal with my offender as You see fit.  
And Lord, thank You for giving me Your power to forgive  
so that I can be set free.  
In Your holy name I pray. Amen.”

### A BITTER SURVIVOR

**QUESTION: “How can I release bitterness toward my loved one who committed suicide?”**

**ANSWER:** Although you cannot confront your offender in person, you can confront indirectly by saying what you would want or need to say as if your offender were in front of you.

- Consider the “chair technique.” Imagine your offender seated in a chair placed in front of you. Say the things you would say if the person were actually seated across a table from you. Express your feelings about what was done to you and the painful ramifications those events have had on your life. Then extend forgiveness and explain that you have taken the person off of your emotional hook and placed the person onto God’s hook.
- Write a letter to your offender, stating every painful memory. Read it over the person’s grave or at a place where you can speak openly as though you were in each other’s presence. Then at the close, choose to forgive by releasing your offender into the hands of God.
- Make a list of all painful as well as positive memories. After completing the list, go back to the beginning and write the word “past” by each memory. Acknowledge and accept that the past is in the past. Release all the pain as well as the person into the hands of God.

The fact that your offender has died does not mean you cannot forgive and thereby release bitterness that may have established a foothold in your heart and mind. The Bible says ...

*“See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God  
and that no bitter root grows up  
to cause trouble and defile many.”  
(Hebrews 12:15)*

## G. How to Turn from Feeling to Healing

When you're in the darkest depths of despair, when you feel emotionally trapped with no way out, remember ... *you're not alone*. Countless thousands all around the world are experiencing the same feelings of hopelessness.

Besides pursuing activities that will help dissuade suicidal thoughts, reach out to others who are hurting just as you are. Find comfort and solace in sharing feelings and encouraging one another. There's no better way to bring hope and healing to yourself than by bringing hope and healing to someone else. Your own spirit will inevitably be lifted. ...

*“Our hope for you is firm,  
because we know that just as you share in our sufferings,  
so also you share in our comfort.”  
(2 Corinthians 1:7)*

If you focus on feelings of despair, then hopelessness will inevitably lead to depression and possibly to suicidal thoughts. Replace those negative, self-defeating thoughts with constructive thoughts. ... Occupy your mind with uplifting activities. Above all, if you are thinking about suicide, call your pastor, a suicide prevention center, a counselor, or a trusted friend. They want to help you.

### ACTIVITIES TO ALLEVIATE SUICIDAL OBSESSION<sup>36</sup>

- Walk, jog, bike, or swim. .... *for physical release*
- Lie down or take a nap. .... *for physical renewal*
- Take a long, hot shower or bubble bath. .... *for physical soothing*
- Curl up with a heating pad. .... *for emotional warmth*
- Play with a pet or cuddle a stuffed animal. .... *for emotional comfort*
- Journal or draw your feelings. .... *for emotional release*
- Watch an inspiring movie. .... *for emotional enjoyment*
- Play Christian praise music. .... *for spiritual inspiration*
- Read a Christian book or biography. .... *for spiritual pleasure*
- Memorize a verse of Scripture. .... *for spiritual focus*
- Work a jigsaw or crossword puzzle. .... *for mental stimulation*
- Do indoor or outdoor chores. .... *to remove clutter*
- Clean a refrigerator, cabinet, closet, or a drawer. .... *to feel productive*
- Prepare a grocery list, selecting healthy foods. .... *to meet physical needs*
- Organize coupons and go shopping. .... *to meet practical needs*
- Take prescription medicine as needed. .... *to meet medical needs*

- Go to the park and watch the people. .... *to enjoy others*
- Sort through clothes to give to the needy. .... *to benefit others*
- Volunteer at a ministry, church, or charity. .... *to serve others*
- Call a friend and offer help. .... *to reach out to others*

*“There is surely a future hope for you,  
and your hope will not be cut off.”*  
(Proverbs 23:18)

## H. How to Present “The Contract”

The most essential lifeline you can provide to a suicidal struggler is HOPE. Even if you feel inadequate to become involved with someone who is suicidal, God may draw you into that person’s life to be a reflection of His love. Consider such a divine encounter to be a candle of hope to someone living in darkness. Jesus said ...

*“Let your light shine before others,  
that they may see your good deeds  
and glorify your Father in heaven.”*  
(Matthew 5:16)

### WHERE THERE’S LIFE, THERE’S HOPE!

*“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.”*  
(Hebrews 6:19)

## H—HONESTLY Confront

- Take all talk of death and suicide seriously. Repeat back what was said: “I’m hearing you say *life’s not worth living*. Is that right?”
- Identify with their pain and express your concern.  
“That must feel painfully empty. I want you to know I care about your pain!”
- Ask these direct questions: “Are you thinking about harming yourself? How ... ? Do you have a plan?”
- Seek to find out what problem is causing the pain.  
Ask, “What has been so painful that you don’t want to live?”

The Bible explains this compassionate approach. ...

*“The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters,  
but one who has insight draws them out.”*  
(Proverbs 20:5)

## **O—OFFER** Options

- Acknowledge the fact that life is hard.
- Point out that choices in life often consist of unpleasant possibilities.
- List possible options on a sheet of paper.
- Rank the options in order of preference.
- Communicate God’s purposes for suffering. One purpose, for example, is to develop compassion: “Many people are hurting just like you are. They feel desperately alone, assuming that no one understands their pain. You know what it is like to hurt. Your personal pain enables you to have a ministry of compassion. You are being prepared right now to be a lifeline of hope for someone else who feels hopeless.” When you speak with kindness and compassion, you reflect the wisdom of God’s Word. ...

*“As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved,  
clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness,  
humility, gentleness and patience.”  
(Colossians 3:12)*

## **P—PRESENT** a Contract

- Build a relationship by showing your care and willingness to help.
- Ask if the person would be willing to make a contract with you.
- “Will you promise that if you are considering harming yourself, you will call me before doing anything?”
- Be sure to obtain a signature.
- Make a commitment to stay in contact.

*“Carry each other’s burdens,  
and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”  
(Galatians 6:2)*

## **E—ENLIST** Help

- Encourage the person to have a physical checkup.
- Seek a trained counselor or therapist.
- Call a minister.
- Contact the Suicide Crisis Center.
- Help make arrangements for hospitalization.

*“Plans fail for lack of counsel,  
but with many advisers they succeed.”  
(Proverbs 15:22)*

## MY CONTRACT OF HOPE

The following is a solemn binding contract. This contract cannot be declared null and void without the written agreement of both parties.

*I promise that if I should consider harming myself, I will talk with you before I do anything destructive.*

*I sign my name as a pledge of my integrity.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*“Anyone who is among the living has hope.”*  
(Ecclesiastes 9:4)

## SWORN TO SECRECY

**QUESTION: “I promised I would keep my friend’s secret about suicide. If I tell, am I breaking the right to privacy?”**

**ANSWER:** Never keep any possibility of suicide a secret. Take your friend’s suicidal words seriously. You are not betraying your friend. In fact, you may be the only one in a position to help save the life of your friend.

- Say, “I didn’t realize that what I was promising could actually hurt you. I care about you too much to keep that promise.”
- Encourage your friend to tell a responsible adult and seek professional help.
- Talk to an adult whom you trust IMMEDIATELY if you feel the risk is imminent!

Realize, saving a life is always more important than keeping a secret. You may risk losing your friendship by breaking your promise, but keeping your promise and then losing your friend would be a far greater tragedy.

The Bible says ...

*“We who are strong ought to bear  
with the failings of the weak  
and not to please ourselves.”*  
(Romans 15:1)

## I. How to Connect with Compassion

Tragically, those who take their lives fail to move from destructive to productive thinking. They fail to realize that *now is not forever*. They fail to see that *suicide is a permanent reaction to a temporary problem*.

One fact about life as we know it is that it is constantly changing. ... People and circumstances are constantly changing. Just as the seasons of the year change, the seasons of life change. ... *Now is not forever!* ... *Now is not forever!* ... In His time, God can and will change your circumstances and—if you let Him—He will change your heart. Like David, you can one day say ...

*“To you, LORD, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy ...  
You turned my wailing into dancing;  
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,  
that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.  
LORD my God, I will praise you forever.”  
(Psalm 30:8, 11–12)*

### REASONABLE RESPONSES TO SUICIDAL STATEMENTS

When first responding to suicidal statements, don't *counter*—instead *connect*. Don't focus on countering with your points, but rather connecting with the person. Then, through the relationship, you *earn* the right to be heard.

- **“There is nothing left in life I care about. It's pointless to go on living.”**

“I know your present pain is overshadowing everything dear to you right now. Tell me, please, what you have cared about up to now that has made life meaningful for you. Are there other things you could care about if your pain were not so great?”

- **“I can't face the future. The only thing to do is just escape it all.”**

“I hear your desperation, and I know the future can sometimes seem impossible to bear. Tell me what the future holds that you think you can't face. And talk to me about some of the fearful challenges you have already faced and conquered that seemed insurmountable at the time.”

- **“Things will never change. Death would be better than this.”**

“I definitely agree with you that there are things in everyone's life that will never change. But that doesn't mean we can't figure out a way to change the degree of their impact on us. Would you be willing for us to talk about the things in your life that you want to change and then explore ways to diminish their control over your life?”

- **“I may as well end it all. I don't matter anyway.”**

“You certainly matter a lot to me, and it hurts my heart that you feel so defeated and down on yourself. What would it take to make you feel valuable—to let you know that your life has meaning?”

- **“It won't really hurt anyone else. Actually, I'll be doing everyone a favor.”**

“Well, I'm already hurting just knowing you are hurting so badly. It is heartbreaking to me that you feel so uncared for that you actually think no one would be hurt by your death and that you would be doing everyone a favor. What has caused you to come to such a drastic conclusion? What could the people who love you have done that you would feel this way about them?”

- **“I’ve done all that can be done. There is only one thing left to do.”**

“I can hear your discouragement in your voice, and I am sorry. Please tell me what you are referring to and what you have hoped to accomplish by your efforts. Maybe between the two of us we can come up with another way of looking at it and hopefully gain a new perspective.”

- **“Soon it will be all over, and then I will have peace!”**

“You sound really tired and exhausted and just ready to give up. Would you share with me what it is that has worn you out and robbed you of your peace? What does the peace you are wanting look like to you? How did you attain peace in the past, and how did you come to lose it?”

- **“I can’t go on living like this. Life is hopeless.”**

“You sound like you have really come to the end of your resources and are in desperate need of a drastic change in your life. What is making life seem so unbearable? What has led you to conclude that life is hopeless? What would have to happen for you to have hope?”

- **“I’m too depressed to go on.”**

“I know life seems hopeless right now and you don’t feel like you have the strength to keep on keeping on. If I could, I’d pour my own strength into you but I can’t. All I can do is remind you that each day you work to get better will bring you another day closer to conquering the mountain you are climbing. And I can be here as a constant reminder that you are not alone and that you are loved more than words can ever express. Together with the Lord, we can and we will meet this challenge. We will experience *the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living*” (Psalm 27:13).

- **“Everyone will understand. I have suffered long enough.”**

“I understand your wanting the suffering to stop. I have no doubt that everyone who loves you hates to see you suffer and would take it from you if they could. But taking your life will bring suffering to them, and I know you don’t want to do that.”

- **“Everyone has given up on me, so I’m giving up on me!”**

“I realize you feel that you cannot change, and it seems easier to just give up than to keep on trying. But I know everyone hasn’t given up on you because I haven’t given up on you. I’m sure there are others who feel the same as I feel about you. You may not yet be the person you want to be, but you can become that person by taking just one step at a time. Let’s look for a possible step you can take today.”

Unless hopeless words are replaced with hopeful words and those who feel disconnected from others feel reconnected ... those who have lost hope will come to the conclusion that death is the only possible solution to their problems. This is a lie! Satan is the father of lies and the author of such fatal thinking. Ultimately, suicide is a deliberate choice to believe the enemy’s twisted reasoning: that taking your own life is the most reasonable way out. Jesus said of Satan ...

*“He was a murderer from the beginning,  
not holding to the truth,  
for there is no truth in him.  
When he lies, he speaks his native language,  
for he is a liar and the father of lies.”  
(John 8:44)*

## J. How to Comfort Those Caught in the Aftermath

Sympathy says, “I’m sorry you’re hurt.” Empathy says, “I’ll hurt with you.” Compassion says, “I’ll stick with you until the hurt is gone.” We all need that compassionate friend when we’ve lost a loved one to suicide.

Typically, those who have lost suicidal family members feel more pain than those whose loved ones have died of natural causes. They feel more rejection and more abandonment, and often feel responsible for the suicide.

No one is exempt from the gravity of this kind of grief. ... It is a grief like no other. For those left behind, the emotional fallout from suicide is more devastating than most people could ever imagine. Few people know how to come alongside and comfort those who suffer the aftermath.

Tormenting emotions cause survivors to spiral through the process of grief, and their haunting question of “*Why?*” is never really answered. Even when suicide strikes within our own boundary of relationships, we can feel inadequate to face the reality of such a tragedy! Survivors experience ...

### A GRIEF LIKE NO OTHER<sup>37</sup>

As a survivor, you can feel ...

- **Shock** ..... “This is a mistake. I saw her just a few hours ago.”
- **Rejection**..... “He thought death would be better than living with me!”
- **Guilt**..... “I should have done something to prevent this.”
- **Anger**..... “How could she do this to me?”
- **Shame** ..... “What will I tell others?”
- **Fear** ..... “I’m afraid of whatever is wrong with our family!”
- **Sadness** ..... “I keep dreaming that I’ll be with him again.”

As a survivor, you need to know the compassionate promise of the Lord. He hears your heartache and sees your tears. The Bible says that after a period of time ...

*“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”*  
(Psalm 147:3)

### A FRIEND LIKE NO OTHER<sup>38</sup>

As a friend of the survivor ...

- **Be honest** ..... Express your own feelings of grief and confusion. ... Don’t hide from the truth or be afraid to use the word *suicide*.
- **Be present**..... Be willing to just “be there”—your presence is enough!
- **Be listening**..... Hear your friend’s heart and encourage your friend to express feelings.
- **Be accepting** ..... Accept all the emotions, no matter how raw or offensive the feelings may seem to you.

- **Be nonjudgmental**..... Refuse to pass judgment on the one who died of suicide or on those who have survived. Trust in a compassionate God.
- **Be forgiving**..... Let the survivors see your heart of forgiveness. They may feel the need to confess and receive God’s forgiveness, especially if they are experiencing guilt.
- **Be spirit-led**..... Be led by the Holy Spirit. Trust Him to give you the appropriate words to say.
- **Be prayerful** ..... Offer to pray if the survivor seems receptive. Commit to lifting the whole family up in your personal prayers.

*“There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”*  
(Proverbs 18:24)

## DISCUSSING SUICIDE

### **QUESTION: “Is there a ‘better way’ to talk about suicide?”**

**ANSWER:** Although many people speak of someone who “committed suicide,” the less judgmental, more sensitive term is speaking of one who “died of suicide.” Likewise, rather than a *completed* or *successful* suicide (which sounds too positive), the term “suicide death” is preferable. Pray that you will use wisdom with your words. ...

*“Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still;  
teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.”*  
(Proverbs 9:9)

## **K. How to Address Young Siblings After Suicide**

When a child carries out a suicide attempt, family and friends are left emotionally shattered and mentally scattered, not knowing what to do with their feelings or how to make sense of what has happened. Many loved ones feel as though they are in a dense fog, with no sense of direction and no destination in sight. Just trying to survive is often seen as the task at hand, but overcoming is what the Lord has in mind for His children.

The depth, degree, and duration of the impact on your remaining children and how you deal with them will vary per child based on individual temperament, age, and maturity. However, there are some common clues to look for, identify, and resolve as you seek to help your children become overcomers. Some of the feelings they may experience include ...

### **FEELINGS OF SIBLINGS LEFT BEHIND**

- **Anger** at the sibling for leaving without saying goodbye or talking with them about it before doing it, or anger at God for allowing it, or anger at a parent for causing it
- **Rejection** because of the sibling’s not wanting to be with them or not valuing them enough to stay alive for them

- **Fear** of being alone in their bedroom or playroom at night because something or someone in the darkness may hurt them, or fear that their sibling may be punished by God for all eternity
- **Sadness** over the loss of a cherished confidant, constant companion, or committed “cheerleader”
- **Confusion** about why the sibling chose suicide and whether they are destined to suicide too or confusion about whether they actually should follow the example of the suicidal sibling
- **Guilt** that they may be somehow responsible for their sibling’s being unhappy and despondent enough to want to die rather than live with them
- **Hopeless** about facing the future without their sibling to help them, to spend time with them, to teach them the ropes, to understand them
- **Alone** without the only family member they can truly relate to, play with, confide in, tell secrets to, look to for security, advice, and guidance

### HELPING SIBLINGS LEFT BEHIND

Typically, children lack the skills to clearly express their emotional reactions to traumatic events; therefore, you will need to ...

- **Ask questions** that will aid your children in both clarifying and communicating their feelings.
- **Listen intently** to them and mirror their feelings back to them, validating them, comforting them, and extending hope and encouragement to them.
- **Respond to their questions** and needs by attempting to answer and meet them in practical, meaningful ways.
- **Spend more time** with your children. Engage them in activities they enjoy and include them in some of your activities, including your work and free time.
- **Pay attention to any change** in their mood and in their patterns of eating and sleeping, studying and playing, socializing and relating.
- **Realize your children are most vulnerable** to suicide during the days and months following the death of their sibling and on future anniversary dates such as the deceased child’s birthday or the suicide date.
- **Provide professional counseling** for your children should they show signs that depression or stress is impairing their level of functioning.
- **Pray for and with your children.** Read the Bible with them and work through the daily devotional book *Seeing Yourself Through God’s Eyes*<sup>39</sup> with them.

As you seek to yield yourself and your children into the Lord’s strong, healing hands and as you keep your heart fully committed to Him, be assured that ...

*“The eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth  
to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”  
(2 Chronicles 16:9)*

## L. The Dos and Don'ts for Family and Friends

King Solomon models the kind of heart and attitude that we need to carefully and compassionately minister to other people. God told Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted and it would be granted him. Instead of asking for wealth or fame, he asked for discernment to wisely govern the people God had entrusted to him. ... *“Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”* (1 Kings 3:9).

The king's request so greatly pleased God that He not only poured out wisdom in abundance on Solomon, He gave him riches and honor as well. Likewise, it pleases God when we ask for wisdom and discernment about ministering to suicidal people, seeking help from above to restore hope. Our desire should always be that the perfect love of Christ be manifested through us. We should also heed the wise words of Solomon. ...

*“Do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight,  
preserve sound judgment and discretion;  
they will be life for you.”*  
(Proverbs 3:21–22)

Words can wound, and words can heal. Those whose hearts are heavy with thoughts of suicide need true healing. Be aware of the power of your words. ...

*“The words of the reckless pierce like swords,  
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”*  
(Proverbs 12:18)

- **Don't** trivialize talk of death by saying, “Stop talking that way.”  
*Do* ... Be willing to listen—really listen. “I want to hear what is really going on in your heart and life.”
- **Don't** minimize emotional pain by saying, “It can't be that hopeless.”  
*Do* ... Ask questions. “When did you first feel this way?”
- **Don't** ignore feelings. “You shouldn't feel that way.”  
*Do* ... Draw out feelings. “Tell me how you really feel.”
- **Don't** contradict statements of low self-worth. “You can't be that bad.”  
*Do* ... Communicate, “All of us have failed, but that does not make us failures.”
- **Don't** promise, “I will never mention this to anyone.”  
*Do* ... Explain, “Because I care, I can't be sworn to secrecy. I love you too much.”
- **Don't** give a dare like, “Go ahead; kill yourself.”  
*Do* ... Remove all impulse weapons, such as guns and poisons.
- **Don't** blame something or someone else. “It's his fault that you feel this way.”  
*Do* ... Realize that God knows the injustices, yet we all choose how we respond. Will we act responsibly or react irresponsibly?
- **Don't** attempt to “cheer up” with comparisons. “Many others are much worse off.”  
*Do* ... Appeal to the heart. “Are you aware of how devastating suicide is to those left behind? Often loved ones blame themselves for a suicide.”

- **Don't** offer quick solutions. "Just put the past behind you."  
*Do* ... Help initiate a medical/psychological evaluation as soon as possible. Going with the struggler can reinforce a sense of hope: "You don't have to do this alone. Let's make the appointment, and I'll go with you."
- **Don't** assume that you must continue with a specific doctor if you feel no positive connection and care. "You're already seeing this doctor, you don't want to start over."  
*Do* ... Seek a 2nd opinion (or a 3rd... or a 4th ... etc.) until you have peace about how well you both are relating. "If this isn't the right doctor or counselor for you, we will meet with someone else until we find someone you are comfortable with."
- **Don't** give the assurance, "Your problems will soon be over."  
*Do* ... Admit the fact that life is hard. "Although I don't know how long the dark tunnel is, I'll be your friend each step of the way until you come into the light."
- **Don't** refer to depressed people as unspiritual.  
*Do* ... Confirm that the heart of each of us has been "pressed down" and that your own heart has also been depressed.
- **Don't** lecture on the value of life or get into theological arguments.  
*Do* ... Earnestly pray for wisdom for every person involved and give the assurance that "God will never leave you or forsake you."
- **Don't** presume that once someone has decided to commit suicide there's nothing you can do to stop it. "They've already made up their mind."  
*Do* ... Realize suicide is the most *preventable* cause of death. The vast majority of people who get help recover from their suicidal feelings.

*"The hearts of the wise make their mouths prudent,  
and their lips promote instruction."  
(Proverbs 16:23)*

"To be, or not to be, that is the question."<sup>40</sup> Or to put it another way: To live or to die ... which is better? That is the *fictional* question posed by Shakespeare in his centuries-old tragedy *Hamlet*.

The answer to that question goes back much further in time and is spoken by God Himself. ...

*"I have set before you life and death ... Now choose life."  
(Deuteronomy 30:19)*

Life without Christ is a hopeless end.  
Life with Christ is an endless hope.  
CHOOSE LIFE!  
—June Hunt

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We acknowledge that mistakes or omissions could occur in our many Scripture references, writings, and citations. Although the editors have sought to avoid all errors, some may have been overlooked, for which we take full responsibility.

The considerate reader would render us a great service by calling our attention to any such error.

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2017.10.27/8.5 (NIV)

## NOTES

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**Psalm 27:13–14 (NIV)**

*“I remain confident of this:  
I will see the goodness  
of the LORD in the land of the living.  
Wait for the LORD;  
be strong and take heart  
and wait for the LORD.”*

**Psalm 43:5 (NIV)**

*“Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.”*

**Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)**

*“Do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*

**Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)**

*“‘I know the plans I have for you,’  
declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you  
and not to harm you, plans  
to give you hope and a future.’”*

**2 Corinthians 4:8–9 (NIV)**

*“We are hard pressed on every side,  
but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;  
persecuted, but not abandoned;  
struck down, but not destroyed.”*

**Psalm 34:18 (NIV)**

*“The LORD is close to the  
brokenhearted and saves  
those who are crushed in spirit.”*

**Proverbs 3:5–6 (NIV)**

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;  
in all your ways submit to him,  
and he will make your paths straight.”*

**1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (NIV)**

*“Do you not know that your bodies are temples  
of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have  
received from God? You are not your own;  
you were bought at a price.  
Therefore honor God with your bodies.”*

**Proverbs 23:18 (NIV)**

*“There is surely a future hope for you,  
and your hope will not be cut off.”*

**Ecclesiastes 9:4 (NIV)**

*“Anyone who is among the living has hope.”*

I feel alone, **brokenhearted**,  
and **crushed in spirit**. ...  
Where is **the Lord** in all this?

*Suicide Prevention*



I don't see **the goodness of the Lord**.  
How can I have the **heart** to keep on **living**?

*Suicide Prevention*



My pain is beyond my **own understanding**.  
Why should I **trust** anyone with my **heart**?

*Suicide Prevention*



**My soul** is **downcast** ... and **so disturbed**.  
Where can I find **hope**?

*Suicide Prevention*



My **body** is my **own**. I'm under no obligation  
to **honor God** with it. If I want to destroy it—  
isn't that my right?

*Suicide Prevention*



My life is filled with **fear**.  
Can anyone **strengthen and help** me?

*Suicide Prevention*



I feel like my **hope** has been **cut off**. ...  
Is there any **hope** for me in the **future**?

*Suicide Prevention*



I don't have any **hope**.  
Can anyone **give** me help  
with **plans** for the **future**?

*Suicide Prevention*



How can I go on **living**?  
My life **has** no **hope**.

*Suicide Prevention*



I feel **pressed on every side**.  
How can I *not* have **despair**?

*Suicide Prevention*

