

Dealing Biblically with a Terrible Tragedy – Suicide

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I. Introduction.

II. What you are feeling is normal for those who have experienced such a tragedy.

- A. Those left behind experience many emotions. 2 Sam. 18:33
- B. It is right and normal to mourn, but not as those who have no hope. 1 Th. 4:13
- C. Some emotions may emerge as time passes.
- D. Life has changed and you have changed.
 - 1. You cannot go back.
 - 2. Will you be better, or bitter?

III. There are some things you cannot know. Deut. 29:29

- A. You will have many questions.
- B. Some of your questions cannot be answered in this life. Deut. 29:29
- C. We need to focus on what God has revealed. 2 Tim. 3:16-17
- D. You can know that God is good, loving and just. Gen. 18:25 50:20
- E. While it is not wrong to cry out to God, be careful not to accuse Him of wrongdoing. Ps. 61:1-2

IV. There are many important and useful things we do know.

- A. You are involved in spiritual warfare. 1 Pet. 5:8 Eph. 6:11-13
 - 1. Satan is a murderer. John 8:44 10:10
 - 2. Satan is deceiver. John 8:44
 - a. The person who takes his own life believed the devil's lies.
 - b. The Evil One wants to deceive you. Gen. 3:3-5 2 Cor. 11:3
 - c. We must answer the devil's lies with God's truth. 2 Co. 10:5
 - 3. It is appropriate that we hate him and his works.
 - 4. God has given us armor for the battle. Eph. 6:13-18
 - 5. Satan wants you to be complacent. 1 Cor. 10:12 Js. 1:14-15
- B. God's grace is sufficient to help you through this. Ps. 46 121 23 2 Cor. 1:3-5 12:9
 - 1. Others have gone through such trials and have endured with God's help. 1 Co. 10:13 Lam. 1:12 Ps. 6:8
 - 2. Pray. Ps. 86:7

3. **Read His Word (especially the Psalms).** Ps. 119:50
4. **Remember His character.** Ex. 34:6-7 Rom. 11:33-36
 - a. **He has proven that He loves you.** Rom. 8:32
 - b. **He has delivered you many times in the past.**
5. **Jesus fully sympathizes with you in your suffering and He helps you.**
Heb. 4:15-16 2:17-18
 - a. **Jesus has conquered our enemy, death.** 1 Cor. 15:20-26,55-57
 - b. **Nothing can separate you from His love.** Rom. 8:31ff Heb. 13:5
6. **The indwelling Holy Spirit is the Comforter.** John 14:16
7. **Eschatology (our future hope) is a great comfort when we are suffering.**
Ro. 8:18 2 Cor. 4:16-18 Heb. 11:13 1 Pe. 1:3-4 Rev. 21:3-4 7:9-18
8. **The passage that helps me the most when I am tempted to despair:** John 6:66-69

C. God has put us in the body of Christ so that we can help one another. 2 Cor. 1:4
1 Thess. 4:18

1. **Sympathize with those who are crushed and hurting – listen.** Rom. 12:15 Js. 1:19
2. **Isolation is dangerous.** 1 Cor. 12:20-21 Eph. 4:14-16
3. **Point them to the hope that only God can give.** Rom. 15:4,13 5:8 Heb. 11:1-2
7:25 Jer. 17:5-8 Phil. 4:13 1 Tim. 1:1 1 Pet. 3:15 Mt. 11:28-29
4. **Offer practical help.** Gal. 6:2
5. **Things to say and things not to say.**
6. **The Spirit will help you know what to say.** Mark 13:11

V. Understanding suicide. Rom. 15:14

A. Suicide is a growing problem.

B. Suicide is sinful. Ex. 20:13 1 Co. 10:13

1. **Suicide denies God's sovereignty.** Ps. 139:16 Heb. 9:27 Dt. 32:39 1 Co. 6:19-20
2. **Suicide harms those left behind.**
3. **Examples in Scripture.** Judges 9:54 16:1ff 1 Sam. 31:4-5 2 Sam. 17:23
1 Ki. 6:18 Mt. 27:3-5 Acts 1:18 16:27 Luke 4:9

C. Myths about suicide.

1. **Suicidal people are depressed.**
2. **Suicidal people are mentally ill.**
3. **People who threaten suicide won't really do it, they just want attention.**
4. **Thinking about suicide means that you will commit suicide.**
5. **Once suicidal, always suicidal.**
6. **The risk goes down when the mood goes up.**
7. **Talking about suicide to a suicidal subject encourages him to do it.**
8. **A true believer cannot commit suicide.** Heb. 11:32-33

D. Why do people take their own lives?

1. **They have lost hope – unsolvable problems.** 2 Sam. 17:23 1 Sam. 31:4-5
2. **Reasons may include anger, jealousy, depression, self-pity, pride, shame, guilt, revenge, to avoid greater pain, loneliness, rejection, loss of status/money/power, boredom, proving autonomy, divorce, death of spouse, stress, medical diagnosis.**

3. "Suicide is actually more about living than dying. Suicidal subjects are unhappy with their lives. It's not so much that they want to die as they don't want to go on living the way they are." (Bruce Ray)
4. "A core feature in suicidal thinking is the belief that there are only two choices: pain or cessation of consciousness." (Jeffery S. Black)
5. A large percentage of those who take their own lives have high levels of drugs and/or alcohol in their systems.
6. A person may have many influences in his life, but none of these is determinative.

E. What are indicators that a suicide attempt may be imminent?

1. Verbal signs.
2. Behavioral signs.
3. SLAP
 - a. Specific plan.
 - b. Lethality.
 - c. Availability (of means).
 - d. Proximity (of help).
4. Often family and friends do not recognize the signs until after the fact.

F. What can be done to help someone who is suicidal? Romans 15:14

1. Don't leave him/her alone.
2. When in doubt, ask.
3. Take them and their concerns seriously – acknowledge the reality of his pain.
4. Listen – what does he/she want?
5. Don't get into an argument/debate.
6. Remain calm and be patient.
7. Offer hope from God's Word – answer Satan's lies. 2 Cor. 4:16-18 10:5
1 Cor. 10:13 Psalm 23 32 Rom. 15:4,13 Isa. 55:6-7 Jer. 29:11-13
8. Pray with and for him. Ps. 31:22 55:17 86:7
9. Get help from other appropriate people.
10. Do not agree to keep this a secret.
11. If a person is making concrete plans to take his own life, call 911.
12. A seventy-two hour involuntary psychiatric hold often enables someone who is suicidal to get past a critical period and to consider other options.
13. Don't compromise your own personal safety.
14. You cannot save the suicidal person.

G. Biblical examples.

1. Crying out to God. Psalm 38 22 31
2. Despair without hope. Psalm 88
3. Fighting despair with truth and faith. Psalm 42
4. Enduring with Christ. Heb. 12:1ff
5. Gaining a heavenly perspective. Psalm 73 37

VI. Conclusion and Q&A.

A. Many of these principles are seen in John 11.

- 1. Sometimes we don't understand the Lord's inaction. John 11:1-6**
- 2. Jesus cares – and He hates death. John 11:32-36**
- 3. Jesus has conquered death. John 11:24-26,38-44**

B. Recommended Resources.

- 1. Black, Jeffery S.; I Just Want to Die – Replacing Suicidal Thoughts with Hope.**
- 2. Bridges, Jerry; Trusting God – Even When Life Hurts.**
- 3. Powlison, David; Grieving a Suicide – Help for the Aftershock.**
- 4. Ray, Bruce; Help! My Friend is Suicidal. (Kindle book)**
- 5. Ray, Bruce; Help! Someone I Love Committed Suicide. (not yet published)**
- 6. Tripp, Paul; Grief – Finding Hope Again.**
- 7. The Institute for Biblical Counseling and Discipleship — www.ibcd.org.**