

## **Murder By Selfishness!**

### **Suicide**

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I want to begin with some astounding statistics on suicide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO):

- Over 800,000 people die by suicide every year.
- There is one death by suicide in the world every 40 seconds. (That's approximately 18 during the time of this commentary.)
- Suicide is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death in the world for those aged 15-44 years.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC): "Suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the U.S. for all ages." Every 12.3 minutes, somewhere in the United States someone commits suicide. That's 105 lives taken each day. That's more than 38,000 every year. An estimated ¼ of a million Americans each year become suicide survivors.

What may be even more tragic than this, suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15-24-year-old Americans. Many accidents (auto, alcohol abuse, and drug overdose) are really suicides. It is not confined to the young; an increasing number of elderlies are taking their own lives, too. Suicide rates among the elderly are highest for those who are divorced or widowed. Some experts believe that more than 40% of the suicides in the U.S. are older adults. Surprisingly, I have known several people in the greater church of God who have attempted suicide. Some succeeded, some did not.

The typical suicide victim is white and is from a middle- or upper-middle-class family.

Why is a teenage more likely to kill himself (or herself) today than in the 1950s? There are several reasons. Experts point to a number of social factors: the breakdown of the family, drug and alcohol abuse, and increased influence of the mass media. Some popular songs actually encourage suicide,

and suicide is sometimes romanticized when it is dramatized on television or in the press.

There is another change that the news media often ignore: increasing sexual activity at ever-younger ages. When a teenager breaks up with someone he (or she) was sexually involved with, it's like a divorce. For kids, it can be devastating.

In the past, many experts believed that the brain may have been done developing in the mid- to late teens. Therefore, under most laws, young people are recognized as adults at age 18. Then along came some evidence to suggest that development may last until at least age 20.

Today, a consensus of neuroscientists agree that brain development likely persists until at least the mid-20s. But neuroscientists agree that brain development for most people doesn't reach full maturity until an average of age 25. Take one quick glance at society today and you realize that they may be right.

So, when a child has an emotional trauma, it is exaggerated because of the lack of brain development and maturity to handle the ordeal. Therefore, don't let your child try to become an adult too early. They will always try to push the freedom envelope, which can be detrimental to their own emotional development. But don't over protect them, causing them to be unable to function properly in society.

"Cluster suicides" seem to be on the rise. There have been cases of a group of teenagers driving into a garage, closing the door, and letting carbon dioxide snuff out their lives. One high school had 5 teenagers attempt suicide; 3 succeeded. One town had 8 teenagers in 16 months murder themselves. Some critics assert that media sensationalism is partly responsible for copycat suicides.

Shortly after the group of teenagers gassed themselves in that garage, two other teenagers attempted suicide in the same garage. A day after that garage incident, two teenagers in another town who heard about it, committed suicide in the same way. Two days later, a teen was found dead in his garage, poisoned by exhaust fumes. For some reason, teenagers tend to be

copy-cats and want to imitate others. Maybe it is for the notoriety. I am not sure.

Secular psychologists see suicide as an act of self-hate, which may have an element of truth in it, since murdering yourself is certainly not an act of true love. However, it is also an act of perverse “self-love.” Psychologists refer to it by the derogatory term, “selfism.”

TV talk shows, books, magazines, movies, seminars all propagate self-esteem, self-assertion, self-admiration, self-indulgence, self-confidence, self-pleasing, self-determination, self-satisfaction, and self-love. “Selfies” are often a manifestation of this self-absorption. Not in every case, but they certainly have taken society by storm.

Such an emphasis on selfism causes one to feel badly if he or she is not measuring up to a wrongly perceived standard. It is essential to understand that suicide is a very selfish act and often committed because the person “loves” himself too much and doesn’t want to continue to face life’s problems. And so, he considers only self and no one else.

Let’s consider the biblical principles:

**Psalms 100:3** Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Since we are not our own, but God’s, for a person to take his or her own life is to destroy God's property. The self is viewed as sovereign rather than God, our Creator.

Man is created in the image of the Creator; to dishonor or destroy or murder our bodies is to disobey and dishonor Him.

**I Corinthians 6:19-20** Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

God is the giver of all life. He sets the boundaries and sets the span and nature of being. He has established the laws of life for here and for all eternity. Neither love of life or desire for death may be placed before or above God. It is a sin for the god of self to have preeminence. Thus, the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me," is directly violated in such a situation.

Not only is suicide a breaking of the First Commandment, but it is also, in a very direct and willful way, a breaking of the Sixth Commandment, "You shall not murder," because suicide is self-murder. Anyone who puts an end to his own life is a murderer. Our lives are not our own, and we cannot quit them at our own pleasure because they belong to God, not us.

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, was tempted in all things just as we are.

**Hebrews 4:15** For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

...and He never considered suicide. In fact, He never even considered tempting God or the angels. There on the pinnacle of the temple of Jerusalem, Satan tempted Jesus, urging Him to commit suicide, in one sense:

**Luke 4:9-12** Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt [test] the Lord your God.'"

Suicide is not a problem of the causes of diseases and how they affect people. It is a problem in the skewed thinking of the mind. Sinful desire is the source of suicidal tendencies.

When a person has enmity against God, he has a self-destructive attitude which will bring about a life of slow agonizing death because of a self-

destructive lifestyle: poor health, deteriorating body, and varying degrees of insanity. He tries to destroy himself through alcohol, smoking, and overuse of pharmaceuticals. This is the attitude that Proverbs warns us about:

**Proverbs 16:25** There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

So, what is the answer? What is the solution to a suicidal tendency? It is our Savior Jesus Christ who heals the broken heart and sets at liberty those who are oppressed.

**Matthew 11:28-30** "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

In an uncaring world, it is Christ (doing the will of the Father) who hears, cares, heals, and saves. It is He who can transform a death-wish into a joyous song of life.

Consider what the Apostle Paul tells us about despair in II Corinthians 1:8-10 to put things in the right perspective:

**II Corinthians 1:8-10** For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us

Yet through the grace of God and the power of His Holy Spirit, Paul learned:

**Philippians 4:11-13** Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and

to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Serving others in humility, being content in our own trials, and having faith in Christ for spiritual strength is the recipe for living a selfless life, one without despair and that isn't depressing. Trust that God will deliver you, whatever your trial may be, because Satan is always after us to depress and discourage us.