

# Choosing To Die

**Introduction.** In some societies, both ancient and modern, suicide was/is seen as an honorable way to die. The Greeks considered it a part of man's freedom. French novelist George Sand wrote, "We cannot tear out a single page of our life, but we can throw the whole book in the fire." "Suicide" is derived from two Latin roots: *sui*, "one's self," and *caedere*, "to kill." It is defined as the killing of one's self with intentional malice, while in possession of a sound mind.

From our youth to the elderly, suicide is an increasingly popular "escape from life" in America. Teen suicide has more than tripled since the 1950s. More than 5,000 teenagers kill themselves each year. In fact, suicide is the second leading cause of death among those between 13 and 21 years of age. In a survey of 11,000 young people, 25% of the boys and 42% of the girls stated that they had thought seriously about taking their lives. Also, more and more of our elderly people are electing to die by their own hands, especially among elderly men.

Most preachers have probably conducted funeral services for suicide victims — even church members. Delving into this topic will help us understand this tragic occurrence, and possibly prevent it from happening among the people we love.

## ***I. Why Do People Decide To Give Up?***

- A. The conviction that human beings have little worth.
  1. Human value is now measured in material concepts. How much does one possess? What is his/her status in society? How does he/she look?
  2. It creates an increasing lack of self-esteem which generates despair and frequently leads to self-violence.
- B. The dehumanization of man.
  1. Progressive injustice has disillusioned people. Greater communication has brought us into closer contact with the problems of the world.
  2. Some are terribly discouraged and have come to the conclusion that society is a sphere of tragedies in which life is no longer worth living.
- C. The disintegration of the home.
  1. This has soured people on life and contributed to self-destruction. Marriages have broken up and children have been subjected to the horrors of marital warfare.
  2. When the last haven of safety and security has perished, many people find life too difficult to manage.

- D. The decline of religious conviction.
  1. With the corresponding denial that humans are accountable to a Supreme Being, the worth of life has been cheapened.
  2. Materialism has led many to believe there is nothing beyond death, hence, when seemingly insurmountable difficulties are encountered, suicide can "end it all."
- E. The advance of a highly technological society.
  1. Instead of opening up our world with information through this wonderful technological blessing, it has only precipitated emotional frustration.
  2. Increasing the perplexities about the meaning of human existence creates tension without providing answers to social/ethical conflicts.
- F. The use of drugs and alcohol.
  1. One study has indicated that approximately two-thirds of suicide deaths are substance-abuse related.
  2. How many celebrities or average people have you heard of committing suicide under the influence of drugs? It is another symptom of an unhappy, depressed world.
- G. The increase of sexual immorality.
  1. Both within and without marriage, immorality has created countless heart-breaking situations such as adultery and unplanned pregnancies.
  2. These radical, life-altering circumstances have brought numerous souls to the brink of despair and suicide.

## ***II. Is Suicide Wrong?***

- A. The Bible's laws and principles declare suicide morally reprehensible. There are four cases of self-murder in the scriptures, and all of them are viewed unfavorably (Saul, 1 Samuel 31:4-5; Ahithophel, 2 Samuel 17:23; Zimri, 1 Kings 16:18; Judas, Matthew 27:5).
- B. Suicide is a violation of several biblical principles.
  1. Suicide asserts that man is autonomous; i.e., that he is a law unto himself.
    - a) Seneca, the Greek Stoic, defended suicide as an aspect of man's lordship over his own being. However, the Bible teaches that it is God who made us (Psalm 100:3).
    - b) By virtue of His creative power (Genesis 2:7), God has the right to say that all souls are His (Ezekiel 18:4). Human beings belong to the Lord and they do not have the right to end their lives.
  2. The scriptures make it very clear that life is a gift from God.
    - a) God is the Lord of heaven and earth (cp. Genesis 14:19, 22). He gives life to all (Acts 17:25; 1 Timothy 6:13).

- b) No person, therefore, has the right to take away what has been bestowed by the eternal Source of life, unless specifically authorized to do so (Leviticus 20:2).
- 3. Suicide is a violation of the divine law prohibiting murder.
  - a) The unauthorized shedding of human blood is an assault on the image of God in man (Genesis 9:6).
  - b) Both testaments condemn murder (Exodus 20:13; Romans 13:9), and suicide is self-murder when perpetrated by a rational person.
- 4. Suicide is an act of selfishness.
  - a) Human beings have been given the responsibility of serving God (Ecclesiastes 12:13). God is our Maker (Psalm 95:6), and as such He is worthy of our constant service (Psalm 18:3). Man was made to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7).
  - b) Moreover, it is our sacred duty to help others. Our Lord went about doing good (Acts 10:38), and in this regard He is our example. We are exhorted to act benevolently toward all men (Galatians 6:10). No man is allowed to exist without regard for the effect he might have on others (cp. Romans 14:7).
- 5. Suicide violates the principle of self-esteem.
  - a) Jesus and Paul implied a proper level of worth and recognition (Matthew 22:39; Romans 12:3). If the Bible teaches in Romans 13:10 that I am to do no wrong to my neighbor, and I am to love myself as my neighbor, would it not follow that I am not to do wrong to myself?
  - b) Again, when Paul exhorts a man to love his wife as his own body (Ephesians 5:28), there is the presumption of a legitimate respect for one's body.

### ***III. What Can We Do?***

- A. In a world that is increasingly fraught with so many pressures, the suicide rate will likely continue unabated. Christians need to be prepared to deal sympathetically with those who are driven to despair.
- B. Several elements of counsel might be given to people who are frustrated with living.
  - 1. Forcefully teach the truth that we are creatures of God.
    - a) Evolution has brutalized humanity with its doctrine that we are only beasts who have clawed our way up from the slime of antiquity.
    - b) As beings fashioned in God's image, we have worth; there is purpose in living, and an awareness of this purpose can bring true happiness in the place of depression (Luke 12:24). Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 that the Christian's body is a

temple of the Holy Spirit. We are important to God! There is so much that He wants us to accomplish in our lives to His glory.

2. Identify the horrible results of sin.
  - a) Christ came to remedy the problem of evil (Hebrews 2:14-18). We cannot eradicate wickedness but we can discover why God allows it to continue temporarily, and thus learn to cope with this fact of human existence (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).
  - b) We have a message of hope that through Jesus Christ and His redemptive plan we can be free from the individual guilt of all past sins (Acts 2:38), and we can learn to deal with situations that we cannot personally change (Philippians 4:13).
3. Teach and demonstrate the tranquility and joy of being in Christ.
  - a) Life was designed to be a wonderfully thrilling experience (Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; 5:18-20; 8:15).
  - b) The Lord gave us abundant life (John 10:10), but that life can only be found in submission to Him. Our lives can be glorious examples of the power of Christ (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

**Conclusion.** Suicide is a serious matter. There are those in the world who cannot cope with life's problems in a rational way. It is our duty to care for and help one another in times of severe need. Help the souls who cry out in anguish because of their conditions to see the true reasons why sin exists in the world and then show them that their lives are worth everything to the Creator of the Universe whom we obey.