

What is the Reasoning Behind Suicide?

Part One

A. There are seven suicides recorded in Scripture. All seven were men. In Scripture, we do not find any judgments on suicide. It is viewed as an act of deliberate self destruction.

1. Abimelech

- a. He feared for the loss of his honor after being mortally struck by a mill stone a woman had thrown down from a high tower. He asked his armor bearer to kill him (Judges 9:54).

2. Samson

- a. He sought revenge for the loss of his two eyes after he made the mistake of giving up the secret to his strength (Judges 16:30).

3. King Saul

- a. After he was mortally wounded in battle, he feared that the uncircumcised Philistines would find him and torture him (shame, and pain) (I Sam. 31: 4).

4. Saul's armor bearer

- a. He may have feared what would happen to him if he was captured so he killed himself (I Sam. 31:5).

5. Ahithophel (King David's former counselor)

- a. He realized that both he and his counsel were rejected by Absalom so he hung himself (2 Sam. 17:23).

6. King Zimri

- a. He saw Israel reject him as king and when they came to kill him he burned his house down while he remained inside (I Kings 16:18).

7. Judas

- a. His guilt over betraying Christ and his inability to undo it drove him to kill himself (Matt. 27:5).

B. Suicide is the ultimate expression of black and white thinking. People view themselves as totally good or bad. Situations are also perceived as totally good or bad.

1. Any improvement is not viewed as a positive thing.
2. Relief may have been just around the corner but they just could not wait.

C. Suicide is a response to intolerable physical or emotional pain that appears to have no end. They feel it is the only way out of the pain. They feel hopeless and helpless. They may feel they are so wounded emotionally they cannot picture themselves being healed or surviving as long as healing may take.

1. These feelings may come on the heels of rejection or personal failure.
2. Rejection feels absolute and permanent resulting in leaving them feeling unlovable or with a lifetime of unbearable loneliness.
3. The hopelessness and helplessness are a part of the syndrome called depression.
4. If a person has a low threshold for pain and experiences chronic pain, they become candidates for suicide (Crisis, p. 99).
5. The pain is not viewed as opportunity to build the godly quality of endurance that James states is the result of pain in the first place (James 1:1-4).

D. Suicide may be a surrender to overwhelming responsibilities. It is the final abdication of responsibility. It is the choice of “none” when “all” is possible.

1. The apostle Paul declares that we are able to do anything that God (not man) expects of us through Christ who gives us the energy to do it.
2. Often the feelings of being overwhelmed come from the failure to determine what is in our circle of responsibility.

E. Suicide may be an answer to an impossible dilemma.

1. The only way out of an abusive relationship. It is a failure to see choices.
2. It could be the only apparent solution to a situation that demands giving up something that is precious.
 - a. One nurse took her life because the courts said she could not have the new husband she loved in the same house as her daughter that he molested.

F. Suicide may be the choice of one who cannot see through the fog of the crisis of the moment.

1. They are in pain now but cannot draw up any past consolation or hope.
2. They may be experiencing some kind of stress, pain, emotion or defeat. They are overwhelmed and decide to commit suicide. These may call for help and are easiest to help (Crisis, p. 99).

G. Suicide is not caused just by a wish to die.

1. It can be an expression of hopelessness and despair.
2. It can reflect intolerable rage or guilt.

H. Suicide is the ultimate means to control one's destiny when life feels out of their control. Suicide allows one not only to choose the means but to select the time of death.

I. Suicide can be viewed as a sacrifice. They reason that others would be better off without them. They may feel they are a burden. Some consider life insurance or other financial advantages that death may bring the family.

J. Suicide can also be a hateful act of revenge because it is the willful act of abandonment of others.

1. It is a message that others have failed disastrously and irrevocably.
2. It could lead to the fulfillment of a child's fantasy of revenge, "You'll be sorry when I'm dead."
3. Their desire to hurt back is stronger than their desire to live.

K. Suicide is viewed as liberation from torment and depression.

1. The person may be sitting on a high level of unacceptable anger as a result of a series of events in his life over which he has no control. Ultimately, he turns this repressed rage against himself in suicide (Crisis, p. 99).
2. It is common for deeply depressed people to show a sudden elevation of mood once a decision to die has been made.
3. Now they can present themselves as peaceful and content.
4. Normally these people are determined and their attempts are lethal.

L. Some fantasize that suicide is a reunion with the dead. This comes from the tendency to idealize the dead.

1. The longing for the reunion may be seen by the choice or the method a particular person may select to die. It may even resemble a particular person's mode of death or even mimic it precisely if that person also died by suicide.

M. Suicide can often be ambivalent. In many cases the suicidal act may allow for some chance of rescue.

N. Suicide is a fantasy of dying without death. It is a chance to seek the love and devotion in death that was missing in life. It is like attending one's own funeral and viewing people pouring out their love on the one they now miss.

O. Suicide leaves an enduring legacy.

1. Survivors are scarred for life.
2. Children experience horrible rejection, abandonment, guilt and rage as they come to grips with the death personally.
3. The foundation of their security and trust is shaken.
4. Their sense of order is turned upside down. Something beyond their wildest imagination has happened.
5. The world is now a treacherous place.
6. What was once forbidden is now simply one of the options for escaping pain.
7. If a parent kills himself, his children become many more times likely to eventually end their lives the same way. It is one wound that time can never heal completely.

P. Suicide can be viewed as taking power and control over others. He is like a terrorist who takes hostages to get everyone's attention. He makes demands and when they are not met he will kill himself.

1. Immature boyfriend will threaten to kill himself if his girlfriend leaves him.
2. The results of such black mail are usually destructive.
3. If the relational demands are met the threats are very likely to be repeated as a means of control. It is a form of black mail. The lover who refrains from breaking up a relationship because of threats of suicide is a prisoner who will look hard for ways of escape at the earliest opportunity.

Part II Myths about Suicide

A. Suicide and attempted suicides are the same thing.

1. Suicide is committed usually by one who wants to die.
2. Attempted suicide is a cry for help. They want to change something and want to be rescued.

B. Suicide only happens in a specific class of people.

1. It is no respecter of persons, rich or poor.
2. White males have a higher rate than black males.

3. Men outnumber women in committing suicide.

C. Once a person is suicidal, he is suicidal forever.

1. Not true. Why? They may have discovered answers to their problems or acquired better tools for living.

D. Suicide is inherited or runs in the family.

1. If a family member has committed suicide, this fact could cause a person to be fearful of their own future behavior.
2. Although suicidal tendencies are not inherited, the family environment and examples may be influential. Remember, it is a learned behavior, not an inherited behavior.

E. If a person is a truly born again Christian, he will not commit suicide.

1. Not true. No one is immune to it.
2. He was born again in his spirit (John 3:6), not soul (mind, will and emotions), therefore, he is subject to all the physical and emotional pain of life.
3. Both Christians and non Christians can experience all kinds of physical and emotional pain and disorders.

F. Suicide and depression are the same.

1. Those who attempt suicide may be experiencing a high level of stress and yet others may experience stress without thoughts of suicide.
2. Suicide does not occur only when there is unhappiness or depression. Depression is not a sign of suicidal thoughts, but if one is depressed, it would be good to be alert to any thoughts or indications of the possibility of suicide.

G. Improvement after a suicidal crisis means that the risk of suicide is over.

1. Almost half the persons who were in a suicidal crisis and actually committed suicide do so within three months of having passed through their first crisis.
2. It appears that the period of time immediately following a suicidal crisis is critical.
3. If a person immediately states that his problems are solved and seems overly happy, then we ought to be wary and concerned (Crisis, p. 100, 101).

Bibliography

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