

Anxiety & Fear

There is a wide range of terms to describe levels of emotional reaction toward an expectation of perceived future evil or danger. The mind is disturbed by the uncertainty or expectation with various levels of uneasiness ranging from mild to painful. Words describing this emotional state listed from mild to severe are: uneasiness or disturbance, trouble or solicitude, anxiety, fear, fright, dread, terror. The stronger the apprehension of impending danger or expected evil, the stronger the emotional disturbance and corresponding actions. Generally, but not always, the level of apprehension is directly related to the clarity, possibility and seriousness of the impending danger or expected evil. For example, a vague danger is usually at the uneasiness or troubled level. A clearly defined danger that has remote possibility is usually at the troubled level if the danger is mild, but at the anxiety level if it is serious. A clearly defined and impending danger will be at the fear level or higher depending on the seriousness of it.

Note that the danger does not have to be real to cause an emotional disturbance leading to even irrational mental thought and actions; it only has to be perceived as real. This is why identification of the source of the anxiety or fear becomes important. Fears with a basis in incorrect perceptions - falsehoods, lies, etc., will be dealt with in a slightly different way than those based in reality. Both types of fears - rational and irrational - will be overcome in similar ways in some respects, but the irrational fears will also have to have their false premises exposed in order to gain correct thinking.

The following should be considered when trying to understand an anxiety or fear

#1 - Emotional Circle: Feelings of anxiety are often related to unacknowledged feelings of anger and guilt.

Reason: Unwanted emotions may serve a wanted function. A claimed painful emotion or condition can often represent an acceptable strategy for expressing unacceptable emotions and reaching wrong goals. For example, A) The child that claims to be sick to avoid a school test (the related anxiety can cause actual physiological problems). Being sick is an acceptable reason to miss school, not wanting to take a test because you are not prepared is not acceptable. B) The wife that claims a headache because she is mad at her husband and therefore does not want to be intimate with him. Physical pain is considered a valid excuse, holding a grudge is not acceptable.

#2 - Volitional Circle

Feelings of anxiety which once served a useful purpose can become “functionally autonomous” and continue to grow despite the absence of continued secondary pain.

Example - A child that was defended by the parents as being “shy” and therefore excused from rude behavior of properly greeting others or even of playing with other children becomes self-fulfilling as the child grows older and the anxiety of being in new situations, meeting new people, experiencing new things, etc. becomes a controlling fear of public places (agoraphobia). The result is increasing isolation even to levels of becoming an eccentric hermit. Such a person may express the desire to be able to go out in public and experience new things, but the irrational emotional circle controls, and the anxiety may even cause physical ailments when attempts to overcome them are made (stomach upset, etc.).

#3 - Rational Circle

Feelings of anxiety are most quickly terminated by avoiding the anxiety-producing stimulus. Avoidance is therefore reinforced.

Example: A child that stutters is assigned to lead a class meeting once a week. Each time that meeting came up, the child “suddenly” developed some physical malady to avoid the possible embarrassment that could occur if he tried to fulfill the assignment. The result was reinforcing the idea of avoiding the fearful situation into a belief that the best way to face fear was to avoid the situations that might cause it. The short term strategy works quickly, but it never overcomes the basis of the fear resulting in the problem usually getting worse. In this case, the wrongful strategy could become avoiding any situation in which some flaw - stuttering - would cause embarrassment. Protecting oneself from possible ridicule becomes controlling.

It takes maturity to endure short term pain for long term gain, and doing it produces greater maturity.

#4 - Personal Circle

Sometimes the dreaded and avoided stimulus involves a perceived assault on the person’s self-worth.

Example: The person who stuttered came to believe that his worth depended on being approved of by others, so avoiding situations in which he might not be approved such as public speaking became a strategy to fulfill that goal.

Example: Fear of water can be caused by a number of initial sources such as swallowed water while trying to swim, reading about someone drowning, watching a frightening movie about a fish that eats people, etc. That initial emotional response controlled the behavior so that the person started to avoid the water. Since the anxiety was reduced by this, the person felt better each time he avoided the water and came to believe that avoiding water was the strategy of choice even though that strategy cost him having fun in the water. It became more important to avoid the fear of water as a strategy for succeeding in life than in what others thought or missing out on the fun others were having.

#5 - Anxiety can result in double-mindedness (James 1:8)

A person’s fear of losing control in an area that is important to them may result in seemingly unrelated symptoms.

Example: A person’s desire to be hospitable is sabotaged by his desire to remain in control of situations. A) She serves a dinner, but stays so focused on all the minute details of the meal that she fails to enter into any meaningful conversation with her guests. B) He invites people to come to his house for dinner, but is uncomfortable when a hospitality gift is given to him, in fact, he tries to give it back. C). She goes out of her way to help someone in great need, but then returns a thank you gift from that person.

The cure for double-mindedness is a clear commitment to do things God’s way and define a strategy for following that commitment.

Biblical Guidelines for Resolving Fear & Anxiety.

#1 - Perfect love casts out fear - 1 John 4:18 cf. Romans 5:8

When you become aware of and choose to trust Jesus' love for you, then you will be willing to do whatever He asks while trusting Him for the outcome.

#2 - God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline - 2 Tim. 1:7

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me - Phil. 4:3 (the context of this is being content in any circumstance)

The feared stimulus must be faced if any meaningful change is to take place. If the person chooses to face that fear and is willing to remain in the presence / experience the feared stimulus until the fear subsides, the person will experience meaningful and lasting reduction in fear. The person must not depend on a gimmick to reduce the fear. The essential ingredient is the choice to face the fear

#3 - Christians are to love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith - 1 Tim. 1:5

Look for the ulterior motive (secondary gain) behind the anxiety response.

“Hysterical symptoms” are physical problems with no organic base which serve a useful purpose to the person. A helpful question to ask in assessing a physical problem as a possible “hysterical symptom” is “*How would things be different if you did not have this problem?*” If the answer is only that they would feel better without mention of an additional activity they could engage in, there is probably not a secondary gain involved. If they do mention additional activities, then the physical symptoms could be a hysterical response. Until ulterior purposes (secondary gains) are resolved, the person will not give up their anxieties.

Reducing fear

Find out what they believe and are thinking and replace those with Biblical truth

Consider possible ulterior motives and deal with those

Plan a program of gradual exposure to the area of fear stimulus. Do this as gradually as required by the person, but insist that the person choose to approach their fears.

Fear / Anxiety Case Studies

Read through all the situations below. Pick one or two and write out how you would respond to the situation and counsel those involved. Include in your answer:

- *What test of faith may be involved or what sin(s) is being yielding to.
- *The questions you might ask to uncover what might be going on in their Emotional; Volitional; Rational and Personal circles;
- *Relevant Bible verses that would expose sin and encourage them in the faith and in a righteous response;
- *Advice you would give on how to handle the situation being faced.

Remember the basic counseling flow chart & basic stages of counseling handed out previously

Stage 1: Identify presenting problem (The test)

Stage 2: Identify problem emotion (E)

Stage 3: Identify problem behavior (V)

Stage 4: Identify problem thinking (R)

Teach Biblical commands concerning problem areas (Correction of V, R & P)

Stage 5: Clarify Biblical thinking (R)

Stage 6: Secure volitional commitment (V)

Stage 7: Plan and carry out Biblical behavior (V)

Stage 8: Identify Spirit controlled emotions (E)

Case Study #1

A lady in your church has been seeing a psychiatrist for some strange fears she has developed. Just recently she has become a Christian and believes that Christ can deal with the problem more adequately. There is no outwardly apparent reason for her fears. They seem to come on her without an connection to fearful events. How would you treat this problem?

Case Study #2

A person in your church has become convicted by the pastor's sermons and their own Bible study that he/she is not serving the Lord as he/she should. You know them only superficially because he/she is only comes to the morning service and usually leave as soon as the service is over. In talking with him/her you find out the following: The person has been a Christian for two years and came to Christ through reading the Bible. He/she has a PhD and works as a laboratory research scientist. His/her favorite hobbies are reading and playing musical instruments - but can not imagine playing in front of anyone. Upon further inquiry it becomes clear that he/she has no close friends and all their activities are solitary. He/she claims to be shy and prefers being alone. How will you help them fulfill their stated desire of learning to serve the Lord?

Case Study #3

A teenager in your church comes to you and pours out his / her heart about having a poor self-image. The teen says this has been a problem since early childhood. There are no obvious sin issues that you can discern. In fact, this young person is one of the exemplary young people in the church. The teen confides that in the last month or so the problem has surfaced again with some intensity. How will you deal with this problem?

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Presenting problem: Strange fears which come upon her suddenly - an anxiety attack?

Problem emotion: fear - have her describe in greater detail what this fear is like. What is the strength of the fear - describe how she feels.

Problem behavior: unknown - find out what she does as a result of these fears

Problem thinking: unknown - find out what she is thinking when these fears come upon her as well as the thinking underlying her actions. Why does she choose to respond in those particular ways to her fear.

Since there is no connection to fearful events, (though, keep in mind that she must define what a fearful event would be - ask her what kinds of things do make her fearful?). The problem could have an organic component. What is her age? Has she had a physical check up? What are her hormone levels like?

Relevant Biblical Commands: She already understands that Christ is adequate to overcome her fears. Have her start by memorizing general Bible verses dealing with anxiety and responding properly to it - Philippians 4:6,7; 1 Peter 5:6-7; etc. She should also be familiar with Matthew 6, Isaiah 40, etc. and the various Psalms by which the Psalmist overcame fears.

Clarify Biblical thinking - help her to apply the Biblical truths in her life in all areas that can be identified. Learning to think and apply Biblical truth in one area will usually also affect the areas not identified.

Secure volitional commitment - Get her to commit to working on at least one identified area at a time and practicing at least one Biblical principle towards anxiety - i.e. praying when anxious, recalling and saying relevant Bible verses, etc.

Plan & Carry out Biblical behavior - put the specifics of the plan into action.

Case Study #2

A person in your church has become convicted by the pastor's sermons and their own Bible study that he/she is not serving the Lord as he/she should. You know them only superficially because he/she is only comes to the morning service and usually leave as soon as the service is over. In talking with him/her you find out the following: The person has been a Christian for two years and came to Christ through reading the Bible. He/she has a PhD and works as a laboratory research scientist. His/her favorite hobbies are reading and playing musical instruments - but can not imagine playing in front of anyone. Upon further inquiry it becomes clear that he/she has no close friends and all their activities are solitary. He/she claims to be shy and prefers being alone. How will you help them fulfill their stated desire of learning to serve the Lord?

Presenting problem: Need to serve the Lord, but not knowing how.

Problem emotion: Apprehension about doing things with other people. Explore reasons for shyness and any fear underlying it.

Problem behavior: Shyness that has resulted in isolation. Explore depth of this behavior. Does it include active avoidance or is it generally passive due to choices of lifestyle?

Problem thinking: Some thought patterns have ended up excluding any meaningful involvement in the lives of other people. Explore reasons for this.

Relevant Biblical Commands : The various verses about being involved with one another, Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 14, Ephesians 4 - The importance of body life.

Clarify Biblical thinking. Make sure it is clear to him/her what God desires in his/her life including personal involvement with others - even if that is at the risk of getting hurt.

Secure volitional commitment - to start in at least one area. Start with what seems safest to him / her and then increase involvement with others. Perhaps individual discipleship, then a small group, then serving in that small group, then expanding from there.

Plan & Carry out Biblical behavior - Secure specific plan and implement.

Also do a Spiritual gifts inventory and then suggest appropriate areas to begin to explore ways to serve God. Introduce him/her to other people that can help get him / her involved in a particular ministry that is indicated by the inventory and of interest to the individual.

Case Study #3

A teenager in your church comes to you and pours out his / her heart about having a poor self-image. The teen says this has been a problem since early childhood. There are no obvious sin issues that you can discern. In fact, this young person is one of the exemplary young people in the church. The teen confides that in the last month or so the problem has surfaced again with some intensity. How will you deal with this problem?

Presenting problem: Poor self-image that has become intense. Clarify exactly what is meant by having a poor self-image. Anxious? Inadequate? Disappointed? Ashamed?

Problem emotion: It appears to be fear, but it could be pride. Look for elements of it

Problem behavior: Identify what behaviors the teen is having because of this.

Problem thinking: Identify what thoughts are leading to the behaviors, what thoughts are present when he / her is having feeling of a “low self-image.”

Relevant Biblical Commands - Go over verses that stress that our identify is to be in Jesus Christ and Him alone - we are His slaves - Romans 6, etc., bought with the price of His blood - 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Peter 1:18; crucified with him - Gal. 2:20. Nothing other than Christ living in us needs to be known - 1 Cor. 2:2; We are to think of ourselves rightly - Romans 12:3f. Humility is the key to living the Christian life - 1 Peter 5:5-6

Clarify Biblical thinking: Make sure the teen understand the source of proper self-esteem

Secure volitional commitment: to at least one step towards living with a proper self-esteem

Plan & Carry out Biblical behavior - Make plans specific.

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Suicide

People generally consider suicide for the same reasons they may feel depressed. The essence of the desire to commit suicide is to escape the feeling of hopelessness. Life is not considered to be worth living. It usually has an element of escape from a painful situation and often may include an element of revenge.

Whenever suicide is mentioned or even just alluded to, it must be addressed directly.

Immediate steps when suicide is mentioned or alluded to:

- 1) Bring out veiled threats into the open. Ask directly, *“Are you giving any consideration to suicide?”*

You will not be introducing the idea to him, only clarifying what he is or may be thinking. If he is not thinking about it, you can simply say you are glad and then go on with your conversation / counseling. IF he is thinking about it, then continue.

- 2) Determine the level of seriousness. Is it just a passing thought, something he has given thought to, something he has fantasized about, something he has planned - and if so, what is his plan? If he has a plan, then determine the following:
 - A) What is his plan - specifically? Get the details.
 - B) Is it lethal?
 - C) Does he have the means to carry it out in the immediate future?
 - D) When is he planning to do it?

Other considerations in considering the seriousness of thoughts about suicide:

- a) Previous attempts (4 times more probable to act)
- b) Family or friends that have committed suicide (4 times more probable to act)
- c) No close relationships - The person does not feel needed, valued or wanted
- d) The person is dominated emotionally by the feeling of hopelessness
- e) The person has no strong religious or philosophical objection to suicide.

- 3) Taking action.

- A) Do not let your anxiety show. Be confident, directive and warmly firm.
- B) Get the person to tell you what has caused the immediate crises. Be empathetic, but not overly sympathetic (which would reinforce the hopelessness). Avoid entering into a power struggle with him.
- C) Be gentle, but firm. Give clear directions on what to do. Make it clear that suicide will not solve the problem - whatever it is - ultimately ending pain or seeking revenge
- D) Secure a commitment that he will not kill himself until after you can meet and talk with him (provides hope and relationship) - or 24 hours - or whatever you can secure.
- E) Make sure you know his definite plans for the next 12-24 hours. The crisis time is short. If he lives for 24 hours after the temptation is strongest, the risk is lessened
- F) Beware if he becomes suddenly calm. That may mean he is high risk because he has decided to kill himself. If you wonder why he is calm, ask directly.
- G) If you believe the risk could be serious, call the authorities - or better, get someone else to call the authorities so while you are talking. It is much better to have him mad at you than dead. Professionals at the scene can make a much better assessment than you can over the phone.

- 4) Future Action

The person needs to get counseling to help resolve the underlying issues.
He will also need close accountability to not fall back into the temptation.

Dealing with the aftermath of a suicide

There are many factors in our society that have resulted in increasing rates of suicide including, but not limited to: selfishness, low value of life, priority on escape from pain, nihilism, high rates of people on medication for depression, economic collapse, societal decline, destruction of previous way of life, war, invasion. The new reality is that you may have to deal with the suicide of someone you know, perhaps even a close friend or relative.

While each suicide may have different underlying specific causes, the general causes (as mentioned above) will be the same. Ultimately suicide is usually done out of a motivation to escape pain or an effort at revenge, or possibly both. A particular suicide may be successful in these endeavors to a limited degree, but is never ultimately successful.

For non-Christians, suicide to escape physical or emotional pain will end the present pain being experienced in this life, but it immediately puts them into suffering that will last for eternity in being separated from God and experiencing what is described in multiple scriptures as physical pain (See: Matthew 3:12; 13:17-50; 25:41; Luke 16:21-31; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Revelation 20:12-15).

Suicide as an effort of revenge is short sighted. While it may or may not create emotional turmoil for others, those others continue to live which means there is hope for change and happiness for them, while the person who commits suicide begins their eternal suffering.

For Christians, suicide to escape physical or emotional pain will end the present pain being experienced in this life, but it removes from them the joys that could have been theirs if they had instead trusted God in life. A Christian will still enter heaven, but without the crowns that could have been earned. They will be forgiven, but there will be eternal regret about what should have been if they had been obedient to God and trusted him. Suicide does call into question the nature of the faith professed by the individual. That brings shame on Christ. Whether the person was or was not an actual Christian must be left in God's hands. Many people are self-deceived about their true relationship with Christ. At the same time, Christians can become so despondent that they lose proper focus and yield to the temptations offered in the present to escape present pain in an improper manner. Suicide is a sinful attempt to escape pain.

Suicide as a means of revenge is also opposite of Christian character and will also result in the losses as noted above. And though it may cause emotional turmoil for those left behind, since they are alive, there is hope for change and happiness for them.

In short, suicide cannot fulfill the ultimate goals of the one committing it.

Hope for those left behind.

- 1) The responsibility of suicide is always ultimately in the hands of that individual himself.
- 2) Any guilt felt towards a suicide must be explored as to any actual failure as opposed to perceived failure. Perceived failure is thinking that if you had done something differently, you could have kept the person alive, but it is actually unreasonable that you were or could have been aware, or could have actually done something to prevent it. In these cases, comfort is taken in God's sovereignty. Actual failure is being cognitively aware and purposely failing to take reasonable action to prevent it. In these cases, forgiveness can be found in Jesus Christ.
- 3) Pursue a vibrant life in Christ. Like any other tragedy, focus on the suicide is the wrong focus. The focus must be on Christ and how He wants you to respond and live life. The memory of the suicide will always be tragic and sad, but allowing it to change the focus and direction of your life is wrong. Learn what you can from it and use it to teach and warn others. Be honest, but do not become introspective about it. A person who takes his / her life at his / her own hands is a tragedy, not a hero or a martyr, so do not let the memory of him / her put him / her in such a position. Even if the suicide was done as a means of revenge, do not let yourself be a victim of it.

Suicide Counseling Situations

Read through all the situations below. Pick one of the situations below and write out how you would respond to the situation and counsel those involved. Include in your answer:

- *What test of their faith may be involved or what sin(s) to which he / she is yielding
- *The questions you might ask to uncover what might be going on in his / her Emotional; Volitional; Rational and Personal circles;
- *Relevant Bible verses that would expose sin and encourage him / her in the faith and a righteous response;
- *Advise you would give on how to handle the situation being faced.

Remember the basic counseling flow chart & basic stages of counseling handed out previously

Counseling Situation # 1

A man calls you on the phone and tells you his friend is threatening suicide. He manages to get his friend on the phone. You know him to be an upstanding man and not involved in any sin of which you are aware. You do learn that his business associate has cheated him and left him to file bankruptcy. What steps will you take to deal with his threat? What will you do if the threat appears to be trying to get attention? What will you do if it appears to be serious? How will you counsel him if you are able to get him to come see you face to face?

Counseling Situation #2

A woman comes to see you for help in dealing with the sudden suicide of her cousin. It is a problem for the whole extended family who are close to each other. He was a young man just out of college. He had made a profession of faith in high school, but he had changed a lot in college. He had become increasingly dark spending more and more of his time alone in his basement apartment. He had become involved in online fantasy games. As she looks back at the situation, there were clues that something serious was wrong, but either no one picked up how bad they were or acted upon them. This has left her and others in the family feeling guilty. She had talked with him briefly the week prior to his suicide but he / she did not show much interest in what she was telling him about the family, but was more interested in getting back to a game he / she was playing which sounded strange to her. He / she turned down her invitation to come to a family function that coming Sunday afternoon. She was shocked at the funeral when she saw his body in the casket and how much weight he / she had lost. He / she had left a brief note that was cryptic and confusing, but ended with a statement that he / she wanted to go see Jesus. How will you help her deal with this tragedy? What advice can you give her as she tries to comfort other family members, some of whom are saved, and some of whom are not saved?

Counseling Situation #3

How does one cope with the loss of a sibling to suicide? Being there were no signs they were going that route and there was no goodbye? How do you help one through all of the anger, self-blame, guilt, and heart ache? How do you explain where that sibling is in eternity being the sibling believed in God, believed he was going to heaven sooner, was open to the gospel and yet lived a life contrary to it? This was my older brother and I did get the chance to witness to him. He accepted what I had said but then committed suicide by hanging himself from tree in woods. He believed he was going to heaven and his last words were why can't someone commit suicide and still go to Heaven. This has really kept me from sharing gospel with others as I blamed myself for his death and not seeing all the signs until it was too late. My younger brother is not saved and this has really affected him. He buries himself in his work.

Counseling Situations - Suicide

Counseling Situation # 1

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A. Initial Response

My initial response to a suicide threat is to remain calm and try to determine the probability of the person actually killing himself. I would then try to prevent him from carrying out his threat of suicide. This can be done through getting him to promise not to kill himself until he can meet with me, through getting family or friends to stay with him, or if the situation is very dangerous, even calling the police and having him committed to a hospital for 24 - 72 hrs observation. The first 12 to 24 hours after a suicide threat are crucial, because generally if the person makes it through this period of strong temptation, the major crisis is passed.

B. Approach.

Presenting Problem: Most of my initial questions would be designed to bring out veiled threats into the open where they can be discussed. These initial questions would also be designed to help me determine the seriousness of the threat and to find out where he is currently located. Important factors in determining the risk are: 1) Does the person have a plan to commit suicide? 2) Is that plan lethal? and 3) Can the plan be carried out quickly? The more of these questions that can be answered affirmatively, the greater the risk of the person actually committing suicide. For example, if the person thinks he might try to overdose on sleeping pills, but will have to go out and buy them, and does not have access to anything except over the counter medicine - then the risk factor is low. The plan is not thought through. The means of suicide is not lethal, and the ability to kill himself is not immediately available. However, if the person plans to shoot himself in the head with a 38 caliber pistol, and he has the pistol in his hand, and it is loaded - then there is a great risk. He has the plan well formulated, he has the means to carry out the plan immediately, and that means is lethal. As the risk of actual suicide goes up, the more imperative it is that I would find out exactly where he is at the moment and get someone (myself, the police, or someone else) to be with him as soon as possible. This is vital to his continued existence.

Questions designed to find out these things are: Are you planning to kill yourself? Where are you right now? Are you at home? (at work, etc.), How do you intend to commit suicide? Do you have the means (the gun, knife, pills, rope, etc.) with you right now? Have you thought about this before? Have you attempted this before? When are you planning to do it? etc. Even if he does not answer these questions when I first ask him, I would continue to press for answers to them, especially the questioning as to where he is currently located. I would also continue to seek to secure from the him a promise that he will not kill himself in the immediate future, while at the same time I would be trying to give him some hope.

Identify problem emotions, behaviors and thinking and correct with Biblical commands: My next set of questions would be designed to determine the immediate cause of the current crisis, and then show him how that killing himself will not solve the situation. In this particular case the cause seems related to his business associate cheating him and leaving him to file for bankruptcy. Questions to ask include: When did you find out about what your partner has done to you? What are your options

in view of this situation? Have you talked to anyone else about how to solve these problems? How do you think killing yourself will solve this problem? The root problem the man has is that he is currently falsely believing that suicide will somehow achieve some goal. A large part of my job from that point on will be to show him why killing himself will not accomplish his goal, and then point him back to God. Regardless of the goal, (including revenge, escape, insurance, etc.) suicide cannot accomplish it.

If his goal is revenge on his partner, I would point out first of all that revenge belongs to the Lord (Romans 12), not us, so his motive for suicide is a sin. I would also ask him rhetorically, "*Will suicide really get revenge on your partner?*" The actual fact is that if his partner was willing to cheat him and leave him in the current mess, then it is not very likely that this partner would have any negative response even if he did commit suicide. In short, killing himself will not achieve the desired goal.

If his goal was to escape from the situation, I would first point out that the Lord has promised to meet all of our needs (Matt. 6, Phil. 4). His desire to escape shows that he does not believe God and is in essence saying that God is a liar - and that is sin. I would also point out that suicide is self murder and is therefore a sin in itself, and God has promised to never let us fall into any temptation beyond what we are able to withstand, and He will always strengthen us to either endure through it, or provide us a means of escape from that temptation to sin. For him to commit suicide would be to commit a multitude of sins. I would also probe him about the selfishness of the act of suicide for the purpose of escape. How would his friends and family feel? What would it do to those who rely on him to have a lot of their needs met - his family, employees, business accounts, etc? Basically, suicide would be a selfish act that would hurt a lot of innocent people - many of whom he loves. Suicide would also not be an escape, because he would then have to face God and explain his sin.

If the person was seeking insurance money, I would tell him right then that since I now know about his motive, I would bring it to the attention of the insurance company if he did commit suicide, and there would be no coverage.

There is usually a feeling of depression and hopelessness that accompanies the thought of suicide. So another part of my task will be to reassure him that there is hope. Part of restoring hope will be to redirect him as to the purpose of life. This will include redirecting him from his wrong goals for life to proper goals. Goals which God wants him to have - pleasing Him, loving others and fulfilling the responsibilities God gives him. Another important aspect of restoring hope is re-assuring him that there are those that care. The fact that God cares is absolute (Rom 5:8, etc.). And even if he does not believe any other human cares about him, I can tell him that I do and I am willing to work with him. (Since he called me to talk, he may already partially believe this and called out of hope to be reassured of it).

Secure volitional commitment: Before hanging up the phone, I would make sure that any current means of suicide has been removed, that he has definite plans for the next 12-24 hours, that if needed there will be someone with him during that time, and finally that a follow-up meeting will take place at a definite time and place