

BAPTIST MINISTRY SEMINAR – SESSION 5

Suicide: Satan's Siren Song

“Suicide is most common among those who have lost all faith in Christianity.” --Dr. Charles Hodge, Princeton Theologian

- I. Suicides in the Bible
 - A. Saul and His Armor Bearer (I Samuel 31:1-13)
 1. Saul had had come to a day of tremendous defeat at the hands of the Philistines. Several tragedies befall Saul:
 - a. He was clearly losing the battle against the Philistines (1).
 - b. His sons had been killed in battle (2).
 - c. Saul had been seriously, though not necessarily mortally, wounded (3).
 - d. Saul viewed his situation as hopeless. He had run out of resources (4). (Note: Saul made no reference to faith in God though at the most trying time of life.)
 - e. Saul viewed suicide as a way of ending present suffering and preventing future misery (4).
 - f. Saul's actions perpetuated the myth of “death as deliverance,” inciting a copy-cat response from his armor bearer (5).
 2. Most theologians entertain significant doubt as to Saul's spiritual status. In fact, many Bible scholars view Saul as an unbeliever—that while Jewish by blood, he was not a true child of Abraham by faith.
 3. If Saul were indeed an unbeliever, suicide took him out of the frying pan and into the fire.
 - B. Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27:3-10; Acts 1:16-20)
 1. Tremendous guilt over the condemnation of Christ precipitated Judas' suicide (Mt. 27:3, 4).
 2. Judas did not find relief in personal remorse (3 “repented himself”), nor in restitution (3 “brought again the thirty pieces of silver), nor in confession to human religious leaders (4 “I have sinned...).
 3. Scripture teaches that Judas was a lost man who had hardened his heart against the words of Christ. His actions were his own choice, but they were predicted in the prophetic Scriptures (John 17:12).
 - C. The suicides of Saul, his armor bearer, and Judas involve men of at least doubtful spiritual status. The Bible makes it clear the Judas was an unbeliever, and both Saul and his armor bearer are of questionable spiritual condition.
- II. Professing Christians Who Commit Suicide

- A. There is no example in the Bible regarding a professing believer committing suicide.
- B. It is possible for anyone—believer or unbeliever—to be overcome with temporary insanity or an altered mental condition resulting in suicide.
 - 1. Certainly, suicide should not be a common occurrence among professing Christians.
 - 2. Mounting medical evidence indicates the possibility of certain medications promoting suicide.
 - 3. Prolonged pain can alter personality, perhaps resulting in suicide.
- C. Does a professing Christian who commits suicide go to heaven?
 - 1. Because the Scriptures are silent as to this question, only a cautious position should be taken.
 - 2. Some argue that apart from an altered mental condition no true Christian could commit suicide.
 - 3. Dr. Charles Hodge of Princeton has written:

It is a very complicated crime; our life is not our own; we have no more right to destroy our life than we have to destroy the life of a fellow-man. Suicide is, therefore, self murder....It is a crime which admits of no repentance and, consequently involves the loss of the soul.

- 4. Dr. D. James Kennedy states,

I believe, and most theologians would agree, that it is possible even for a Christian to have temporary or even permanent insanity—loss of the rational faculties; and therefore even a believer could, in such a mental state as that, commit suicide without the forfeiture of his soul.

- 5. Given the lack of Scriptural example and the learned doubt of many theologians, it would be unwise to grant blanket assurance that professed believers who commit suicide go to heaven.

III. Suicide and America's Adolescents

A. Factors Contributing to Teen Suicide

- 1. Breakup of the family—the loss of any intense, personal relationship.
- 2. Drug or alcohol abuse
- 3. Prevalent mental disorders—including unruly conduct, anorexia nervosa and bulimia, and clinical depression
- 4. Sexual abuse—especially true of females.
- 5. Friends or family members who attempted or committed suicide
- 6. Recent unpleasant life changes—unhappy move, visible failure, loss of friends, personal rejection, etc. 76% of those attempting suicide cited unpleasant life changes as their reason.
- 7. Societal glamorization of death—rock music, violent videos, etc.
- 8. Precipitating events—when long term problems are coupled with a specific negative event.
 - a. problems with parents
 - b. problems with the opposite sex
 - c. problems with brothers or sisters

- d. problems with peers
- e. psychotic symptoms

B. Warning Signs of Impending Suicide:

1. Depressed Mood—“The largest number of those adolescents who attempt suicide are not psychotic....The overwhelming clinical, observable fact is that, at the time of the attempt, they are depressed.”—Joseph. D. Teicher, *Suicide and Suicide Attempts*
2. Changes in Sleep and/or Appetite Patterns
3. Decline in School Performance
4. Increased Social Withdrawal
5. Loss of interest and pleasure in previously enjoyable activities
6. Preoccupation with themes of death. (If your child keeps a diary or regular written correspondence, you have a duty to read it—even without his/her knowledge!)
7. Increased irritability and behavior problems
8. Verbal expressions about self-death
9. Giving away important possessions
10. Use of alcohol or drugs
11. History of previous suicide attempts
12. History of physical, mental, emotional, or sexual abuse
13. History of learning disabilities combined with a sense of failure
14. Frequent sleeping disorders or complaints
15. Sudden interest in dangerous activities or uncharacteristic risk-taking
16. Inattention to personal hygiene
17. Rebelliousness, belligerence
18. Depression or grief following loss of emotionally supportive “significant other” relationships
19. Sudden lifting of severe depression
20. Recent withdrawal from therapy or psychological counseling

<u>Symptoms of Depression (passive)</u>		
Obvious unhappiness	Withdrawal and isolation	Feelings of helplessness
Unusual fatigue	Self-neglect	Sad or negative thoughts
Inability to concentrate	Physical complaints	Excessive sleeping
Excessive eating/dieting	Sexual disorders	Fear of nervous breakdown
<u>Symptoms of Depression (active)</u>		
Defiance	Rebellion	Disobedience
Delinquency	Running away	Drug abuse
Truancy	Academic/Social failure	Sexual promiscuity