

**Suicide Presentation for Adults of the Yadkin Valley Luther League  
of The Carolinas Mission District  
Part I      Pastor Tom Corbell**

- **Basic thoughts on suicide.**

*We cannot tear out a single page of our life, but we can throw the whole book in the fire.*  
—George Sand

*Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.*  
—Phil Donahue

*Cutting, and suicide, two very different symptoms of the same problem, are gaining on us. I personally don't know a single person who doesn't know at least two of these victims personally.*  
Singer and Songwriter —Pink

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the United States

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) WISQARS Leading Causes of Death Reports, in 2017:

- Suicide was the tenth leading cause of death overall in the United States, claiming the lives of over 47,000 people a year.
- **Suicide was the second leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 10 and 34**, and the fourth leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 35 and 54.
- In 2018 There were more than twice as many suicides (47,173) in the United States as there were homicides (19,510).
- Veterans exhibit significantly higher suicide risk compared with the US general population.
- Twice as many men commit suicide than women.
- Suicide among whites is higher than among blacks.
- Suicide among divorced people is higher than those who are married.
- Suicide is equally distributed across all levels of society.

In the book *Suicide: A Cry for Help* p. 63, the chapter entitled: *By Any Name It's Tragic.*

*Those who die for their faith, or a strong belief, are called martyrs.  
Those who die in the line of duty, such as service men and women, are called heroes.  
Those who die while saving others are called brave and selfless.  
And those who die by their own hand are called suicides.*

*Death before dishonor and suicide for love have been popular among poets and playwrights for centuries. (William Shakespeare and Romeo and Juliet.) On paper or on stage, the suffering of tragic hero or heroine who ends up taking their own lives is often made to appear somewhat noble. But in actual life there is nothing grandiose about the act at all. It has been said that suicide is ugly for onlookers, devastating for relative, and harrowing even for those professionally involved. Anyone who has been at all close to a suicidal situation knows it is impossible to come away remaining aloof and unfeeling.*

The increase in the rate of death by suicide in the United States between 2000 and 2016 has risen from 10.4 to 13.5 per 100,000 people, according to a National Center for Health Statistics analysis of data from the National Vital Statistics System. The rate increased by about 1 percent per year from 2000 through 2006 and by about 2 percent per year from 2006 through 2016.

But this is only the tip of the iceberg. Death may be reported as other means i.e.

- Automobile wreck
- Accident in the home
- Accidental overdose
- Experimenting with drugs
- Deaths that are deliberately covered up to avoid family embarrassment, social stigma attached to the death, or try and avoid financial loss through insurance etc.
- **A working definition relative to the area of suicide:**

**Suicide Threat** – an indication, whether verbal or behavioral, that would suggest the possibility of self-destructive behavior.

**Corpses of suicides were often left unburied**

**Suicide Attempt** – an actual involvement in some type of self-destructive behavior that does not result in death.

**Suicide** – self-destructive behavior that results in death.

**Suicidal** – considering or thinking about engaging in self-destructive behavior. Being in a suicidal state of mind that comes and goes.

**Suicide Rates** – usually calculated as of the number of deaths per 100,000 people. It is important to remember that the statistics represent groups of people and that they do not apply in every situation.

- **How do we approach suicide from the context of the Christian faith?**

**At time throughout history Christians, have been very “unchristian” in their dealing with suicidal persons as well as their families and friends.**

The early Christians had very little to say about suicides. It wasn't until 452 AD that the Roman Catholic Church made its first condemnation of suicide, excommunicating anyone attempting or committing suicide. It did not stop with excommunication. As time went on, the condemnation went rampant. Attempters and their families were ostracized and locked up. Corpses of suicides were often left unburied, hung on the gallows to rot, dragged through the street, or left on hillsides with stakes driven through them.

Much of this behavior was due to the fears and superstitions people developed in response to things they didn't understand. It wasn't until the turn of the century (19<sup>th</sup> century) that suicidal people, like the severely disturbed, began receiving a second look. During this time the church took a closer look at suicide and its attitude towards it.

Unfortunately, many of the old fears and superstitions about suicide still remain today; as a result, it is somewhat difficult for some persons to deal compassionately with suicidal persons – and compassion and understanding are of the utmost importance when dealing with suicidal persons.

**I will return to the Ministry of Caring in Part II of this presentation.**

- **Does the Bible talk about suicide? Yes, but does not use the word.**

**Does the Bible condemn the person to Hell if they commit suicide? NO!**

**The Bible does not specifically address the subject of what happens to the person if they commit suicide.**

**The Bible records 6 suicides: 5 in the Old Testament and 1 in the New Testament.**

**5 Old Testament Suicides:**

**Judges 9:50-54 (ESV)**

<sup>50</sup> Then Abimelech went to Thebez and encamped against Thebez and captured it. <sup>51</sup> But there

was a strong tower within the city, and all the men and women and all the leaders of the city fled to it and shut themselves in, and they went up to the roof of the tower.<sup>52</sup> And Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it and drew near to the door of the tower to burn it with fire.<sup>53</sup> and a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull.<sup>54</sup> then he called quickly to the young man his armor-bearer and said to him, "**Draw your sword and kill me**, lest they say of me, 'A woman killed him.'" And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

### **Judges 16:28-30 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> Then Samson called to the LORD and said, "O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes."<sup>29</sup> And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other.<sup>30</sup> **And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines."** **Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it.** So, the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.

### **1 Samuel 31:1-6 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. <sup>2</sup> And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, and the Philistines struck down Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul. <sup>3</sup> The battle pressed hard against Saul, and the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by the archers. <sup>4</sup> Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and mistreat me." But his armor-bearer would not, for he feared greatly. Therefore, **Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him.**<sup>6</sup> Thus Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, on the same day together.

**2 Samuel 17:23 (ESV)** (Ahithophel devised a plan to kill King David but his plan was rejected.)  
<sup>23</sup> When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went off home to his own city. **He set his house in order and hanged himself**, and he died and was buried in the tomb of his father.

### **1 Kings 16:15-19 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah. Now the troops were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines,<sup>16</sup> and the troops who were encamped heard it said, "Zimri has conspired, and he has killed the king." Therefore all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp.<sup>17</sup> So Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah.<sup>18</sup> **And when Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned**

**the king's house over him with fire and died,**<sup>19</sup> because of his sins that he committed, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and for his sin which he committed, making Israel to sin.

## 1 New Testament Suicide – Judas' suicide recorded twice.

### **Matthew 27:3-5 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, <sup>4</sup> saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.” <sup>5</sup> And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself.

### **Acts 1:15-19 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, <sup>16</sup> “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. <sup>17</sup> For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” <sup>18</sup> (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.

<sup>19</sup> And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

- **Is Suicide a Sin? Yes. God cherishes life.**

### **Exodus 20:13 (ESV)**

(The 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment) *You shall not murder.*

### **Job 1:21 (ESV) (Even in suffering life is precious.)**

<sup>21</sup> And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

### **Acts 16:25-28 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, <sup>26</sup> and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were unfastened. <sup>27</sup> When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup> But Paul cried with a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.”

### **Romans 14:7-9 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. <sup>8</sup> For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. <sup>9</sup> For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

### **1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body.

- **How does Christian Theology help us understand suicide?**

To understand suicide theologically, some Christian truths must be pointed out. Human beings are imperfect. Because of this imperfection, most things that humans say or do are imperfect. All people are sinners: **Romans 3:23 (ESV)** *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*

**Christians confess that whoever believes in Jesus Christ will be saved while the person who does not believe will not.**

### **Romans 10:9-10 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

### **1 John 1:8-10 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Because of this imperfection (sin), no person can come to God except through Jesus Christ who died in order that God might forgive the sins of all who believe in Him.

Suicide is a sin, and whatever circumstance that drives a person to commit suicide – the traumatizing stress, the terminal illness, the torn life – is a result of sin. Suicide could be referred to as an imperfect solution to an imperfect situation, or a simple solution to a simple situation.

- **Is a person condemned for committing suicide?**

Again, the Bible does not say. However, what the Bible says about salvation is found clearly in His Word.

### **John 14:1-6 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

<sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way to where I am going.” <sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

### **Romans 1:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

### **Romans 3:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

### **Romans 5:1-2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

### **Ephesians 2:4-5 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

**Suicide is sin. That is clearly true.**

**Does it stand alone as a condemning sin? NO!**

**What sin can you commit that is unforgiveable and leads to damnation?**

**It is called the Blaspheming of the Holy Spirit.**

### **Mark 3:28-29 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, <sup>29</sup> but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”

<sup>29</sup> This is a famously difficult passage; it equates blasphemy of the Holy Spirit with the unpardonable sin—unyielding refusal to believe the Gospel and a rejection of the Holy Spirit’s work to create faith in Jesus. Guilt of this sin brings one into the everlasting condemnation and punishment established for Satan and his evil angels

Jesus declared, **All the sins and blasphemies** (derogatory words vs. God) **of people** are open to God's gracious forgiveness with one exception—blasphemies **against the Holy Spirit**.

This refers to an attitude (not an isolated act or utterance) of defiant hostility toward God that rejects His saving power toward man, expressed in the Spirit-empowered person and work of Jesus. It is one's preference for darkness even though he has been exposed to light. Such a persistent attitude of willful unbelief can harden into a condition in which repentance and forgiveness, both mediated by God's Spirit, become impossible. +

### BOTTOM LINE – Can a person be saved if they commit suicide?

**YES! A person can trust and have absolute faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They can throw themselves on the mercy of God and God will hear. The Psalmist gives us the key to the mercy of God and how God knows our deepest pains and needs.**

#### **Psalm 139:1-12 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, you have searched me and known me! <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup> You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. <sup>4</sup> Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. <sup>5</sup> You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. <sup>7</sup> Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! <sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, <sup>10</sup> even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. <sup>11</sup> If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,” <sup>12</sup> even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

**Here, in the words of the Psalmist was find tremendous hope. Our loved one, our friend can be saved. They can be depressed and hopeless in their particular situation and see no other way out. They can still have the gift of faith and the promise of God's mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ!**

#### **What will the person feel when they stand before God?**

No one can know for certain. I believe they may feel two emotions:

- A deep sense of REMORSE because at that time all things will be revealed.

#### **1 Corinthians 13:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

#### **1 Corinthians 13:12 (The Message by Eugene Peterson)**

<sup>12</sup> We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be

long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us!

### **1 Corinthians 13:12 (God's Word translation)**

<sup>12</sup> Now we see a blurred image in a mirror. Then we will see very clearly. Now my knowledge is incomplete. Then I will have complete knowledge as God has complete knowledge of me.

- I believe there will be a great sense of JOY and AWE as the person stands in the very midst of the mercy of God. As St. Paul says: **1 Corinthians 15:57 (ESV) But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

#### **Questions and discussion.**

**Part II will be Ministering to and understanding suicidal people and basic information relative to understanding and dealing with suicides.**

+ *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

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