

A Way Out of the Darkness



Answers for the Suicidal

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Suicide, by many accounts, has reached the level of an epidemic not only in the U.S. but world-wide. It is estimated that in 2017, suicide was the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S., but among people aged 10-34, it was the second leading cause.

The specific reasons for this vary widely based upon each individual, but the broader reason is loss of hope. People have lost hope that things can get better, lost hope that there is a purpose, or lost hope that they can obtain that which is better.

Maybe you know someone who has attempted or committed suicide, or maybe you are considering it yourself. I write today to give you hope. You may doubt that this hope is possible, but I have confidence that it is available to you. For a moment, I ask you to borrow my confidence if you lack your own.

I am convinced that a serious mistake has been made in our world. In an effort to rid ourselves of what might be considered by some as oppression, we have inadvertently also gotten rid of that which provides hope.

You see, some years ago, Western society set out to rid themselves of God. They championed the idea that there was no God and that those who believed in God were superstitious and weak.

Every person was supposed to stand on their own and would not give an answer to some oppressive God who would judge them. Now people are supposed to be free of all that restriction and in their freedom, they can pursue their own version of pleasure.

The problem is that in casting off God, we have also cast off any purpose to life. If there is no God, then there is no purpose for life. We are just a cosmic accident and there is no ultimate reason to live. Those men were wrong!

I will not go into the specifics here, but there is significant reason to believe that there is a God and that He has a purpose for your life. I want you to know that God's Word, the Bible, has explored and expressed much on the issue of suicide.

Before you dismiss this, consider that the Bible shows us seven men who committed suicide, one that intended to commit suicide, and four that wished they would die. In all of these instances, we find nine reasons that people lose hope and consider suicide. The interesting thing about the Bible is that it not only addresses the reasons people lose hope and attempt suicide, but it also gives us an answer to these issues and shows how hope can be restored.

The 9 Thieves of Hope

1. Loss of Power

Four times in the Bible, people committed suicide rather than being captured or killed by an enemy in battle. These people were Abimelech in Judges 9:53-54, Samson in Judges 16:29-30, Saul in 1 Samuel 31:3-4, and Zimri in 1 Kings 16:18. In each of these situations, the men had lost hope that they could either escape or that they would be treated fairly. So instead of facing death at the hands of their enemies, they decided to kill themselves first. All of these men were facing or had experienced a loss of position and power.

They had been kings or judges and feared that because of the way they had treated others, they would be treated just as badly. They had lived without mercy and feared dying without mercy. If this describes you, then you need to experience what mercy and forgiveness are through Jesus Christ. Keep reading to find out how.

2. Lack of or Loss of Identity

We see an example of this when the Bible records that Saul's armor bearer committed suicide upon seeing Saul die in 1 Samuel 31:5. The Bible doesn't tell us his name, and that is part of the indication of the problem. This man didn't have his own identity; his identity was wrapped up in his relationship to King Saul.

Many people have allowed their own identities to be lost in the pursuit of someone else. If something happens to the one they are following, such as death or rejection, because they do not have a secure idea of who they are individually, they lose hope which leaves them in a dangerous position. They may ask themselves, "Who am I without this other person?"

Unfortunately, they may come to the mistaken idea, like Saul's armor bearer, that they are no one, and because of that, they may attempt suicide. The truth is that God has offered a new identity to every person that is available to you as well. This identity is secure and reserved by God just for you. To find the identity that God wants you to have, keep reading.

3. Shame

There was a man in the Old Testament named Ahithaphel. He was a counselor to a man who wanted to be the king. One day he gave his counsel and the king decided to accept the advice of someone else instead. Ahithaphel's pride was so wounded in 2 Samuel 17:23, that he left and killed himself.

Sometimes, we let our pride become so large that we think we are being personally rejected when people don't accept our opinion. We can take up offenses against others that lead to great bitterness or, such as in this man's case, lead us to consider death rather than being shamed in front of others.

The feeling of shame is something that no one likes, but when it drives us to consider killing ourselves, it is an indication that our pride has gotten out of hand. The Bible tells us that Jesus despised the shame of the cross to redeem us. He knows about how to deal with, and He can help you through this problem as well.

4. Guilt

Probably the most well-known suicide in the Bible is that of Judas, who betrayed Jesus Christ. According to Acts 1:18-19, Judas killed himself in a field purchased with the money that he had received to betray Christ. There is no doubt that he was overcome with guilt, and we could rightly say that he should have been. I cannot think of anything worse a person could do than to betray Jesus Christ.

Some people carry so much guilt from bad decisions, and even criminal activity, that they are convinced this prevents them from receiving forgiveness and peace. This was the case for Judas, but he was just as wrong as they are. It may be that you are carrying guilt from past choices. I have good news; the Bible says Christ died for all our sins and you can find forgiveness and freedom from guilt by believing in Him.

5. Feelings of Failure or Blinded by the Darkness

In Acts 16:25-31, we read of a man who was a jailor. One night there was a great earthquake, and as a result, the jail broke open. Let's read a brief description of the account for understanding, *"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled."*

Notice that this was something that was totally out of his hands. His job was to keep these prisoners and he thought he had failed in that. There are a few things worth taking note of here. First, it was midnight, so it was very dark. Many times, when people consider suicide, they describe the way that they feel as being dark. I know that this is talking about the nighttime in this passage, but I think there is a metaphor here that is interesting. Darkness does something to us: it can bring confusion and it can bring fear. This man could not see clearly, and so he imagined the worst. That is what people do in the dark.

The Bible says that he supposed the prisoners escaped and because of this wrong supposition, he was going to kill himself. He didn't even wait to examine and see if he was correct. Often in the darkness, we will jump to the conclusion that there is no hope without knowing the truth. We allow the darkness to create despair in our hearts and prevent us from finding out the whole truth.

The truth for this man was that not one of the prisoners left. They were still all there. If you feel that you have failed or feel blinded by the darkness, remember this account. The truth is far different in the light. Jesus said in John 12:46 *"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."*

6. Sickness and Trials

Perhaps no one has had more sickness and trials than a man in the Bible named Job. In just a short period of time, he lost everything he owned, all his children died, and he got painful boils from the top of his head to his feet. He was completely miserable, both emotionally and physically. It is no wonder why, in Job 6:8-11, he wished that he would die. Nothing can steal hope as fast as grief and sickness. Part of this is because we can forget that even in these things, we still have a purpose. We can lose sight of that purpose easily when with the distraction of physical and emotional pain.

Job did this very thing, but by the end of the book of Job, not only had he recovered from his sickness, but he had recovered all of the possessions he had lost and more. Without a doubt, Job had much to be sad about, but the Bible shows us that he didn't know the end of his own story. Likewise, neither do any of us. In the end, Job had far more good waiting for him than the bad he experienced. The Bible tells us that God can give us peace even while we face trials in life and that begins with having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. To learn how to have that peace, continue to read on.

7. Threats or Depression

An evil queen threatened to kill the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 19:2-4 and it caused him so much fear that he even prayed that he would die. Besides her threat, it appears that Elijah also struggled with a bout of depression. In his case, it is difficult to determine which of these things brought about his desire to die. Depression is a significant issue that many people struggle with. If you need help with or have questions about depression, please take the time to contact us for more information on that topic.

When people threaten us, it can create a significant amount of fear in our hearts. We live in a day when threats seem to be frequent, especially with the advent of social media where they can even be from anonymous sources. This type of bullying and threatening can cause a person to be filled with anxiety and dread. Elijah ran for his life, but the truth is that most bullies are only brave in the shadows. Elijah never was killed, and he ended up doing many more things in his life.

Of course, bullying and threats need to be dealt with, but we should not allow intimidation to drive us to the point of suicide. Instead, we should stand up and do what is right so that others can have an example of facing such bullies as well. Jesus faced threats, and even death, for us and through it, He gave us a way to have strength to endure.

8. Bitterness

Another illustration of someone who wished they were dead is a man by the name of Jonah. Jonah was bitter towards an entire city because of how they had wronged his people. In Jonah 4:3-7, Jonah told God "*O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.*" His anger and bitterness had so overwhelmed him that he wished he was dead.

Anger and bitterness can take a heavy toll on the mind and can cause us to do very foolish things. Jonah's bitterness caused him to be self-focused. He was not thoughtful of the hurts that the people of Nineveh experienced; he was just thinking about himself. This is often the case with people who are bitter.

Jonah had become ungrateful for every blessing that God provided him. God had been very good to Jonah and even while he was brooding in self-pity, God was showing him kindness. But Jonah was not grateful for the good things in his life. We all have good things in our lives that we can start taking for granted.

Ultimately, Jonah became a very lonely man. Bitterness often leads us to extreme loneliness and isolation, as it did in the life of Jonah. I am not saying that everyone who is lonely is bitter. There are, of course, many reasons that people become lonely, and it is important that when you find yourself in a lonely place, you reach out to show yourself friendly to others.

The Bible says in, Proverbs 18:24 "*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*" The friend that sticks closer than a brother is Jesus who is always there for you.

If you follow God's instructions in the Bible, there is a way to deal with anger and bitterness that will break their power over you.

God said that we can destroy the power of anger and bitterness through the act of forgiveness. I know that sounds crazy, but that is exactly what God has done for you. Even though you have broken His Law and offended His righteousness, He chose to forgive you by accepting the payment of Jesus Christ for your sin. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:32, *"forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*

Forgiveness toward those who have offended and hurt you is to be done in the same way that God has forgiven you. He chose to accept the payment of Christ on the cross as sufficient for every sin. And if you will accept the payment of Christ as well, then you can have victory over the anger and bitterness that brought you to the point of wanting to end your life.

9. Troubles

The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 1:20-25 that he was ready to die because of the troubles and struggles he faced. At the time Paul wrote that, he was in prison for being a preacher. He endured many hardships because of his preaching. Paul had been beaten, stoned and left for dead, put in prison, and suffered in many other ways.

When Paul wrote in Philippians, he said, *"I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:"* He felt at that time that it would be better if he died and went to heaven. But he also recognized that it was more needful for him to remain here in this life as he said, *"Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."*

Even in prison, Paul realized that there were people here that needed him. I assure you, no matter how you feel right now or what kind of trouble you are in, there are people here that still need you as well. The fact that they need you means that God still has a purpose for your life. Your life is not without purpose.

You just need to accept that the purpose of life isn't to serve yourself, but it is to serve God and serve others. God has a new identity and purpose for you once you have received Him in salvation through repentance and faith.

Maybe you were surprised to learn of the people that considered or committed suicide in the Bible and how the Bible provided so much insight into why they did so. The Bible is full of understanding and help in every area of life.

The greatest news is that the Bible also gives us an answer concerning how to find hope again. Maybe one of these areas fit your circumstances. Don't stop reading because now we are going consider how you can find the hope you are missing because of the issues you are facing.

Hebrews 6:17-19 tells us about a place where we can find hope, and not just any hope, but the kind of hope that can be an anchor for our souls. A place where we can be secure and have refuge from the problems that we are facing. It says, *"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;"*

Let's consider this hope that the Bible speaks of. It is not a place to go to as much as a person who came for you. That person is Jesus Christ. He is the hope that the Bible is talking about, and it is in Him that you can find a new and secure hope and life.

We saw the thieves of hope in the examples of suicide that are in the Bible, but Jesus said in John 10:10 *"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."*

Jesus came to give you a new life, one that is filled with abundance, one that is filled with peace. He provided this new life for us by taking our place in death. He allowed Himself to be killed for our sin and died in our place. Romans 5:8 says, *"But God commendeth (proved) his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* Jesus Christ died for you so that you won't have to.

The life that you are weary of right now He already died for and is offering you a new life in its place. Jesus said in John 3:16-18, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*

This is actually the message of the Bible, that God, in love, sent Jesus to take our sin upon Himself and die in our place so that we can have a life in Him. Apart from Jesus there is only death and sorrow, but in Christ there is life and peace.

That is the hope that God offers you through Jesus Christ, a strong confidence that your sins have been covered no matter what they are and a peace with God because you have been redeemed by Him from all your troubles.

He offers you a new hope, a new life and with it a new identity. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, the Bible tells us, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* This new identity means that you can put the past behind you and start over with a clean slate. God wants you to have the freedom to experience the life He intended you to have in Christ.

Notes

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