

THE CRISIS OF SUICIDE¹

I. Statistics

- A. **Twice as many females attempt suicide as do males.**
- B. **Three times more males succeed than do women.** (Because they use more violent methods. Women often do pills & hope to be found)
- C. **Suicide is the fifth leading cause of death among teenagers.** [as of 1994] [2nd leading cause of death among college students according to a girl interviewed by Ray Comfort for his film “Exit”]
- D. **There has been a dramatic rise in the last few decades. Main reasons:**
 - 1) **The breakdown of the family**
 - 2) **The rise in drug abuse**
 - 3) **The effect of the mass media** i.e. movies, internet, Facebook, video games, etc. Death is *romanticized* & by it society is also *desensitized*.

II. Biblical Examples

- A. **Successful Attempts:**
 - 1) King Saul – I Sam. 31:4
 - 2) Saul’s Armor Bearer – I Sam. 31:5
 - 3) Ahithophel – II Sam. 17:23
 - 4) Zimri – I Kings 16:18
 - 5) Samson – Judges 16:30
 - 6) Judas – Matt. 27:3-5
- B. **Suicide wishes, threats & attempts:**
 - 1) Rebekah – Gen. 27:46
 - 2) Rachel – Gen. 30:1
 - 3) Moses – Num. 11:15
 - 4) Elijah – I Kings 19:4
 - 5) Jonah – Jonah 4:8
 - 6) Jeremiah – Jer. 20:14-18
 - 7) Philippian jailer – Acts 16:27

III. Reasons for Suicide

- A. **Escape** – The highest per capita group are men over 85! (to escape from a fruitless, lonely, unchanging life)
- B. **Vengeance** – Typically extensive bitterness. e.g. “*I’ll show my parents.*”
- C. **Attention & Manipulation**

IV. Hints/Clues

- A. **Verbal Clues** – e.g. “*No one cares about me.*” They *do* talk about it a lot.
- B. **Unexplained Changes** – e.g. putting their affairs in order i.e. giving away valuables, favorite records, DVDs, etc. Also: Beware when depressed people suddenly become very cheerful—it’s typically because they know they’re bailing out; neglecting their appearance; changes in school grades; missing of work; etc.

¹ All of the points, sub-points, etc., contained here have been taken verbatim from notes I received in a master’s degree course I took titled “*Crisis Counseling*” taught by Dr. Jim Berg in 1994 in Greenville, South Carolina. In addition, virtually all of the supplementary statements that accompany the various points were made by him as well and were jotted down by me during the lectures. –Mike Edwards, Madison, Ohio, March, 2018

C. **Previous Attempts**

D. **Current Crisis** – e.g. a girl with 2 brothers who committed suicide, a mother with 4 marriages, etc.

E. **Substance Abuse**

V. **Intervention**

A. **Contact**: – i.e. stay on the phone with them e.g. with a pill overdose, get info, etc.

B. **Assess**:

1) **Ask**, “*When was the last time you considered suicide?*” Often “last week,” “yesterday,” etc.

2) **Check out the Plan**:

a) **Is it Lethal?** – i.e. will it really work? “*50 Tylenol won’t kill you, but you’ll wish you were dead.*” (Berg)

b) **Is it Available?** – Where is the gun, etc.?

c) **Is it Specific?**

d) **Is it Activated?** – Do they have the pills? Do they already have the arrangements made?

3) **Ask about their awareness of their death on others.** – e.g. “*How do you think your parents will feel?*” Some may respond, “*I don’t care.*”

C. **Structure**:

1) **Take away the means to commit suicide.**

2) **Take their statements about the worthlessness of life seriously.** “*I want to die because life isn’t worth living.*” Probably true, because it probably isn’t! **They need to change their life!** Don’t say, “*No, your life is good.*” Forget about saying that. **Always agree** e.g. “*Right, life like this isn’t worth living... you need to change your life!*” [But the solution isn’t suicide]

3) **Don’t call a bluff.**

4) **Do something immediately to relieve the pressure.** – Arrange for a job substitute, etc.

5) **Give them a list of things to work on.**

6) **Get a promise from them to call you if they are troubled again.** – “*Before you do this again, promise that you’ll call me.*”

D. **Enlist**:

1) **Parents, guardians, roommates, etc. esp. with a very depressed person.** Btw, when someone is real depressed, don’t be “super happy” around them.

Also, if in counseling they make a sudden change e.g. they are happy & say, “*Thanks a lot!*”, “*I’m delivered!*”, “*You’re so right!*”, etc., that’s a sign that they have NOT changed and they are going to go through with their plan.

Also, some people don’t want to see a pastor because that’s accountability—which is why he *should* be involved. However, on the reverse side, sometimes suicidal individuals like to come to pastors for counsel, because they often figure they won’t have to see him again.

2) **Practical helpers** – Get their car fixed if it’s broke down, get their house repaired for them, etc.

3) **Arrange for follow up** – Accountability is important!

Concluding Thoughts: Suicide is due to extreme depression. In depression you’ve lost *hope*. **Christian counselors need to give hope!** – Rom. 5:1-ff. Find out what has destroyed the hope. *Depression is sorrow without hope* – cf. I Thess. 4:13; II Cor. 7:9-10. Depression is often caused by a loss of something (e.g. a boyfriend/girlfriend, child, job, marriage, career, etc.).