**Thoughts On Suicide**

Introduction:

1. Suicide. Not a pleasant topic. But real.

2. Some take the position that it is murder therefore sin.

3. Some claim that it is a sin that cannot be repented of.

4. Other says, “You cannot know what the suicidal mind is thinking. It may not be responsible for its actions.”

5. And it is often reflective of a mental disorder. Those with depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, personality disorders, anxiety disorders and substance abuse are at increased risk.

6. As many of you may remember my best friend from high school in mid-life committed suicide. I spoke at his funeral.

7. Some are fearful that if we say that suicide is not necessarily sinful then more people will commit suicide.

8. Some of us had just rather not talk about it at all as if talking about it might give someone an idea that they never had before.

9. What does the Bible say? What is some of the statistical information? Is it really a serious issue that we should discuss? What is a reasonable approach?

Discussion:

I. Statistical information, definition and general information.

 A. According to the NIMH.

 1. It is the 2nd leading cause of death of those 10-34 years. It is surpassed only by

 traffic accidents.

 2. It is the 4th leading cause of death in individuals 35-54.

 B. According to the CDC.

 1. For persons ages 10-14 the suicide rate nearly tripled (2.5) between 2007 and 2017.

 It was the 2nd leading cause of death for persons 15-19 and 20-24.

 2. It is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States.

 3. In 2017 there were 47,173 deaths from suicide, about 1 ever 11 minutes. More than 5

 people in the hour that we are here. That’s twice as many suicides (47,173) as

 homocides (19,510).

 4. In 2017 10.6 million Americans seriously thought about suicide, 3.2 million made a

 plan, and 1.4 million attempted suicide.

 5. Risk is higher among those who have experienced violence, child abuse, bullying,

 sexual abuse.

 6. Mental illness was involved in suicide between 27% and 90% of the time.

 7. Protective factors include family support, community support, a sense of

 “connectedness,” and access to health care.

 C. Suicide may be defined as the act of intentionally causing one’s own death.

 D. The causes are complex.

 E. The effects are traumatic on individuals, families and communities.

II. What does the Bible say? Not as much as we might like.

 A. There are seven instances in Scripture that might fit the definition of suicide.

 1. In Judges 9:54 Abimelech, the son of Gideon, was serving as king in Israel, at

 Thebez he captured the city but the citizens of the city fled to a tower in the midst of

 the city. When Abimelech came near the tower a women threw an upper milestone

 crushing his skull. He appealed to his armor bearer to kill him and so he was pierced

 with a sword and died.

 2. Samson in Judges 16:29-31 caused the collapse of the Philistine house saying, “Let

 me die with the Philistines.” Might be considered an act of martyrdom rather than

 suicide.

 3. Saul and his armor bearer in 1 Sam. 31:3-6; 2 Sam. 1 died by falling on their own

 swords after Saul had been wounded with an arrow. They feared torture by their

 enemies.

 4. In 2 Sam. 17:23 Ahitophel strangled himself when Absalom did not follow his advice.

 Evidently he perceived that his time was limited. He had fallen out of favor with the

 Absalom and had opposed King David.

 5. 1 Kings 16:18 describes how king Zimri, now defeated, burned the house over

 himself.

 6. Judas in Matthew 27:5 hanged himself after betraying Jesus.

 B. In most of these cases the individuals found themselves in what they believed to be a

 hopeless situation and ended their lives to avoid what they believed to be a worse

 death.

 C. I would observe that the Bible makes no judgment on these cases. It merely describes

 what happened. There is no comment on the act of suicide itself.

 D. What we do know from Scripture is.

 1. Life is precious and valuable as a gift from God.

 2. Death is described as an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26).

 3. God has acted through Jesus Christ to give us victory over death (1 Cor. 15:56-57).

 E. Scripture is just not explicit enough to define all suicide as sin. One who kills

 him/herself to save another’s life for instance should probably not be evaluated on the

 same basis as one who has a mental disorder. And the one who has a mental disorder

 probably should not be considered the same as a kamikaze pilot. And a 13 year old

 who is being physically, emotionally and sexually abused should not be considered the

 same one who is not. There was a culture in India that when a woman’s husband died

 she was supposed to submit herself to the fires of his funeral pyre.

III. What is a reasonable approach?

 A. We should work to teach what the Bible teaches about the value of life.

 B. We should work to eliminate the sins committed against others that increase their risk

 for suicide: violence, child abuse, bullying, sexual abuse, and anything else that

 diminishes the value of a person. See Matt. 5:21ff.

 C. We should create the environment that provides protective factors against suicide:

 supportive family systems, supportive community systems (including church

 relationships), sense of “connectedness,” access to health care including mental

 health care.

 D. Work to eliminate the perception that mental disorders in some way diminish a

 person’s significance or value.

 E. We can talk directly and openly about suicide and mental disorders and work to

 address our ignorance, and our fears.

 F. Suicide is often a last ditch effort to control one’s circumstances.

 1. Some of the examples in Scripture were working to do just that.

 2. Suicide is one way you can control your circumstances. And when you find

 yourself in what you believe to be an impossible situation don’t be surprised if

 suicide comes to your mind. There is some sense in which that is normal. We

 search for ways to gain control in what appears to be hopeless situations. Suicide

 can become quite attractive in situations like that.

 3. But remember people commit suicide usually as a result of a seemingly hopeless

 emotional state. But emotional states change. One time you are so very

 depressed and later you are less depressed. Such states are made worse by

 alcohol and drug use.

 4. Suicide is often preventable by “getting through” the temporary emotional state

 associated with these suicidal thoughts.

 G. There is help. Don’t try to address your circumstances all by yourself. You are not

 alone, even though it may feel that way sometimes. Reach out for help. You are

 valuable. Your life is valuable. The Lord sacrificed His life for you. That’s a clear

 indication that you are important. Others love you and are want to be there for you

 too.

Conclusion:

1. The devil is out to destroy us and he will use any means necessary to accomplish his objective.

2. He will lie to you and tell you you are not valuable. He will place you in seemingly impossible situations that overwhelm you with sadness, grief and depression.

3. But the Lord is the one who gives us life. We need to depend on Him.

4. We need to be those people who encourage and give life and not act as the agents of the devil to destroy life.