



## **SUICIDE**

Stuff We Don't Talk About  
(But Probably Should) – Part 1  
Senior Pastor Keith Stewart  
April 30, 2023

We may not want to talk about it but not talking about it is what has led to so much confusion and pain. Practically everyone you meet has had their life touched in some way by suicide. But because we treat it like a taboo topic, unsettling questions are turned inward where they do incredible damage. Honest conversations about suicide are what is needed most of all. Not only does that decrease its likelihood in those who are struggling but it also helps individuals and families who are dealing with the aftermath. That's what this weekend's message is all about. My hope is that you'll never need it, but if you do, you'll be grateful your understanding of suicide begins with grace and truth.

"I was convinced I was going to hurl myself off but his voice made me stop and grab the railings. That's what you see." – Kevin Berthia



“They regretted their decision as soon as they jumped.” - Ed Newman, A Lesson from 29 Golden Gate Suicide Attempts

“Every jumper has a 98% chance of success, a much higher percentage than for hanging, a drug overdose, or shooting. The bridge is 225 feet high, and after a four second fall, jumpers hit the water at a speed of 75 mph, with a force equivalent to a lorry (a truck) crashing into a wall.” - Dr. Steve Taylor, The Jumpers

“What am I doing? This was the worst thing I could do in my life.” – Ken Baldwin

### ***1. WHY WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT SUICIDE***

“We have this misunderstanding that if we bring up the word suicide, it’s going to plant that thought into somebody’s mind. Absolutely not so — that’s a myth. It’s actually a huge relief to many people to know that somebody will listen to you if you’re feeling that way and that they’re not afraid and you can actually say what it is that’s on your mind.” – Kay Warren

*...If men walk in darkness, without one ray of light, let them trust the Lord, let them rely upon their God. Isaiah 50.10 (Living Bible)*

41,000

**There is a suicide attempt every 26.6 seconds.**



Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for Americans ages 10 to 34. - Suicide Prevention Resource Center

20% of high school students report serious thoughts of suicide, and nearly 10% report having attempted suicide (as of 2022). - National Alliance on Mental Illness

"Over 700,000 people worldwide take their own life every year." - World Health Organization (2022)

## ***2. WALKING THROUGH A DARK TIME***

How do you recognize who is vulnerable?

- Stress factors
- Personal history
- Behavioral clues
- Verbal clues

God's intervention into suicidal thoughts

"It's important to remember that once a person starts becoming depressed, he usually behaves in a way that reinforces the depression." - H. Norman Wright



*Elijah was afraid and ran for his life...and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life." 1 Kings 19.3-4a*

"If you change any of the three, you can prevent most suicides." – George Crane

- God gave Elijah something to do.
- God gave Elijah something to look forward to.
- God gave Elijah someone to be with him.

It's harder for a person to listen to the critical inner voices when in the company of other people.

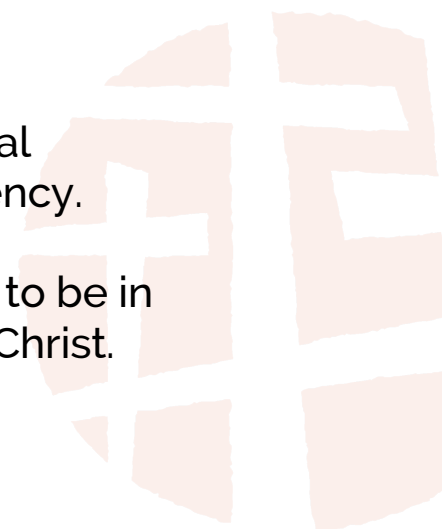
"Hope comes in the form of people like you, not sentences." – Joni Ericsson Tada

Construct a hope kit.

Call or text 988

Suicide is the product of emotional and mental anguish and not necessarily a spiritual deficiency.

Before we can become what we were meant to be in Christ, we first need to accept who we are in Christ.



## My True Identity in Christ:

- You are not condemned (Romans 8.1)
- You are accepted (Romans 15.7)
- You are ransomed - "restored to favor" (1 Corinthians 1.30)
- You are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5.17)
- You are the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5.21)
- You are liberated (Galatians 2.4)
- You are chosen, holy and blameless before God (Ephesians 1.4)
- You are redeemed, forgiven (Ephesians 1.7)
- You are alive (formerly dead in spirit) (Ephesians 2.5)
- You have boldness and confident access to God (Ephesians 3.12)
- You have all your needs supplied (Philippians 4.19)
- Your life is hid with God in Christ (Colossians 3.3)

### ***3. SUICIDE IS A SINGULAR ACT WITH A PLURAL EFFECT***

For every suicide, an average of 135 people are exposed.

Suicide is the result of extreme emotional distress, not a character defect and not something criminal.

❑ Why did they do this?



Only about 15% of cases of suicide actually leave a suicide note.

❑ Why do I feel this way?

- Guilt

You can be responsible to people, but you cannot be responsible for people.

- Hurt

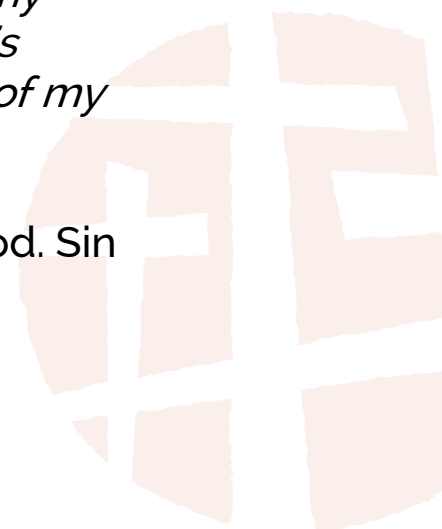
"Suicide can shatter the things you take for granted about yourself, your relationships, and your world." - Dr. Jack Jordan, *After Suicide Loss: Coping with Your Grief*

- Anger

❑ Is this an unforgivable sin?

*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. John 10.27-29*

Sin doesn't rob you OF your relationship to God. Sin robs you IN your relationship to God.



Maybe it's time we stopped defining victory by how many times we win and start measuring victory by how many times we get back up again.

### ***RECOMMENDED READING***

Dark Clouds, Silver Linings, Archibald D. Hart, PhD., Focus on the Family Publishing, 1993, ISBN 1-56179-248-9

What to Do When Someone You Love is Depressed, Mitch Golant, PhD. And Susan Golant, Villard Books, 1996, ISBN 0-679-45154-4

Bright Days, Dark Nights: with Charles Spurgeon in Triumph over Emotional Pain, Elizabeth Ruth Skoglund, Baker Books, 2000, ISBN 0-8010-6192-X

### ***ONLINE RESOURCES***

<https://kaywarren.com/suicide/>

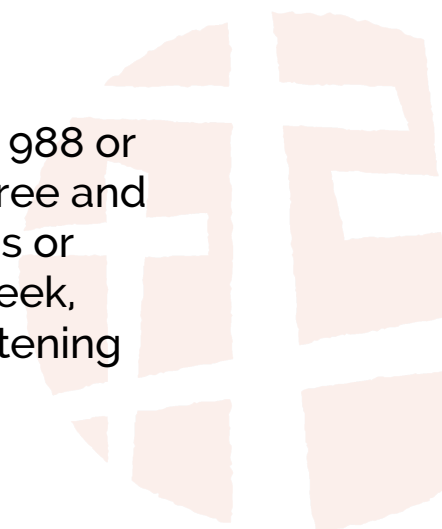
<https://www.compassionatefriends.org>

<https://988lifeline.org>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/suicide-resource-guide>

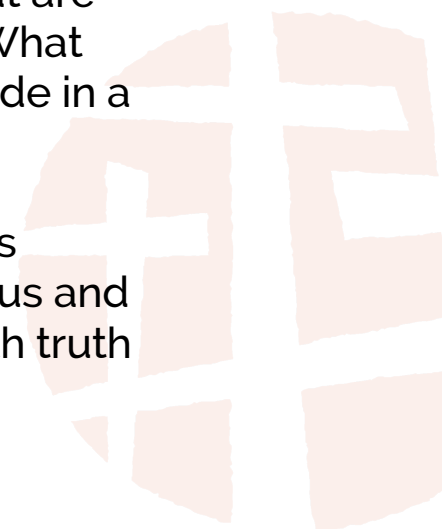
### ***REACH OUT***

Call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 or chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org). The Lifeline provides free and confidential support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. Call 911 in life-threatening situations.



## *DISCUSSION QUESTIONS*

1. Take some time as an individual or group to think about and discuss (if you're comfortable doing so) about how your life has been personally impacted by suicide. How did it affect you? What questions did you have? How did others respond? What, if any, direction were you given?
2. Why do you think this is such a taboo topic? Have you been in a church or religious environment that addressed suicide? If so, what was said and did you find it helpful?
3. There is no question, suicide rates are skyrocketing even as the average age for suicide is getting younger and younger. What do you think is driving this phenomenon? What can we do as a society to better address these issues?
4. Pastor Keith suggested those who struggle with self-destructive thoughts to construct a Hope Kit. Whether this is a journal, scrapbook or box of mementoes, the idea is to have a plan and be proactive when troubling thoughts arise. What are some of the things Pastor Keith suggested? What are other things that might be helpful to include in a Hope Kit?
5. Our identity, who we actually are in Christ, is essential in battling lies both the enemy tells us and we tell ourselves. Lies must be countered with truth and truth must be put into practice. In the list





provided in the message notes, how do you put those truths into practice? How do you live like the truth is truth?

6. Grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide compounds normal grief and adds a dimension of guilt, hurt and anger. This is normal – expected – what most people experience. What have you found most helpful in working through negative emotions like these?

7. As Pastor Keith wrapped up, he spent some time unpacking how grace and forgiveness actually work and then applied that to the person who takes their own life. How does this align with what you have been taught about suicide? Do you struggle with this explanation at all? If so, why?

