

A Christian Response to Suicide

WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?

It is okay to say, we don't know. None of us know what was on the mind a person who commits suicide or what he or she was facing. Therefore, it is not helpful to try and figure out the reasons.

However, there are things that we can know from God's Word. First, we know that God is both loving and just. Therefore, we can be confident that, in the end, even this will be reconciled with God's perfect will. Second, we know that God tells us to cast all our cares upon him, for he cares for us. Therefore, we can lean upon God, asking him to help us accept what has happened and trust in His plan, even when we don't understand it.

IS SUICIDE THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN?

Jesus spoke of the unforgivable sin (Matthew 12:22-32) and the Apostle John, speaking of the sin which leads to death, instructed us not to pray for those who commit that sin (1 John 5:16). While it is true that suicide is a sin because it is self-murder, it is not the unforgivable sin, any more than someone who dies in a car accident while thinking sinful thoughts, would be unforgivable. Both people sin, and both don't have the opportunity to repent, but both might still be saved. The most important thing to remember is the person's faith prior to suicide. Were they trusting in Christ alone for salvation? Did their life demonstrate that they were a follower of Christ? If so, then we should not be so quick to disqualify them from the treasure of salvation, because Jesus paid for all the sins of the elect, even the sin of suicide.

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

I suggest that we respond with the three P's: Prayer, Patience and Presence.

In the story of Job, he lost his property, all seven of his children, and his health. When Job's friends came to visit him, they sat with him in silence for many days, joining him in his mourning. Yet, they end up breaking their silence and saying very unhelpful things, for which they are eventually rebuked by God. We must understand what Job's friends failed to understand, that we are not God and we cannot see behind the scenes.

We are called to "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15) and we must do so. Often that means simply being there for them. We do that by praying for them, that God would comfort them in this time, and bring them to faith in Christ as the only comfort in life and in death. We are patient with them, knowing that this process of grieving over a loss is going to take its time, and each person will deal with it in a different way. And we make our presence known, seeking to spend time with those hurting, even at the expense of our own wants and needs. And when the time comes, when they ask us how we are so hopeful in a world that seems so hopeless, we must be ready to speak the truth in love. We never hide the truth, but how and when we speak it is important. The truth can be delivered in either a hurtful way or a helpful way. Let us make sure that everything we say, especially those hurting, is seasoned with the grace and love of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In Christ,
Pastor Campbell