

# The Problem of Suicide

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among teenagers.  
Every 28 seconds someone attempts suicide.  
It is the second leading cause of death between 15-24.

It is often difficult to identify teens who are contemplating suicide partly because "teenagers in particular are often reluctant to reveal the problems they are experiencing or their inner thoughts.

Some of the signs that may alert a parent, teacher, youth leader, pastor or friend to a possible suicide attempt include:

- Previous suicide attempt
- Threats of suicide
- Talking about death
- Preparation for death (cleaning out locker, giving away possessions, etc.)
- Depression
- Sudden change in behavior (acting out, violent behavior, etc.)
- Moodiness
- Withdrawal
- Somatic complaints (sleeplessness, sleeping all the time)
- Fatigue
- Increased risk-taking
- Drafting a suicide note

## ***I. The Causes of Suicide***

### **A. Societal Factors**

- 1- the changing moral climate,
- 2- the high mobility of American society,
- 3- the high divorce rate,
- 4- the frequent abuse of alcohol and other drugs, 5- the glorification of violence in the mass media,
- 6- the easy availability of guns, and
- 7- the already high suicide rate."

What if the family moves hundreds or thousands of miles from any relatives or mother and father divorce and you see only one of them regularly? The sources of support become shaky foundations.

When the foundations become shaky, some young people turn to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Finally, suicide begets suicide. Suicide attempted or completed plants the idea of self-generated death in the minds of others; suicide in the family especially pulls other family members closer to that option.

But beyond the societal factors are personal factors. Why do teens try to kill themselves? The following are among the reasons:

**A. Family Disruption**

**B. Escape**

Most suicidal persons want to escape from what they consider an intolerable situation.

Two important ingredients for those who begin to ponder taking their lives are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Mental illness can be involved.

**C. Loss**

"For some," writes Olson, "the death of a parent, close friend or loved one seems too painful to bear."

**F. Guilt**

Suicide is often the individual's own attempt to take control of punishment for sins or other misdeeds of which he or she feels guilty.

**G. Attention**

A suicide attempt grabs attention like few other things. People are startled, guilty, concerned, puzzled. Suicide attempt can be a desire for attention and for help.

**H. Manipulation**

Manipulation by attempted suicide is used by children against parents, husbands against wives, girlfriends against boyfriends, workers against coworkers.

**H. Revenge**

The suicide of revenge is usually directed toward a lover, parent or parent figure."

**I. Impulsiveness**

Adolescents often display a casual disregard for their life and safety, and also sometimes exhibit a fascination with the unknown, including death.

### ***J. Expression of Love***

The breakup of a romantic relationship, a divorce and the death of a loved one deal the rejected or surviving individuals a shattering blow.

Their emotions are numbed, their perceptions distorted and their hopes for the future destroyed.

## **II. The Effects of Suicide**

Few young people contemplating suicide realize the traumatic effects an act of suicide can have on those around them, principally, grief and the planting of the seeds of destruction.

### ***A. Grief***

Inevitably the living never blame the dead—they blame the living—they blame themselves.

### ***B. Seeds of Destruction***

Suicide not only destroys the person who takes his or her life, but it plants the seeds of destruction in the lives of those around him or her.

## **III. The Biblical Perspective of Suicide**

The Bible contains many accounts of individuals who had faced great difficulties and endured great burdens.

### **Psalms 73:14**

*14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.*

### **Job 3:3**

*3 Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived.*

### **Job 3:11**

*11 Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?*

The Scriptures even contain a number of accounts of suicides.

1- \_\_\_\_\_ killed himself along with all the Philistines in the temple of Dagon.<sup>21</sup>

2- \_\_\_\_\_ fell on his own sword rather than allow himself to be taken prisoner by the Philistines.

3-Ahithophel, a counselor to King David hanged himself.

4-When Zimri he saw that his royal city had fallen to rebel forces, the king of Israel, set his palace on fire around him and died in the flames.

5- \_\_\_\_\_—one of the Twelve—betrayed Jesus and later hanged himself.

Scripture repeatedly affirms the sanctity of human life and the conviction that it is the Lord's to give and His to take away. Suicide is not the Lord's way.

### **John 16:33**

*33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

Is suicide the unforgivable sin?

The only sin that truly keeps one from God's presence is the sin of unbelief—of not trusting the work of Christ personally. The inability to confess suicide as a sin is not a real issue. God's forgiveness gives me a position as His child and deals with all of my sin—past, present, and future.

If salvation depended upon confessing every sin committed as a believer, no one would qualify!

### **IV. The Response to the Problem of Suicide**

A professional evaluation is absolutely necessary.

A. LISTEN. "Always take every indication seriously that an individual is thinking about suicide," writes Duckworth. Never dismiss, mock, or challenge a youth's statements about contemplating or attempting suicide. Listen carefully, sensitively, patiently—and take no chances.

B. EMPATHIZE. Blackburn suggests:  
The primary power you have in dealing with a suicidal person is your relationship with him and the way you show interest and concern. Wisely use that power to avert the potential suicide"  
Pray for and stay in touch with the young person.

C. AFFIRM.  
It is of primary importance that everything that is said and done by the adult be presented in a way that strongly affirms his or her worth as a person, as a child of God, as a valued and loved family member or friend, and as an individual with capabilities, gifts, and immeasurable potential.

D. DIRECT.  
1. Work on relationship. The best resource any parent or other adult has for helping a suicidal youth is a healthy relationship.

2. Build self-worth.

Reinforce the child's successes, and offering loving reminders that he or she is loved and accepted.

3. Instill hope. "Suicidal persons .need hope," writes Adams. "They are preeminently persons with no hope."

4. Foster communication. A disturbing percentage of youth—even Christian youth—say they can't talk to their parents about the really important things in life.

Try to show respect their opinions no matter what they are.

5. Teach coping skills.

6. Focus on the available resources.

"Most suicidal persons fail to see the resources available to help them cope," says Blackburn.

7. Develop a plan of action.

Devise a set of practical, concrete steps that will help the youth and his or her circumstances.

E. ENLIST.

Make every effort to enlist the young person's own participation in preventing a suicide attempt.

G. REFER

Help get the young person the right help.

## **True Love**

### **I. The Problem of Finding True Love**

People try in many different ways to discover true love, real love, a love that is strong and deep, a love that lasts for all time. Many young people struggle mightily to understand what love is and how they can find it.

### **II. The Causes of Not Finding True Love**

#### ***A. Teens Don't Know What Love Is***

They confuse real love with other experiences and emotions. Consequently, they have no basis on which to evaluate the relationships they pursue and the decisions they make in search of real love.

#### ***B. What Love Isn't***

1- Real Love Isn't the Same As Lust

2- Real Love Isn't the Same As Romance.

Romance can be wonderful, but it's not love.

Romance is a feeling; real love is much more.

3- Real Love Isn't the Same As Infatuation.

Infatuation is a fascination with—an intense interest in—someone of the opposite sex. What is more, you find yourself held captive by identical feelings for another person.

#### ***B. What Love Isn't***

##### **1- Real Love Isn't the Same As Lust.**

Love is much different from lust. Love gives; lust takes. Love values; lust uses. Love endures; lust subsides.

##### **2- Real Love Isn't the Same As Romance.**

Romance can be wonderful, but it's not love. Romance is a feeling; real love is much more.

##### **3-Real Love Isn't the Same As Infatuation.**

Infatuation is a fascination with—an intense interest in—someone of the opposite sex. Then sometimes you find yourself held captive by identical feelings for another person.'

When people talk about "falling in love" or about "love at first sight," they are usually talking about infatuation. Infatuation can be an overwhelming feeling, but it is not real love.

#### **4- Real Love Isn't the Same As Sex.**

Many teens (and many adults as well) confuse the intensity of sex with the intimacy of love.

What are the differences between love and sex?

Love is a process; sex is an act.

Love is \_\_\_\_\_; sex is \_\_\_\_\_.

Love requires constant attention; sex takes no \_\_\_\_\_.

Love takes time to develop and \_\_\_\_\_; sex needs no time to develop.

Love requires emotional and \_\_\_\_\_ interaction; sex requires only physical interaction.

Love deepens a relationship; sex (operating alone) \_\_\_\_\_ a relationship."

#### **5- What Love Is**

"Few people—adolescents or adults—know what real love is.

Some has said there are really three kinds of "love," three ways of behaving that people routinely label as "love."

##### **1-Love If**

It's the love that is given or received when certain conditions are met. One must do something to earn this kind of love:

"If you are a good child, Daddy will give you his love."

"If you get good grades . . ."

"If you act or dress a certain way . . ."

"If you meet my expectations as a lover . . ."

The love is offered in exchange for something the lover wants. Its motivation is basically selfish. Its purpose is to gain something in exchange for love. Love if . . . always has strings attached.

##### **2- Love Because of . . .**

In this type of love, the person is loved because of something he or she is, has, or does. This kind of love reflects attitudes, usually unexpressed, such as:

"I love you because you're so beautiful."

"I love you because you're rich."

"I love you because you give me security."

"I love you because you're so funny."

This love may sound pretty good. We want to be loved for what we are and what we do, right? It's certainly preferable to the "if" kind of love.

The "if" kind of love has to be earned constantly, and it requires a lot of effort.

### **Here is the problem:**

But what happens when someone comes along who is prettier? Or funnier? Or wealthier?

**3-Love, Period!** The third kind of love is as uncommon as it is beautiful. It is love without conditions. THAT IS THE LOVE OF John 3:16.

It says, you can't do anything to turn off my love. I love you, PERIOD!"

It knows the other's faults, yet it totally accepts that individual without demanding anything in return.

There's no way to earn this type of love. Neither can one lose it. It has no strings attached. "Love, period" is a giving relationship. It's all about giving. The other two kinds of love are all about getting.

### **III. The Biblical Perspective of True Love**

"Love, period" is the only real love, the only true love, the only biblical love. According to the Bible, true love is evident when the happiness, health, and spiritual growth of another person is as important to you as your own.

The Word of God records the command, "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt.19:19); it doesn't command us to love our neighbor more than ourselves. We are to love God more than we love ourselves, but we are to love our neighbor, boyfriend, girlfriend, or our mate in marriage as we love ourselves.

#### **Ephesians 5:28**

*28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.*

#### **Ephesians 5:29**

*29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:*

God's definition of true love means to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, that is, to protect and provide for the happiness, health, and spiritual growth of another person-----in the same way you protect and provide for your own happiness, health, and spiritual growth.

True love will not pressure a boyfriend or girlfriend to have sex outside of marriage, because that does not protect him or her; it does not provide for his or her happiness, health, and spiritual growth.

Agape love is an unconditional response to the total person: "I love you in spite of" (the weaknesses I see in you).



It reaches beyond to a "willingness to give when the loved one is not able to reciprocate, whether it be because of illness, failure, or simply an hour of weakness.

It is a love that can repair bonds severed by unfaithfulness, indifference, or jealousy." The best example of this type of love is God himself.

#### **IV. The Response to the Problem of Finding True Love**

##### **A. LISTEN.**

Encourage the young person to put his or her concept of love into words. Ask questions like:

- What is true love?
- Have you ever been "in love"?
- How do you think a man or woman knows if he or she is in love?
- What do you think being in love feels like or looks like?

##### **B. EMPATHIZE.**

Keep in mind the fervency and urgency with which most teenagers approach love issues.

The empathetic adult will be careful not to dismiss a young person's feelings on this subject but will take the youth seriously and address him or her carefully.

##### **C. AFFIRM.**

Parents and other adults who are concerned for youth must strive to communicate acceptance, affirmation, affection, and appreciation to them at every opportunity.

##### **D. DIRECT.**

Take every opportunity to model a biblical concept of love to the young people in your life;

Pray with youth about their love lives; encourage them to involve the Lord in their search for true love.

Seek "teachable moments" to communicate a biblical concept of love to the young people in your life so they will know what they are looking for in relationships and be more likely to recognize it when it occurs.

##### **E. ENLIST.**

1. Do we both know Jesus personally?
2. Is Jesus Christ first in our relationship?

Cooperation among the principal influences in a teen's life is vital to the development of strong, healthy concepts and convictions about love.