

# Do Thyself No Harm

ACTS 16:28

## Ten Biblical Reasons Why Suicide Is Sin!

Russell K. Tardo

Question: What did Cleopatra, Ernest Hemingway, Socrates, Nero, Marilyn Monroe, Hannibal, Alan Ladd, Vincent Van Gogh, Kurt Cobain and Judas Iscariot have in common?

All were famous? Rich? Powerful? Well, most of them were famous in their lifetimes, Van Gogh and Judas Iscariot being the exceptions. Neither of them were rich or powerful, either. The others on this list of notables were powerful, influential and wealthy. Many were good looking, had fans, families, and others who loved them. They were relatively young and healthy, and had a lot to live for. What did they have in common?

**They all committed suicide!**

**Why? Why would wealthy, famous people, who seemed to achieve the international ideal of riches and fame, commit suicide?**

And why do over 30,000 people intentionally kill themselves every year in the United States alone?

Currently, every single minute of every single day, someone attempts suicide in the U.S.A! Worse yet, one in 15 succeeds! It's sobering to consider that more people die from suicide in our nation than from homicide, and the average citizen is far more likely to kill himself than to be killed by someone else. Overall, **suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death in the U.S.A., and the third leading cause of death among our young people.**

Some reports indicate that suicide rates are even higher among homosexuals, and among certain professions such as doctors, dentists and law enforcement.

**Why Do They Do It?**

Those who've attempted suicide or seriously considered it cite a variety of reasons for their desperate action. Marriage failure or failure of some other relationship, family problems, loss of a loved one, business failure, substance abuse and addictions, bankruptcy, guilt, shame, depression, poor health, feelings of hopelessness or despair, and the persuasion that one has "nothing to live for" are mentioned most often as the reasons for their attempt.

## **An International Epidemic**

America is certainly not the only nation facing this suicide epidemic. In other nations, the problem is actually worse. For instance, in **Japan**, where there is a long history of suicide, the chances are 1 in 1000 that a person will intentionally kill himself. The Orient has long considered self-murder an acceptable exit from life in order to preserve one's honor or dignity. Statistically, suicides in the Orient are committed for much the same reasons as those in the U.S. In both countries suicide rates increase in the over 65 age bracket, especially among the divorced and widowed.

In **China**, self-murder is the #1 leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 34. The U.S. records 30,000 suicides per year; China had 300,000! Ten times as many! Chinese authorities are baffled. They wonder why so many of their young people are killing themselves. **The very ones who have so much promise, so much potential, and so much going for them, such as youth, health, and vitality, are the ones most likely to kill themselves!** WHY? Numerous answers have been suggested. Some feel deprived and trapped in impoverished rural villages, with no opportunity to ever advance in life nor of ever escaping the endless poverty. Some who do make it to college and university feel defeated if they don't excel, and suicide is how they deal with the shame and dishonor of failure. Others feel isolated and rejected by boyfriends or girlfriends; and in despair, they end their own lives.

**Russia's** suicide rate is among the highest in the world — three times higher than that of the U.S. Poverty, health disorders, marriage and relationship failures and alcoholism are all factors in their suicide statistics, according to Russian authorities. In fact, **alcohol is said to be a major factor in 30 to 50% of all suicides!**

## **A Very Real Devil!**

If nothing else convinces us of the existence of a very real devil, whose aim is to “kill, steal, and destroy” (John 10:10), these statistics should! What else could influence people with so much to live for, to want to die so desperately that they take their own lives? And who else but the devil would be so relentlessly and methodically waging such a deadly warfare against all of humanity- a humanity created “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:26-27). **Consider.** Through abortion, millions of unborn children all over the earth are killed every year. Hunger kills millions more. Millions are killed by horrible diseases such as AIDS, cancer, heart disease, malaria and dozens of other plagues. War kills and maims multitudes. Multitudes more perish in catastrophic disasters, such as hurricanes, cyclones, earthquakes, floods, tidal waves and tornados.

Though such catastrophes are often deemed to be “acts of God,” just the opposite is true.

Jesus said, “*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10). The Gospels reveal that Jesus brought life and health and hope to the world. They also show that the devil seeks to destroy life; to harm, maim and kill. “*The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy*” (John 10:10 NASV).

Jesus called Satan “*a murderer*” (John 8:44). Certainly it is none other than Satan who, when he fails to kill through these myriads of other means; prods, goads, torments and instigates men and women into murdering themselves!

## **Suicide is Self-murder!**

Make no mistake about it; **suicide is murder!** It is the intentional killing of oneself. It is self-murder. Homicide is the killing of another. Patricide is the killing of one's father. Fratricide is the murder of one's brother or sister. Genocide is the murder of a particular race, ethnic group, political group or culture, and suicide is the murder of oneself; the word *suicide* itself is derived from the Latin, "*sui*," meaning "of oneself," and "*caedere*," meaning "to kill." It is the intentional taking of one's own life; it is self-inflicted murder!

## **Thou Shalt Not Kill!**

In the sixth Commandment, the Bible prohibits murder (Exodus 20:13). Certainly this includes the murder of oneself! The ancient Jews always considered suicide both morally and ethically wrong. It was, in their eyes, disgraceful, shameful, and evil.

Jerusalem's Rabbi Shraga Simmons said, "Judaism's opposition to suicide is found in the story of Noah's Ark. After the flood, God says to Noah: '*Your blood which belongs to your souls I will demand; from the hand of every beast will I demand it. From the hand of every man; from the hand of every man who is his brother will I demand the life of man*'" (Genesis 9:5). "(From) The Talmud (Baba Kama 90b), (one) learns from the first part of the verse, '*And surely the blood of your lives I will demand,*' that one may not wound his own body. **All the more so, he may not take his own life.**" Rabbi Simmons goes on to say that there are "deep spiritual consequences to suicide," and, "When a Jew commits suicide, he is not permitted a full Jewish burial, and there is even a debate whether *shiva* (the seven-day mourning period) is observed or whether the *kaddish* prayer is said." (from the column, *Ask Rabbi Simmons, Burying a Suicide*, Aish.com)

## **The Bible Record**

The Bible records a few suicides, none of which are regarded in a positive light. In the Old Testament, King Saul and his armour bearer killed themselves after Saul was wounded in battle and did not want to fall into the hands of his enemies (I Samuel 31:1-6). Ahithophel, David's former counselor, hung himself after betraying him (2 Samuel 17:23). Zimri, the fifth king of Israel committed suicide after reigning only seven days when his treachery was discovered (I Kings 16:9-20). The only actual suicide recorded in the New Testament is that of Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of the Lord (Matthew 27:5). **Every one of these men were in a state of rebellion against God in their life and in their death, and are certainly not examples to be followed!**

### **The Biblical View of Suicide.**

#### **Ten Reasons Why Suicide Is a Sin:**

- 1. It is a direct violation of the sixth Commandment:** "*Thou shalt not kill*" (Exodus 20:13). It is just as wrong and just as sinful to kill oneself as it is to kill another.
- 2. It is a usurpation of God's Sovereignty.** God made us and gave us life and breath and all things; as a Sovereign King, He also established the scope of our lives and the number of our years. Several Bible passages declare this to be so:

*“The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each of us” (Acts 17:24-27).* This passage reveals both national and individual aspects. Nationally, we see a Sovereign God who establishes nations, sets the boundaries of their territories and influence, and the span of their existence. Individually, we see in this passage a Sovereign God who made us, set us in the nation and family of our birth, and appointed the duration of our lifespan. He has determined our *“appointed times,”* and it is not our prerogative to usurp that Sovereignty! In Psalms 39:4, the Psalmist prayed, *“Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the extent of my days, Let me know how transient I am.”* He wanted to know that the remainder of his life that God had allotted him would be well spent, and not squandered.

In Psalms 90:12, he prays, *“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”* His prayer is that we be aware that the clock is ticking, that life is passing by very quickly, and that we not waste any part of the allotted time we have left. All of these passages reveal that a Sovereign God has given each of us life and breath and an allotted span of life. One usurps that sovereignty by taking one’s own life. *“Neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?” (Ecclesiastes 7:17)*

**3. Suicide is the sin of unbelief.** It deprives God of all opportunity to intervene in one’s behalf. It is the total abandonment of all faith in God to change one’s circumstances, and bring help, healing, deliverance, comfort, provision and restoration. Is our faith so small and our unbelief so large that we doubt God’s willingness or ability to change our situation? Since such unbelief is so serious a matter, one should know what the Bible says on the subject.

*“Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

*For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.*

*And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?*

*So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:12, 14, 18-19).*

Unbelief kept Israel out of the promised land! Because of their unbelief, they constantly grumbled, moaned and complained about any hardships they encountered. Compare such unbelief to the faith of Job, who, according to the Bible, went through incomparable suffering, sickness and heartbreak. Yet in the very midst of sickness and despair, Job cried, *“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15).* Furthermore, despite the loss of everything he had, all he had worked his whole life to acquire, and all he loved (his children), the Bible declares, *“In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (Job 2:10, NASV).*

**4. Suicide is the sin of cowardice!** Scripture declares that the righteous are **“bold as a lion”** (Proverbs 28:1). Suicide is just the opposite of courage and the antithesis of

bravery. Augustine called it “the failure of courage.” Of all people on earth, Christians are to be brave, bold, and courageous- men and women who “*fight the good fight of faith*” (1 Timothy 6:12), “*war a good warfare*” (1 Timothy 1:18), and are “*good soldiers of Jesus Christ*” (2 Timothy 2:3). Suicide stands in stark contrast to Christian behavior and conduct, and it sends the wrong message! It says, “God is unfaithful” and “God doesn’t care.”

**5. Suicide is a sin against God’s Love.** The Bible repeatedly declares God’s love for mankind- a love so vast it encompasses all of humanity. Not one single person is excluded from the outreach of God’s great love.

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). Throughout Scripture, God is depicted as extending His hand of love and assistance to all who will believe.

*“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness”* (Isaiah 41:10).

**Through suicide, one slaps away the hand of God that is extended to help.** It is a rejection of the love of God that saves men and gives life. Furthermore, it displays a gross lack of thankfulness, gratitude and appreciation to the God who loves us and saved us for a better, more noble end.

**6. Suicide is a sin against God’s property-your body!**

*“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

The Bible clearly teaches that our physical body belongs to God. It is not our own to do with as we please. He bought us at a terrific price, and to destroy ourselves is to deprive God of what He bought and paid for!

Furthermore, you are a steward, appointed by God and charged with protecting and preserving what is His (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 1 Peter 4:10; Luke 16:1-13). You are His!

**Suicide is therefore a rejection of God’s ownership and a denial of His dominion and right-of-possession!** This makes suicide an act with formidable consequence.

*“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are”* (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

Consider this; if it’s a sin to desecrate or destroy a church building, how much more is it a sin to destroy something far more valuable to God and far more precious to Him than a mere building of wood and brick; You!

**7. Suicide is a clear violation of the command given by the Apostle Paul in Acts 16:28, to, “Do thyself no harm.”**

When an earthquake broke the jail apart where Paul and Silas were imprisoned, the jailer immediately decided to kill himself, rather than suffer the certain humiliation, torture and

death he would receive from the hands of his superiors. The penalty for allowing prisoners to escape was death! But Paul spoke up quickly, pleading with the man who was at the very brink of suicide, to *“Do thyself no harm.”* Paul’s words saved the man’s life, and revealed a great eternal principle: We must never intentionally harm ourselves! Life is precious! You are precious to God! **Suicide is a sin against yourself and a rejection of God’s great gift of life!**

The scribes once asked the Lord, which was the greatest commandment of all? *“And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these”* (Mark 12:28-31).

Love God, and love your neighbor as you do yourself; these sum up all the commandments, and nothing is more important than these! But **suicide violates this commandment to love your neighbor as you love yourself!** These verses reveal that there is in every man a God-given instinct for self-preservation. God expects the Christian to extend that instinct beyond the border of oneself and to embrace his neighbor with it, just as the “Good Samaritan” did, in Luke 10:25-37. He loved his neighbor by doing for him what he’d do for himself. He cared for him and did all in his power to preserve his neighbor’s life.

Is killing your neighbor an action of love? Of course not! It is just the opposite of love! It is an act of hate! The clear and undeniable principle is, that **it is just as wrong to kill yourself as it is to kill your neighbor!**

And it deprives you forever of the greatest good in your possession, your life!

#### **8. Suicide is a violation of Romans 12:1.**

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”*

Our bodies, not just our soul and spirit, are to be consecrated to God, and are to be employed as *“a living sacrifice,”* not a dead one!

When a person kills himself or herself, they deprive God of this service which is due Him. They deny Him the witness and testimony of their consecrated lives, and they cheat Him out of the very life He bought and paid a terrific price for.

**9. Suicide is an irreversible sin!** It is a choice that prevents all future choices! It is not the kind of sin one can later repent of and then hope to do better next time. There is no “next time” for the suicide victim. They have made a choice, an awful choice, that can never be undone.

**10. Suicide is a sin against one’s own family.** It robs the family of one of its members. It deprives the family of any further opportunity to minister to them. It stigmatizes the whole family that is left behind and lays upon them a terrible burden of guilt and shame. It is a burden the rest of the family will carry for the remainder of their lives. Parents, siblings, children, grandparents, grandchildren and the whole family circle are heavily and forever affected. **Suicide is the cruelest, most evil, despicable and selfish crime**

**one could ever perpetrate upon their own family.** Nothing could be worse for the family left behind!

### **Attempts That Don't Succeed.**

Statistically, there are ten to fifteen times as many attempted suicides as there are actual suicides. For every one person who jumps off a bridge or a building, nine or ten have stood on the ledge. For every one who dies of a slashed wrist, ten others lived through it. For every one who dies of an intentional overdose of sleeping pills or other drugs, there are twelve to fifteen others who made a similar attempt but failed. All of which leads many authorities to believe **that most people who attempt suicide don't really want to die**; their actions are more of a desperate "cry for help." Especially tragic are those individuals who attempt suicide and live, but are horribly mutilated, disfigured and/or brain damaged after ingesting drugs or shooting themselves. Sadly, most of the people who attempt suicide are otherwise healthy and could have many more productive years of life. All over the world, there are people fighting to cling to life, as disease or injury robs them of their vitality. They recognize just how precious life is, and they cling desperately to it, fighting for every extra breath, and every extra hour. While others who are often healthy in body, contemplate suicide because of some setback, sense of loss, grief or negative circumstance in their personal life, **all of which can be overcome by simple trust in Jesus Christ!**

### **Questions & Answers**

**Question:** Can someone who commits suicide be saved? Is it possible they could still go to heaven?

**Answer:** Personally, I tell everyone the same thing: If you commit suicide, I can give you no assurance that you'll go to heaven. You may be a Christian, and because of your own circumstances, have contemplated suicide. Perhaps you are thinking that "God understands your situation, He knows your depression and will forgive you this act of self-destruction." However, for all the reasons we've cited, **suicide is a sin, and a very grievous sin! It is murder!**

*"And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him"* (1 John 3:15). From all appearances, it would seem that all those who committed suicide in the Bible died unregenerate. Judaism declares suicide to be a sin. Christianity clearly defines it as self-murder, and some denominations deny proper Christian burial to those who commit it. Dante depicted those who committed suicide as eternally consigned to the seventh circle of the inferno.

**I do not offer anyone even the slightest hope that they could commit this act and still be saved.** While I do not believe either murder or suicide to be the "unpardonable sin," the act of suicide leaves one no room to repent afterward. And if we tell people they can commit this atrocious act and still go to heaven, will our assurances help send them over the edge? Could such assurances actually cause even more suicides than there already are?

I encourage them instead to commit their whole situation to God, and trust Him to bring resolution. God is faithful! He loves you and cares about you! Trust Him!

**Question:** What about those who've lost a family member to suicide? How do you comfort them?

**Answer:** I'd tell anyone who lost a family member to suicide **that God is always fair, just and righteous.** He will deal justly and righteously with everyone and no one will ever be judged unrighteously. I tell them that it is not for us to decide their fate, and that **we must let God be God!**

Dear reader, God has given you life! "*seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things*" (Acts 17:25; Genesis 2:7). Your life is precious and valuable! God gave you life for a reason and a purpose! That purpose is to know Him, love Him, and serve Him, and in Him find the peace, joy and security of forgiveness and salvation (Colossians 1:16; John 3:16; Romans 12:1-2; Romans 10:9-10, 13).

Many of the godliest saints and greatest heroes of the Bible faced times of severe trial and attacks of deep depression. During those times, some felt like God had forgotten them (cf. **David**, Psalm 13:2-4); and others even expressed the wish that they'd never been born! (cf. **Jeremiah**, Jeremiah 20:14-18; and **Job**, Job 7:15-16). But each of these men maintained their faith in God and were confident He would bring about their deliverance. Their faith was abundantly rewarded! The dark days and the deep trails soon passed! Though they faced great injustices and endured much suffering, they refused to give up and God richly blessed their perseverance! Each of them serves today as great examples to us! We too, can enjoy God's blessings and peace if we will only trust Him to do what He promises!

### **Sound Advice!**

Never take dramatic actions or make life altering decisions when you are in the depths of depression. Should a person kill himself because it is a cloudy, rainy, dark or stormy day? Or a dark and stormy week? Of course not! Why? Because **the sun will shine again!** No matter how dark, gloomy or hopeless it seems at present, the daylight will break through! Remind yourself that these circumstances are only temporary, and that God is Faithful to deliver, bless, heal, provide, forgive and restore, if we will but pray, and trust Him!

Dear friend, the KEY to real happiness is to surrender your life now to the Lord who gave it to you and trust Him entirely! He will hear your prayer! Will you call upon Him now?

**Pray:** "*Heavenly Father, please forgive me of my sins. Help me to trust you to overcome my circumstances. Come into my heart and change me. I want to know you, serve you, and live my life for you from now on. I yield my life to Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior. And it's in Jesus' name I pray, amen.*"

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