

What Does the Bible Say About Suicide?

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DALLAS -- National Suicide Prevention week is September 6-12 this year. Jim Denison, co-founder of Denison Forum, pastor, author and digital-ministry leader, offers helpful insight on what the Bible says about suicide.

"Even before the pandemic and recent social unrest, anxiety and depression were escalating in our culture and the suicide rate along with them," Denison said. "As a pastor and a theologian, I am not qualified to offer medical advice or professional counseling to those suffering from anxiety or depression. But I can offer biblical insights on the painful issues of suicide."

A Problem on the Rise

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report one in four young adults said they had considered suicide in the previous month because of the COVID-19 pandemic. And 30.9 percent of respondents said they had experienced symptoms of anxiety or depression. The World Health Organization estimates 800,000 people take their lives each year – one every 40 seconds! And the Washington Post, citing a late-March U.N. report, stated that, "Americans are the least happy they've ever been."

Consider these startling statistics from the CDC's most recent study on the subject in 2017:

- Suicide accounted for 47,000 U.S. deaths and was the tenth-leading cause of death.
- For those between the ages of 10 and 34, it was the second-leading cause of death.
- There were more than twice as many suicides (47,173) in the United States as there were homicides (19,510).

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The Bible does not actually contain the word "suicide," however it is still relevant to this subject. There are five instances in the Old Testament of people taking their own lives or having another do it for them, and there is one in the New Testament.

What the Bible makes unmistakably clear is the sanctity of life, Denison said.

"In a nontheistic or relativistic society, it is difficult to argue for life and against suicide. If we are our own 'higher power,' we can do with our lives what we want, or so we're told," Denison said. "But if God is the Lord of all that is, he retains ownership over our lives and their days. He is the only one who can determine when our service is done, our intended purpose fulfilled."

Three Biblical Promises

The Bible makes three promises to those suffering today.

One: You and everyone you know is someone of inestimable worth.

Depression and life crises can cause people to feel that their lives are not worth living. The opposite is true. Every person on earth is someone for whom Jesus died.

Two: God loves you and wants to help.

Denison quoted Psalm 34:18 as an example of God's compassion for each individual: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." He continued, "However, let me repeat that one of the most important ways the Great Physician heals is through human physicians. That's why you or families with loved ones suffering from a mental illness need to reach out to professional counselors as soon as possible. God will use them as he ministers his grace to you and your family."

Three: You can "dwell on the heights" with God.

"Isaiah 33:6 says God wants to be 'the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge,'" Denison said. "And verse 16 says the person who walks with him will 'dwell on the heights.' This is the promise, and the invitation, of God."

Denison pointed out that every threat of suicide should be taken seriously. And for help, people can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) or go to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's website at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

For much more on this subject, read the complete article on the [Denison Forum](#).

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Denison and the Denison Forum reach people around the globe with *The Daily Article*, delivered by email and social media; *The Daily Article* podcast; and numerous books. He speaks and writes on cultural and contemporary issues where faith and current events intersect.
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Denison holds doctoral and master's degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and has pastored five churches across 36 years with a combined membership of more than 20,000. He is the co-founder and Chief Vision Officer of the Denison Forum. He also serves as Resident Scholar for Ethics with Baylor Scott & White Health and as Senior Fellow for Cultural Studies with Dallas Baptist University.

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About The Denison Forum

The Denison Forum exists to thoughtfully engage the issues of the day from a biblical perspective. Through The Daily Article and podcast, which globally reach 1.8 million people monthly with subscribers in 226 countries. Dr. Jim Denison guides readers to discern today's news – biblically.