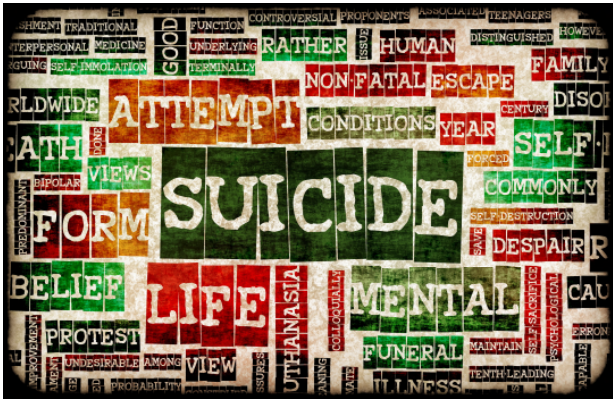




## Is Suicide an Unforgivable Sin?

**Psalms 38:4: (NASB) *For my iniquities are gone over my head;  
As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.***



Sometimes we forget that life is precious and it is worth fighting for. When someone dies as a result of suicide that fight has been lost. When we lose a loved one to suicide we might ask ourselves, have we become so entangled in the web of social standing and status that we somehow stepped over and ignored our loved one who was struggling with being able to hold onto the sacredness of life? Were we so absorbed in our own stress and schedule that we were blind to our loved one's battle or did they do such a convincing job of hiding their pain that the whole thing was just a shocking tragedy? What happened to our loved one that

they found themselves drawn downward into a vortex of torment and suffering so dark that they despaired life itself? How do we better understand and cope with suicide?

This conversation is not one for children, as we will be addressing the stark realities of the real life experiences of some who have come all too close to suicide - please use discretion!

**IMPORTANT**

In a crisis, call #800-784-2433, (800-SUICIDE) or #800-273-8255 (800-273-TALK) or TEXT "Go" to 741741



Stats and cause, *Why Do People Commit Suicide*, DNews

- Hey, friends! I'm Laci Green and you're watching DNews. Got some dark, very dark stuff for you today. You have been warned. Over the past 45 years, the global suicide rate has risen by 60%. In the United States it is more common than car accident deaths making it a worrisome public health issue. So, what's going on? Why are people killing themselves? That's a loaded question, obviously. But researchers at the University of British Columbia are trying to put the pieces together. They just published the largest study ever done on the motivations for suicide. What they found is that many of the assumed motivations for suicide aren't reality - things like impulsive personality types, attention seekers or financial problems weren't the cause. For 100% of the participants, they found that suicide was a way to solve a problem, a problem of ongoing and overwhelming emotional pain; a problem of hopelessness so profound that it consumes you completely.

(Source: <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/veterans/2016/07/07/va-suicide-20-daily-research/86788332/> July 7, 2016) Roughly 20 veterans a day commit suicide nationwide, according to new data from the Department of Veterans Affairs - a figure that dispels the often quoted, but problematic, "22 a day" estimate yet solidifies the disturbing mental health crisis the number implied. In 2014, the latest year available, more than 7,400 veterans took their own lives, accounting for 18 percent of all suicides in America. Veterans make up less than 9 percent of the U.S. population. About 70 percent of veterans who took their own lives were



not regular users of VA services. The new data, being released publicly today, is the most comprehensive suicide study ever conducted by the department.

Let us answer the stated question first and then we will work on understanding the depths of the issue of suicide. Is suicide an unforgivable sin? NO!

### Suicide is not related to the “unforgivable sin:”

**Hebrews 6:4-6:** (NASB) <sup>4</sup>For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup>and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, <sup>6</sup>and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put him to open shame.

This talks about denying the ransom as it applies to yourself after you have given your life to the Lord.

Is letting the distractions of life interfere with our relationship with God the same as “falling away” from Him? No. That would be interpreting human weakness for a human choice. Sometimes we fall down or get distracted. Sometimes we get depressed, but in our heart if we still want to serve God and be like Jesus, even though we fall down, we are not in line for this type of sin.

This unforgivable sin is a clear and informed decision (not a reaction or emotion) to walk away from God - after having been deeply blessed and filled with His Spirit. Only those individuals who have received the Holy Spirit are even liable to this. It is a conscious choice. The decision for suicide is based in despair, grief, sorrow and hopelessness, and while it is a choice, it is clouded with distress.

 **Narrowed vision, Why We Choose Suicide, Mark Henick, TEDxToronto**

- *I was barely a teenager the first time I tried to kill myself. If I knew then what I know now, well, it probably wouldn't have changed very much. And it probably wouldn't have changed very much because sometimes it doesn't matter what you know - what you feel just takes over. And there are so many ways like this that our perception becomes limited. In fact, our perception is its limits and these limits, they're created by our biology, by our psychology, by our society. These are the factors which create that bubble which surrounds us, that is our perceptual field, our world as we know it. This bubble, our perceptual field, it has this incredible ability to expand and contract based on changes in any of those factors which create an informant. Most of us have experienced the challenges of the contraction of our perception from time to time. Think about that time when you got cut off in traffic. Maybe you felt your heart rate start to quicken, your face flush. You jammed on your breaks in order to avoid a collision. And when you did, you focused in on that one license plate as it sped by. Maybe the only thing to go through your mind at that time was how creative you could be in the words you were about to hurl out the window at that guy.*

What does it mean when your perceptual field contracts? Most of us see several things around us simultaneously and our brain is able to process all the different inputs. When your perceptual field contracts, you cannot “see” all those things and your mental vision narrows. When someone becomes suicidal, they are capable of seeing just one thing. If we understand that, we can begin to understand the depth of the tragedy that brings someone to suicide.



## Emotional despair and anguish are common in Scripture:

**Psalms 6:1-6:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your wrath. <sup>2</sup>Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am pining away; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are dismayed. <sup>3</sup>And my soul is greatly dismayed; But You, O LORD - how long? <sup>4</sup>Return, O LORD, rescue my soul; Save me because of Your lovingkindness. <sup>5</sup>For there is no mention of You in death; In Sheol who will give You thanks? <sup>6</sup>I am weary with my sighing; Every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my couch with my tears.

These expressions of David surely fit with what we are trying to understand. He went through great despair many times. By God's grace, he was a chosen vessel and wrote these down. When we see someone going through this, perhaps it can help us to realize we are not alone. Life is precious!

## How often does the Bible talk about suicide and despair?



A CQ App user from Mississippi suggests: I believe Christ made allowances for those that committed suicide when faced with things like incurable diseases.

Depression is a disease and many times it is biological.



Know, what and talk, *The Cultural Taboos of Suicide*, John Niewenburg, TEDtalks

- *Start that understanding by educating yourself. Although the exact cause of most mental illness is not known, it is becoming clear through research that it's a combination of psychological, biological, social and environmental factors. Mental illness is not a flaw in character. Get the facts so that we can stop the stigma. And third, let's talk about it. The elephant in the room is a metaphor for an obvious truth that is being ignored or unspoken. The best way to deal with an elephant? To name it. Get it out in the open. Let's talk openly how mental illness and suicide affects us all - either directly or through a family member, colleague or a friend. Let's talk openly about mental illness and suicide as part of normal life.*

Could becoming an alcoholic or drug addict be a cry for help - a type of suicide? In a way it hides their problems and destroys their lives and often leads to literal death. Sometimes suicide occurs by an act and sometimes by a lifestyle. Both are equally tragic.

(Source: Gotquestions.org) The Bible mentions six specific people who committed suicide: Abimelech (Judges 9:54), Saul (1 Samuel 31:4), Saul's armor-bearer (1 Samuel 31:4-6), Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17:23), Zimri (1 Kings 16:18) and Judas (Matthew 27:5). Five of them were wicked, sinful men (not enough is said regarding Saul's armor-bearer to make a judgment as to his character). Some consider Samson an instance of suicide (Judges 16:26-31), but Samson's goal was to kill the Philistines, not himself.

## Regarding our theme chapter of **Psalms 38:**

(Source: Biblical commentary by Adam Clarke) Several conjectures have been made relative to the occasion on which this Psalm was composed; and the most likely is that it was in reference to some severe affliction which David had after his illicit commerce with Bathsheba; but of what nature we are left to conjecture from the third, fifth and seventh verses. Whatever it was, he deeply repents for it, asks pardon and earnestly entreats support from God.

In many of the Psalms, David shows us the tragedy of the suffering as a result of his sins and shortcomings.



 **Knife to my throat, *Why We Choose Suicide*, Mark Henick, TEDxToronto**

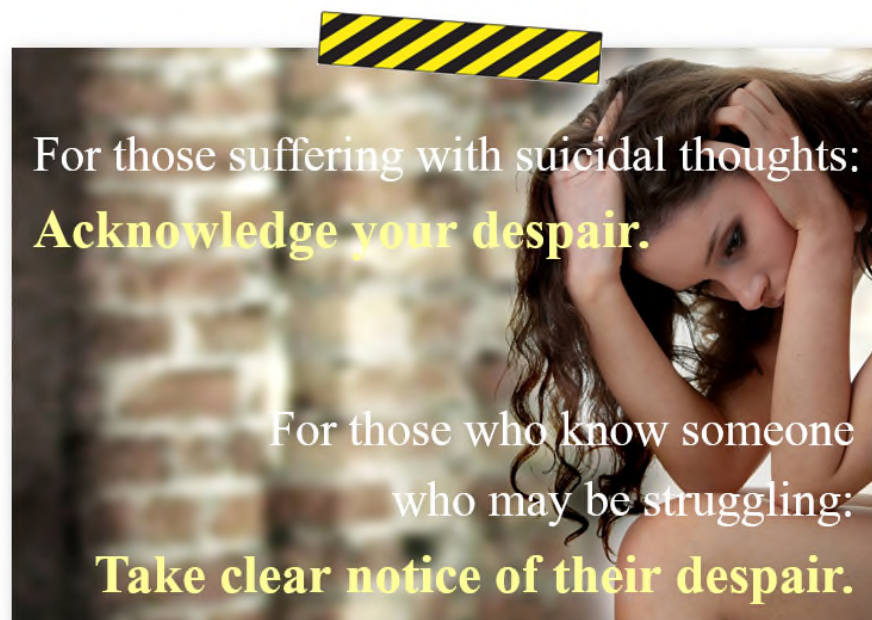
- *Now eventually your perception would have returned to normal. You would have relaxed, you would have went on with your day, you probably would have even forgotten about it. But imagine you didn't. Imagine you stayed there, stuck there, in that narrow, dark place. Well, that's what it can be like to live with a mental illness. At least that's what it was like for me at the depth of my own mental illness as a teenager. My perception had become constricted and darkened and collapsed. I felt like an asthmatic who had lost his glasses in a hurricane. So, when I was sitting in that chair across from my eighth-grade guidance counselor, the only thing that I could think was: you're not good enough, you're not smart enough, you're not enough. And it didn't matter if I was, because these were the constricted limits of my perception. So, when I held that 8-inch chef's knife in my hand and I raised it to my throat and I pressed it there, and I felt the blood begin to trickle down my hand, the only thing I could think in that moment...nobody would even know you're gone.*

(Mark's 8th grade counselor tackled him, wrestled the knife from him and saved his life.) He describes the inability to see or think anything else. His field of perception became so narrow that only those negative thoughts of "not being enough" remained.

**David reveals a season of overwhelming despair:**

**Psalms 38:1-8:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath, and chasten me not in Your burning anger. <sup>2</sup>For Your arrows have sunk deep into me, And Your hand has pressed down on me. <sup>3</sup>There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. <sup>4</sup>For my iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they weigh too much for me. <sup>5</sup>My wounds grow foul and fester because of my folly. <sup>6</sup>I am bent over and greatly bowed down; I go mourning all day long. <sup>7</sup>For my loins are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh. <sup>8</sup>I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart.

David shares the depth of his own despair with everyone. For those struggling with suicidal thoughts, this is important - acknowledge these thoughts exist.





 **Second attempt, *Why We Choose Suicide*, Mark Henick, TEDxToronto**

- *Well, this is the part that I'm doing differently with you today. By sharing with you my experiences I hope to raise my voice, and I hope to open those doors. This is how I do it: I remember. I remember I was wandering the empty streets of my hometown. I was alone this time unlike that other time, and it's because I wanted to die alone. My mind was running, screaming, shaking, collapsing in on itself again. When you're in that place and your perception is collapsing like that, those old thoughts kept coming back again: you're not good enough. You're not smart enough. You're not enough. So, I walked up and I approached the railing to the overpass. I walked along it. I looked over. I came to a light post on my left hand side and I stopped. Should I hang in there for just one more day? That's a phrase that people always seem to ask themselves when they're suicidal, I found. Should I hang in there for just one more day. For what? To be that crazy kid? I've already held on for this long and things haven't gotten any better. Why would I keep trying what hasn't been working?*

You can see his field of perception collapsed until he could see only one choice. Those of us who are not in the situation can help by being there for those who need our help.

David, the musician and writer, was prone to the deep emotions of distress, despair, joy and exultation.

**He acknowledged the pain but found the source of peace:**

**Psalms 69:1-13:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Save me, O God, for the waters have threatened my life. <sup>2</sup>I have sunk in deep mire, and there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and a flood overflows me. <sup>3</sup>I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched; my eyes fail while I wait for my God. <sup>4</sup>Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies; what I did not steal, I then have to restore. <sup>5</sup>O God, it is You who knows my folly, And my wrongs are not hidden from You. <sup>6</sup>May those who wait for You not be ashamed through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; May those who seek You not be dishonored through me, O God of Israel, <sup>7</sup>Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; Dishonor has covered my face. <sup>8</sup>I have become estranged from my brothers and an alien to my mother's sons. <sup>9</sup>For zeal for Your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. <sup>10</sup>When I wept in my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. <sup>11</sup>When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. <sup>12</sup>Those who sit in the gate talk about me, and I am the song of the drunkards. <sup>13</sup>But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, at an acceptable time; O God, in the greatness of Your lovingkindness, answer me with Your saving truth.

*My eyes fail while I wait for my God - He still acknowledges hope in the midst of despair.*

*The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me - David did not want to be a bad example to others.*

David found God in the midst of his great despair. He acknowledged the pain but also acknowledged the source of peace through God.



Once you acknowledge the despair of your life, where do you go with it?

Jonathan: To get a woman's perspective, we have invited our very own Loni from the CQ Team to share on tonight's topic. Welcome, Loni!



Loni: I think this is such an important topic to discuss, and I am glad this program is addressing it. I've talked to people who struggle with this. They know someone who has taken their own life, and they fear their loved one is burning in hell or being tormented.

Jonathan: How sad that people are taught that false doctrine.

Loni: It is heartbreaking and I think it's that misunderstanding breeds fear. You know, I've had bad days, and I know what it feels like to pray to God and ask for peace and release from the stress of life we all can relate to - that can feel crushing at times. But, I cannot begin to comprehend the thoughts and feelings of someone who is truly suicidal, who feels like they have nothing left to live for. I would never assume that I could even imagine what that is like if I have not gone through it myself. I confess I DO NOT KNOW what that is like. I don't know how to fix it or prevent it. But here's what I DO know: I know with all my heart that God is merciful and God is loving.

Jonathan: [Psalms 86:15](#): (NASB) *But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.* I can remember a time in my life when I was in despair and God helped me with His love, mercy and truth. He turned my life around.

Loni: I love that Scripture, and we have so many like that to reassure us of God's love. I do not believe that God's love is not powerful enough or that God is unwilling to show His mercy to those of the human race who are in that despair and need it the most! It is the opposite - when people are hurting that badly, we know [Psalms 34:18](#): (NASB) *The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.* Based on Scripture and reason, my answer is no, suicide is not an unforgivable sin.

The idea that a loving God would punish someone who is already hurting so deeply is one of the grossest misrepresentations of God's character in my opinion. Think about it: If someone were injured and laying on the side of the road and you witnessed an onlooker who had the means and ability to help but just stood by and watched the other person suffer, you would think, that's a bad person. But then, if the onlooker, after not bothering to help, goes out of his way to give the person in pain a swift kick in the gut, that would be outrageous! I think even in our most fallen state most people would say, "Well, that was wrong."

Jonathan: That to me sounds like a satanic disposition. There are even Christians with that disposition when they say people deserve to go to 'hell' (their version of the word).



Loni: It does not make sense that a God of love would behave in that way. When I was in high school, one of my class projects was to choose a hero to research and portray for a day. I picked Robin Williams. From the Genie in Aladdin to Mrs. Doubtfire, I grew up with him and can probably quote most of his movies to you. He will forever in my mind be one of the most talented actors and comedians, and I identified with him and admired him because he was the epitome of goofiness, happiness and joy. He was funny and carefree and loved life! At least, that is what he portrayed to the world. When I learned that he took his own life, I thought to myself, you just NEVER know what people might be struggling with way down deep in their core. The lesson for me was, don't always assume that everyone is JUST FINE.

Jesus told his disciples they would be "fishers of men." I think it means that our business needs to be people. Like good fishermen are interested in everything about the fish: how they move, where they hang out, what they like to eat...if we want to be like Jesus, we need to be interested in people. We need to be a source of love, understanding and caring for those around us, because we may unwittingly be the one thing that someone has when Satan tries to convince them that there is nothing left in this world for them and there is no one who will understand.


When the perceptions of the mind are skewed and clouded, sometimes love and reason may not be enough to prevent someone from becoming a victim of suicide. That is exactly why we need God's mercy. We have it! We can be confident in it, because it is promised to us! Psalms 145:9: *The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.* We never have to fear because love casts out fear and we know God is LOVE.

Jonathan: So Loni, your thoughts are that suicide would *not* be an unforgivable sin based on God's love and mercy. Thank you for your perspective on such a serious topic.

**Out of David's  
overwhelming despair  
comes a dark and lonely  
existence:**

Psalms 38:9-11: (NASB)  
*<sup>9</sup>Lord, all my desire is before You; and my sighing is not hidden from You. <sup>10</sup>My heart throbs, my strength fails me; and the light of my eyes, even that has gone from me. <sup>11</sup>My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague; and my kinsmen stand afar off.*

Sometimes we perceive loneliness when we can in fact have support if we were only able to see it and accept it.



For those suffering with suicidal thoughts:  
**Reach out in spite of your loneliness.**

For those who know someone who may be struggling:  
**Try to see through their protective shell and reach through to their loneliness.**



 **Unexpected gift, The Cultural Taboos of Suicide, John Niewenburg, TEDtalks**

- *After my attempt I received an unexpected gift. The unconditional love and support of my partner, Jennifer, and two of my brothers, Roy and Jim with whom she shared my secret. It's with their help that I survived. At the time I didn't think their help was available.*

**James 5:13-18:** (NASB) <sup>13</sup>Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. <sup>14</sup>Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; <sup>15</sup>and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

Prayer can be used in many ways, one of which is as a tool of humble fellowship and spiritual healing.

<sup>16</sup>Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. <sup>17</sup>Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. <sup>18</sup>Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

This shows a very clear principle of fellowship. True fellowship means trusting others with your hurt and your failure. Being a Christian does not mean you do not need professional treatment or medication.

We should share with others what is on our hearts and minds so it can be reciprocated.

 **How far to jump, Why We Choose Suicide, Mark Henick, TEDxToronto**

- *My perception was collapsing. It was squeezing out that instinctual hope that everybody has inside them. So, I climbed the railing in three parts like rungs on a ladder. I was being very careful not to slip. I climbed back down the other side again. I had very few choices in my life. But this, this was certainly one and I needed something - anything that I could be certain about. So, I turned around and I felt the railing pressing against my back just below my shoulder blades. I stretched my arms out on its cool metal surface. I remember feeling raindrops under my fingers. I looked down at my shoes. My running shoes were old, worn-out, tired. My heels were on the concrete. My toes were on nothing. I looked past my toes to the ground 50 or so feet below. And on the ground I saw a rusted out chain link fence topped by three strings of barbed wire. As I was standing there in that moment, the only thing that I could think for my collapsed perception was, how far out would I need to jump from this bridge so I wouldn't land on that fence? Because I just didn't want it to hurt anymore.*

Notice the minute detail of his recall of this event - the perception that this was his ONLY choice and HE could find control.

**Loneliness can be combated with the reality of how the body of Christ works - ALL therein are important and ALL therein contribute!**

**1 Corinthians 12:20-23:** (NASB) <sup>20</sup>But now there are many members, but one body. <sup>21</sup>And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. <sup>22</sup>On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; <sup>23</sup>and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on





these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable...

God truly does recognize the extraordinary value of those who may be deemed insignificant.

 **A man's voice, *Why We Choose Suicide*, Mark Henick, TEDxToronto**

- *In that moment my entire life was completely in my control, and when you're living in a hurricane like this all the time, that's a really unfamiliar but really satisfying feeling: to feel like you have control over your whole life. So, I stayed like that for awhile. I just stood there in that feeling, experiencing that feeling of having agency over my life for a change. Eventually I was brought back into the present by a man's voice over my right shoulder. I talked to him for awhile, but even today I don't remember about what. He was wearing a light brown jacket, but I don't remember his face. I didn't look back long enough, and I never saw him again.*

The man in the brown jacket appeared and stalled Mark, giving him something else to think about. Mark was able to hear another voice that provided another option.

 **No visible solution, *Suicide - Failed Attempts to Success*, Shraddha Shankar TED**  
(This young person attempted suicide at least 14 times.)

- *Because you see, this was a problem with no visible solution. If I break my leg I can see what has happened. I slap a cast on it for six to eight weeks and I'm good to go. But mental illnesses don't really work the same way. Unfortunately, you can't see anything. You have no idea what's going on. All you have is an obscure set of symptoms that could be caused by any number of things, and you're somehow forced to understand how to treat someone who says, "I think I'm seeing things, and I want to die every day." That's a little harder to treat than, "My stomach hurts." So, that was the way life went from then on and this lack of visibility almost forces us to freeball it. This usually means cycling through medications, going from one to another, as long as it takes to find the right one. If you're lucky it just takes a couple weeks. For most it takes a couple months, and in my case a year to a year and a half.*



**From David's dark and lonely existence comes the daily struggle with his enemies:**

**Psalms 38:12-14:** (NASB) <sup>12</sup>Those who seek my life lay snares for me; and those who seek to injure me have threatened destruction, and they devise treachery all day long. <sup>13</sup>But I, like a deaf man, do not hear; and I am like a mute man who does not open his mouth. <sup>14</sup>Yes, I am like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth are no arguments.

Sometimes we can perceive our enemies to be more tenacious and powerful than our allies are.



 **Jump, you coward! Why We Choose Suicide, Mark Henick, TEDxToronto**

- *Before I knew it, I could see flashing lights from the corner of my eyes. I looked to my right and to my left and there were three police cars on either side blocking off the street. There were crowds of late night gatherers gawking at me from either side. This was two, three in the morning, I guess. A male voice from my right side, I heard him scream to me, "Jump, you coward!" Okay. That's enough. Again, I took a deep breath in and as I did, my arms, they seemed to rise from the railing, like they'd suddenly become weightless and unburdened. I could feel the edge of the concrete under the arches of my feet begin to shift. I started to pitch forward. And as I did, I felt the wind blow around my body and on my face and through my hair, and it felt free. Then an arm reached around my chest. A hand grabbed the back of my shirt. The man in the light brown jacket later told police that my body was completely limp when he grabbed me and he dragged me backward over the railing.*



Jonathan's wife, Jewel, contributes that several years ago she and Jonathan were on their way to a Bible study one Sunday morning but were diverted by police from their route over a bridge. They saw a man holding onto the bridge railings from the outside who looked anguished and despondent. Jewel and Jonathan prayed but were not able to get out of the car to share God's love and plan with him. It was an unforgettable experience.

It is important we realize treatment, therapy and medication are important. We should use our faith as well - not as a replacement to the physical things necessary for the biology of our minds. Just like a broken leg needs a cast, our minds sometimes need help as well.



## Jesus literally was able to silence the dark voices of evil spirit beings:

**Luke 8:27-39: (NASB) (selected verses)** <sup>27</sup>And when he came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; ...<sup>28</sup>Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before him, and said in a loud voice, What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me. <sup>29</sup>For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

Fear and respect were in the voice of the fallen spirit beings addressing Jesus - they knew who he was.

<sup>30</sup>And Jesus asked him, What is your name? And he said, Legion; for many demons had entered him. <sup>31</sup>They were imploring him not to command them to go away into the abyss. <sup>32</sup>Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons implored him to permit them to enter the swine. And he gave them permission. <sup>33</sup>And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

Jesus granted this permission for this was not yet the time for their judgment. That would come later.

...<sup>35</sup>and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened.... <sup>38</sup>But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging him that he might accompany him; but he sent him away, saying, <sup>39</sup>Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you. So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

Our faith can help silence and vanquish the voices.

### Only one choice, *Why We Choose Suicide*, Mark Henick, TEDxToronto

- *Can suicide really be a choice if it's the only choice available? We ask ourselves, how can it be the only choice? How can it even be a rational choice? And hopefully we wonder and we ask ourselves how we can help. Well, we can start to help by better appreciating that our mental health is contingent on the state and the flexibility of our perceptions. Whether we have a mental illness or not, how expanded or how contracted our perception becomes impacts the choices that we make. When I was standing on that bridge, my perception was so collapsed that I only had that one choice.*

**Where do you find hope when you are so overwhelmed with despair?**

### Public health concern, *Why We Choose Suicide*, Mark Henick, TEDxToronto

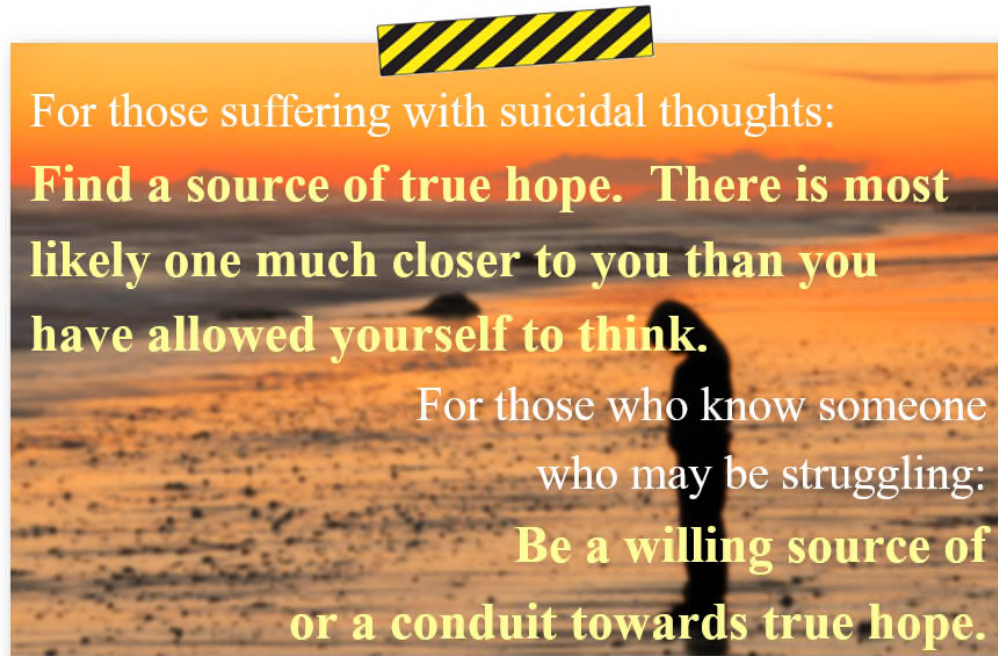
- *When we encounter the suicide of somebody else, we always seem to try to rationalize it. I hear it all the time. And I think that's because we're uncomfortable with feeling helpless and with not understanding. But since we know that our perceptions are created and continually informed by our biology, by our psychology and by our society, we actually have many entry points for potentially helping and better understanding suicide. One way that we can help is to stop saying that people "commit" suicide. People commit rape. They commit murder. But nobody has committed suicide in this country since the early 1970's when suicide was decriminalized. And that's because suicide is a public health concern, not a criminal one.*



From David's daily struggle with his enemies comes his acknowledgement that God does have an answer and is therefore worthy of his hope:

**Psalms 38:15-17:** (NASB) <sup>15</sup>For I hope in You, O LORD; You will answer, O Lord my God. <sup>16</sup>For I said, May they not rejoice over me, who, when my foot slips, would magnify themselves against me. <sup>17</sup>For I am ready to fall, and my sorrow is continually before me.

Beginning to look up, to hope in the midst of darkness - though sometimes it feels feeble - can be a significant step towards healing.



 **Treatments work, *Why We Choose Suicide*, Mark Henick, TEDxToronto**

- *Ninety percent of people who die by suicide have a diagnosable and treatable mental illness at the time of their death. And we know that with medication, with psychotherapy, these treatments work. So, we need to make these treatments more available in an informed way to everybody. And we can be a part of that change, whether we have a mental illness or not, by taking charge of our own mental health. When we go in for our annual physical, we make a point of doing an annual psychological, too. At both the individual and the societal levels, we can challenge our old ideas, like that old idea of saying that people "commit" suicide.*

The right kind of treatment and medication are very important.

If you are in need of hope, it really helps to know where to look for it:

**Psalms 42:1-11:** (NASB) (selected verses) <sup>1</sup>As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. <sup>2</sup>My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? <sup>3</sup>My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, Where is your God?

David's soul needed God in order to be stable. Sometimes we just need to talk ourselves through the storm to find our true north. This is what David did. "Here is where I am; there is where I need to go. I know that where I am is not a good place and I do not want to be here." Part of the challenge is navigating



through that void of helplessness. We can listen, validate and give feedback to people in this situation.

...<sup>5</sup>Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence... <sup>8</sup>The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night, a prayer to the God of my life. <sup>9</sup>I will say to God my rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? <sup>10</sup>As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, while they say to me all day long, Where is your God? <sup>11</sup>Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.

"Should I hang on for one more day?" This gives us a good formula to do that.

David: "In spite of the desperate experiences and doubt that I may face, God can lift my countenance again!" This is profound. God can pull you back up.

**Sometimes help and hope are closer than we can imagine and can come from the most unlikely sources:**

Acts 16:25-30: (NASB) <sup>25</sup>But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; <sup>26</sup>and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. <sup>27</sup>When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup>But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!

An unexpected voice can bring unexpected hope and can lead to our lives changing. Maybe you can be that unexpected voice for the person suffering.

<sup>29</sup>And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, <sup>30</sup>and after he brought them out, he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

**Once we begin to see hope as a real possibility, what should we do next?**

 **Mental illness vs. cancer, Suicide - Failed Attempts to Success, Shraddha Shankar**

- The thing is people can suffer from really bad depression. They can be on the verge of attempting suicide, but if they dare ask for help, they're labeled as "attention seeking" and "crazy." And people know this - they do know this and therefore they figure it might be better to keep quiet than to speak. For some reason, when people come out about having cancer, their Facebook posts gets about 100 likes, their peers might start a Facebook support group page for them, and this illness is taken so seriously that there's a specific foundation that specializes in taking these kids to Disneyland. And when they die - if they die - they're seen as warriors, courageous people who fought until the end, and I'm not saying they're not. For some reason when someone commits suicide because they just can't tolerate the psychotic episodes anymore, or they can't handle the constant changing of medication that seems to trigger a cycle of paranoia, hot sweats, nausea on a daily basis - they just can't take it anymore - they're seen as selfish and weak. It's truly astonishing and saddening that two illnesses that can be just as painful as each other, just as fatal as each other and have the same consequences of each other are seen so differently.

Suicide is a result of serious illnesses that require treatment.

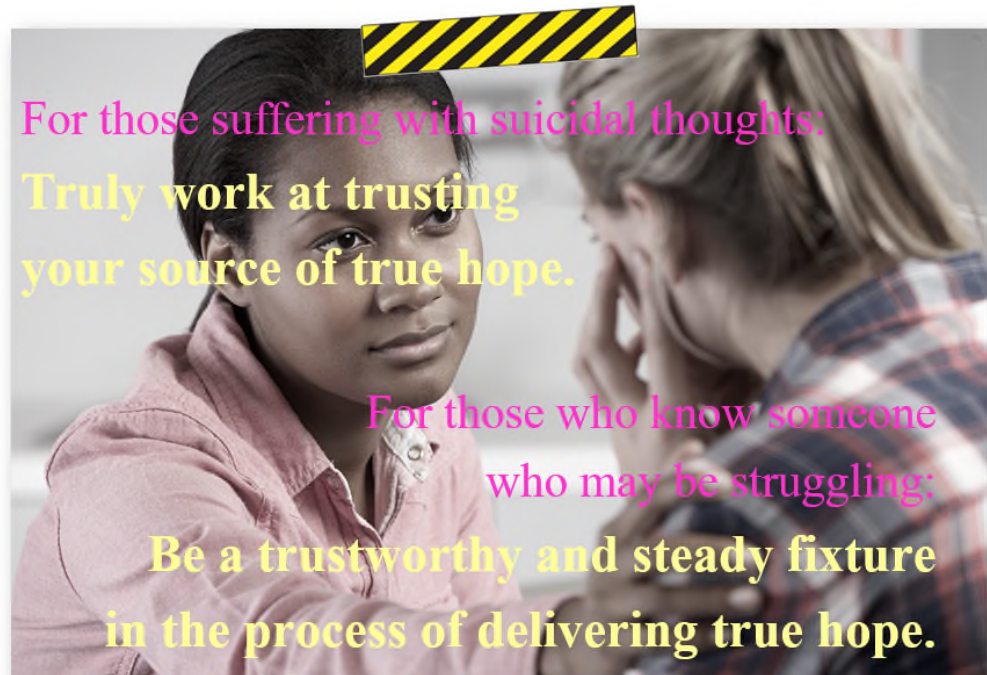


From acknowledging God's answer and hope comes trust - becoming vulnerable before God in all honesty.

**With this trust comes a stated desire for God's presence in and around our struggles, just like David:**

**Psalms 38:18-22:** (NASB) <sup>18</sup>*For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin. <sup>19</sup>But my enemies are vigorous and strong, and many are those who hate me wrongfully. <sup>20</sup>And those who repay evil for good, they oppose me, because I follow what is good. <sup>21</sup>Do not forsake me, O LORD; O my God, do not be far from me! <sup>22</sup>Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!*

He looked for hope in the midst of his despair. Vulnerability before God is a freeing experience, for it means that *our complete trust* is in the hands of the mighty Creator who absolutely knows what is best for us.



You might be the ride to the doctor or the one who picks up medication. You might simply call and meet for coffee or let the person know you are thinking about them.

 **Not acceptable, Why We Choose Suicide, Mark Henick, TEDxToronto**

- *When I first started out doing this, I used to beg for somebody to do something about suicide and stigma. Well, that's not acceptable anymore. So instead, I've started doing something. When a leading cause of death among new mothers in the first year after childbirth is suicide, that's not acceptable either. When our First Nations in AIAN (American Indian/Alaskan Native) communities are being ravaged by a suicide rate five to six times higher than the national average, that is not acceptable. When almost a quarter of 15 to 25-year olds who die at all die by suicide, that is not acceptable. So like I said, I used to plead for people to do something, and that's not acceptable either. Well, you're here and you're doing something already because you're changing the way you think - and that's what changes the world.*



Our mission at Christian Questions is for people to “think about the Bible like you never have before.” We want to bring hope to a sin-sick world filled with challenges to point people in the right direction of God and His word. Mark is reaching out with a focus on suicide. Hopefully we can each use what is in our hands to help all.

As Christians, we follow in Jesus’ footsteps but we are not Jesus. He could read the heart and mind and understand everything about a person. We do not have that same ability. We have to focus, pay attention, observe and act. Much of the issue is due to depression caused by many reasons including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. We need to realize hope exists because we can lift each other up.



Am I willing enough and observant enough to help the person close to me? Am I compassionate enough?

**This next text from the Apostle Paul pulls it all together:**

1. Acknowledge the despair.
2. Reach out in spite of the loneliness.
3. Silence the enemy’s voice.
4. Find true hope and trust in that hope.

Picture the Apostle Paul as your big brother as you read these verses. He will tell you what he learned in his experiences and wants to pass it on to you.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-11:** (NASB) <sup>3</sup>*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,* <sup>4</sup>*who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

In other words, “I have the difficult and draining trial of suffering as do you, but with it comes comfort.”

<sup>5</sup>*For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.* <sup>6</sup>*But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;* <sup>7</sup>*and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.*

In other words, “My experiences, though they are mine, can be shared with you because we are part of the same body.” Our comfort might come from different channels, but we are all in this together.



<sup>8</sup>For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; <sup>9</sup>indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;

In other words, "I was tried beyond what I thought possible - to the very door of death - yet I overcame the chilling call of death and defeat by faith in the One who brings life! I know how you feel. We will get through this together."

<sup>10</sup>who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, <sup>11</sup>you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.

In other words, "Our hope is provable and alive and this gives us the inspiration to truly trust in God as we continue."

 **Keep talking, Why We Choose Suicide, Mark Henick, TEDxToronto**

- So, for those of you who might be thinking about suicide today, good. Keep thinking about it. And then start talking about it. And then start doing something about it, too. And for those of you who might be contemplating suicide, I know that there's a hope somewhere deep inside you. I felt it, too. Keep that hope alive. We need you. We need you to be leaders in this conversation, whether we are ready to have it or not. And trust me, if you're anything like me, it's this conversation that's going to keep you alive every single day as though you've got just one more day. Thank you.



A CQ App user from Melbourne, Australia suggests: Truly understand your child's feelings and thoughts so you don't force them into a position where they feel like they have no option. The parents have a responsibility to make sure their choice of how they direct their child's life does not force them into despair and want to take their own life. Love your children and do not force your ideals onto them.

Galatians 6:2: (KJV) *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

A lot of people are suffering with depression and have tried to take their own lives. We want to react with the compassion of Jesus and our big brother, Paul. We cannot solve the problem, but we can contribute to getting the needed help. Our faith in God can give us the strength and fortitude to help those in need. There is always hope.

**So, is suicide an unforgivable sin?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!**

**And now even more to think about...  
only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!**







### **Words of encouragement: God sees you as valuable!**

**Matthew 10:29-31:** (NASB) <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup>But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup>So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

**Philippians 4:6-7:** (NRSV) <sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**Proverbs 3:5-6:** (NASB) <sup>5</sup>Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. <sup>6</sup>In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

(Source: Gotquestions.org) Some people in Scripture felt deep despair in life. Solomon, in his pursuit of pleasure, reached the point where he "hated life" (Ecclesiastes 2:17). Elijah was fearful and depressed and yearned for death (1 Kings 19:4). Jonah was so angry at God that he wished to die (Jonah 4:8). Even the apostle Paul and his missionary companions at one point "were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself" (2 Corinthians 1:8).

### **Remember, so many of us experience dark and depressing thoughts.**

(Source: healthyplace.org) Feeling suicidal? Here are some ways to help yourself if you are feeling suicidal or suffering from deep depression. Tell your therapist, a friend, a family member, or someone else who can help.

Distance yourself from any means of suicide. If you are thinking of taking an overdose, give your medicines to someone who can give them to you one day at a time. Remove any dangerous objects or weapons from your home.

Avoid alcohol and other drugs of abuse.

Avoid doing things you are likely to fail at or find difficult until you are feeling better. Know what your present limits are and do not try to go beyond them until you feel better. Set realistic goals for yourself and work at them slowly, one step at a time.

Make a written schedule for yourself every day and stick to it no matter what. Set priorities for the things that need to be done first. Cross things out on your schedule as you finish them. A written schedule gives you a sense of predictability and control. Crossing out tasks as you complete them gives a feeling of accomplishment.

In your daily schedule don't forget to schedule at least two 30-minute periods for activities which in the past have given you some pleasure such as: listening to music, playing a musical instrument, meditating, doing relaxation exercises, doing needlework, reading a book or magazine, taking a warm bath, sewing, writing, shopping, playing games, watching your favorite DVD or video, gardening, playing with your pet, participating in a hobby, taking a drive or a walk.

Take care of your physical health. Eat a well-balanced diet. Don't skip meals. Get as much sleep as you need, and go out for one or two 30-minute walks each day.

Make sure you spend at least 30 minutes a day in the sun. Bright light is good for everyone with depression, not just people with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

You may not feel very social but make yourself talk to other people. Whether you talk about your feelings or about any other topic, reducing your social isolation is likely to be helpful.

Remember that while it may feel as if it will never end, depression is not a permanent condition.



The National Hopeline Network (1-800-SUICIDE) provides access to trained telephone counselors, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or for a crisis center in your area, visit the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

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Statistics on suicide *in the United States:*

- Studies indicate that the best way to prevent suicide is through the early recognition and treatment of depression and other psychiatric illnesses.
- Over 32,000 people kill themselves every year.
- Suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death.
- Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for adults between the ages of 18 and 65 years with approximately 26,500 suicides.
- A person dies by suicide about every 16 minutes. An attempt is made once a minute.
- Ninety percent of all people who die by suicide have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder at the time of their death.
- There are more than four male suicides for every female suicide. However, at least twice as many females as males attempt suicide.
- Every day, approximately 80 Americans take their own life and 1500 attempt. There are an estimated eight to 25 attempted suicides to one completion.

Youth suicide *in the United States:*

- Suicide is the fifth leading cause of death among all those 5 to 14 years of age.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among all those 15 to 24 years of age.
- The suicide rate for white males age 15 to 24 has tripled since 1950, while for white females it has more than doubled. Among persons age 10 to 14 years, the rate has increased by 100%.
- Among young people aged 10-14 years, the rate has doubled in the last two decades.
- Between 1980-1996, the suicide rate for African-American males aged 15-19 has also doubled.
- Risk factors for suicide among the young include suicidal thoughts, psychiatric disorders (such as depression, impulsive aggressive behavior, bipolar disorder, certain anxiety disorders), drug and/or alcohol abuse and previous suicide attempts, with the risk increased if there is also access to firearms and situational stress.