



Tough Stuff: Suicide

Text: Psalm 40:1-3

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1. How has your life been affected by suicide? Has someone you know or care about committed suicide or expressed suicidal thoughts? Have you witnessed or somehow been near a suicide or its devastating effects? Are suicidal thoughts something that you have wrestled with personally, either in the past or currently?
2. T.A. taught that while perhaps we have not all considered suicide, we all experience feelings of loneliness, depression, anxiety, of being overwhelmed, of being “blinded by life,” etc. Which of these are you most prone to? Are you in any way experiencing one or more of these right now?
3. T.A. identified 3 lies that those who struggle with suicidal thoughts or attempt suicide are prone to believe: 1) Nobody really cares. 2) Suicide will end the pain. 3) Things won’t change.

Which lie most resonates with you and why?

(Perhaps you have not experienced any of these lies as broadly or as deeply as someone who struggles with suicidal thoughts, but how have you experienced something similar? Perhaps it is a particular person or group who hurt you because you did not believe that they cared about you. Perhaps you have not thought about suicide but there are other ways you try to avoid or numb the pain. Or perhaps there are certain parts of your life that seem hopeless, as if they will never change.)

4. The Gospel – the Good News that God entered our pain in the person of Jesus Christ who lived, died, and lived again in order to bring salvation, hope, and life to those who put their faith and trust in him as Lord and Savior – is what ultimately frees us from the bondage to such lies. (See John 10:10) Study the following passages and describe how the truths expressed therein contain the power to break free from the lies. Then pick one that speaks most powerfully to you and describe what it is specifically that is so meaningful to you.
 - a. Psalm 40:1-3
 - b. Romans 5:8
 - c. 1 Corinthians 6:19-21
 - d. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
 - e. Ephesians 2:10
 - f. Revelation 21:1-4

Challenge: What step do you need to take? Are you someone struggling with depression, anxiety, loneliness, hopelessness, and/or even suicidal thoughts and need to talk to someone about it like a member of your Grow Group and/or the suicide hotline? Have you noticed a family member, friend, or loved one who seems “off” such as suddenly and mysteriously withdrawing or making some strange comments, and if so, how can you reach out to them to show your love, care, and concern? How can you

“preemptively” show love to someone before they ever show warning signs? Are you someone who has yet to put your faith and trust in Christ as your Lord and Savior to receive life, true life, for the very first time?
Prayer:

(Adaptation Ephesians 3:14-21)

Father,

We humbly and earnestly come before you. You are the Creator of all things, including each one of us, along with every single person among the more than 7 million people in the world right now. You are infinitely holy, glorious, and powerful, yet you care deeply for each and every person you have created.

We pray that you would empower each one of us through your infinite supply of strength, flowing from your Spirit. We pray especially for strength and hope for all those suffering from intense depression, loneliness, or anxiety, including those we know and love who fall into this category.

We pray that even when we or they are in pain and life doesn't make sense, that you would give us hearts that trust in your Son, who you gave to radically display your love and care for us. We all experience pain in this life, but you made a way for us to have strength, hope, and even joy amidst the pain, as we look forward to the day when you will remove all pain and wipe away every tear. Give us increasing heartfelt understanding and experience of your infinite love.

Help us believe that with you all things are possible, and we are never without hope. And help us share your love and hope with the hurting world around us. May we, and the entirety of your church, be a part of pushing back the darkness and reversing the horrifying trends regarding suicide in our world today.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

STUDY DEEPER

Get Help

- faithbridge.org/gethelp
- Call Faithbridge's prayer line: 281-320-7588 ext. 820
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

Helping a Friend through the Darkness of Depression

Editor's Note: Depression has been a part of the human condition since the fall. Sin has created all human brokenness. Throughout the scripture, we see God's people struggling with this reality, such as David (Psalm 22:2, 42:11, 32:5), Elijah (1 Kings 19), Jeremiah (Jer. 20:1-11), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1), and Paul (2 Cor. 4:7).

The subject of mental illness is complex, but the purpose of this article is to equip individuals to walk alongside a depressed friend on their path to healing.

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Your friend is in the emotional crisis of depression. This is their darkest moment. What do you do? How can you help?

As with many uncomfortable situations, our first reaction is to flee, to ignore, to hope someone else tends to the issue, or to wait for it to pass. However, every example of Christ shows just the opposite; He was present, fully engaged, always had time for people and deeply cared about the individual. We can do the same.

Here are some things you can DO for your friend suffering from depression:

Above all else, if you suspect your friend or family member is depressed, strongly urge them to see a doctor. There are many causes for depression, or what might look like depression, and they absolutely must be evaluated by a doctor.

Let's say they have visited their doctor and have been placed on medication. Encourage, encourage, encourage. Many medications are very helpful but take some time (usually several weeks) to show full effectiveness. Not only that, it may take a while to find just the right one, which will require a great deal of patience and perseverance. Reassure your friend they're on the right path and that results will come. Check in with them regularly and ask open-ended questions, such as, "How are things going?" Avoid questions that are easily answered and ask questions that require a bit more thinking before answering.

Along with that, an experienced counselor is critically helpful. Many times, talk therapy alone will help someone make big strides in healing. Wounds cannot be healed unless they are opened and cleaned, and an effective, compassionate therapist will provide this care.

Now back to you as a friend. Realize you cannot replace the two things that I've just mentioned - medical care and professional therapy. You are a friend, but even in an illness such as depression, friends still play an important role in restoration and healing.

Just a few practical ways you can help:

Listen. Let them talk. If they have a "safe" person to talk to (in addition to their therapist), it can take the emotional pressure off them for the moment. Everyone feels better after having a good talk with a friend, especially when they're feeling depressed. Even for a non-depressed person, it is emotionally healthy to share thoughts and feelings with someone else.

Allow them to talk without judgment. Just let them talk. Never tell someone they shouldn't feel the way they do, or that what they feel is wrong, or that what they are doing, saying or feeling is contrary to Scripture. In the depths of depression, a person needs love, reassurance and support, not judgment. Allowing a person to feel heard and understood without being judged is a powerful way to make them feel loved.

Sometimes your friend or loved one may say, "Maybe it would be better if I weren't here." A person who actually says this is or has probably already contemplated ending their lives, in which case a professional

is needed. I lovingly remind them how much they mean to so many people and how suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Continue to check in daily until you feel this person is out of the ditch.

Warning: this can be exhausting. Faithfully love your friend in the Lord's strength and not your own.

Realize you can't fix it. Whatever problems are wrong in their life, you can't fix them. Whatever issues are causing pain, you can't repair them. You can listen and reassure, but you can't fix.

Understand that true depression is an illness, and illnesses must be treated. You can't just "get over" heart disease or diabetes. Similarly a depressed person can't just "get over" being depressed. They would love nothing better, but it doesn't work that way. It is a medical and emotional issue that may require long term treatment. Walking with someone during this time is a valuable gift. You can see the light – they can't. And you can't make a blind person see what they can't see, but you can help guide them.

Engage them. A depressed person will stay home all day every day if they could, and some do. Invite them to lunch or coffee. This may take a few tries, but don't give up. They need to be with others and need the stimulation of being out and about. Being out in nature is especially healing. On the other hand, if you sense your friend is having a particularly bad day and just can't talk, that's ok. Let them have their space and call back in a couple of days. You can send texts, emails or cards, too. Knowing they are loved will help, even at their most unlovely.

Encourage the person to take care of themselves. Ask if they've done anything for themselves recently. Promote self-care. Many depressed persons have no idea how to care for themselves. They are perfectly capable of caring for others, but self care is another issue. Maybe even sit down together over coffee one day and help her make a list. What things make them happy? What do they enjoy?

Assure them of God's love and your support. Gently remind them, in whatever creative way you choose, that God loves and values them more than they know. He is always with them and has promised to never leave. Likewise, assure them of your unwavering friendship.

Assure them of hope. There is hope in God. "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for us who believe." Eph. 1:17-19. There is not a permanent condition. There is healing and light at the end of the darkness. There is always, always hope.

And finally, pray for them. Pray, pray, pray. How many times do you find yourself praying for people who are physically ill? Pray with the same conviction and fervor for your depressed friend. They need it so very much and they are probably not able to ask for it.

Adapted from <https://bible.org/article/helping-friend-through-darkness-depression>