

What Does the Bible Teach About Suicide?

All the moral teachings of the Bible are based on the Ten Commandments, which cover every possible category of human behaviour. When a problem is not specifically mentioned by the commandments, we need to establish principles which would take the teachings of the Bible and apply it to our question this evening.

First let me say that there is no clear teaching in the Bible concerning suicide and much of what the church has taught over the years is based on tradition and not on the teachings of the Scriptures.

It would too easy to say that suicide is a form of self murder and as such should be condemned along with other forms of murder.

Let us see if we can establish a biblical approach to our topic and discern how we should relate to this painful topic. All of us know someone or know of someone who has taken their own lives.

We have the examples of Saul and of Judas in the Bible and we have the despair of Moses (Num. 11:15) and of Paul (2 Cor. 1:8) and of David (Ps. 18: 4, 5; 22:16; 55:4; and an anonymous psalmist – ps. 107:10, 14, 18) and we need to draw a distinction between being feeling that we are going to die (and indeed wanting to die) and actually taking active steps to end our own life).

Expressions like death by cop, or involuntary suicide (passive suicide) come to mind, but we have not yet drawn a clear picture what the Bible teaches.

Here is an initial attempt.

G-d is the author of life and all of us are given a life span that we are called not to end prematurely. In the Bible there are basically seven ways our life can be ended before we reach the natural span of our years:

1. Criminal idolatry/fornication
2. Murder (life for a life – Ex. 21:22-25)
3. Accidental death
4. War
5. Famine
6. Disease
7. Suicide

It is never the will of G-d that our lives should be ended before they reach their natural span, but all too frequently this has occurred, from the time that Cain slew his brother right up into our own times where the abortion rate nearly equals that natural death rate worldwide (half of those who die every year are aborted).

We need to look at both the perfect and at the permissive will of G-d. We also have to look at the motivation of the hearts of men before we judge too quickly or too harshly. Rom. 2:13-16 and Eccl. 12:13, 14. (AND) Prov. 31:6. Suicide is a despair reaction which can be brought on by chemical imbalances as well as by being overwhelmed by pain, fear or sorrow. There is a question about assisted suicide versus artificially prolonging life.

Conclusion:

We do not fear death. Suicide is never in the perfect will of G-d. When someone is pushed to the point of despair and takes their own life, it cannot be seen in the same light as murder, but should be seen as a combination of disease and distress. It is not the unforgiveable sin (not found in the lists - I Cor. 5: 9-13 and 6:9-11).