

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 39, No.36, September 3, 2013 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **The Grow in Grace Newsletter**— a weekly Bible Study, plus news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church... sent forth to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide who receive the Newsletter), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

A VARIETY OF TOPICS!

I. **Why They Fired the Pastor** edited from John M. Drescher

I don't know how long Pastor Bob had been at the church when the members noticed. I'm certain he must have been on his best behavior for at least a few months. Some members think the first time they noticed was the night he failed to show up at committee. The next day Pastor Bob explained to a member that he had met a friend who had invited him to a community activity. "I knew you could carry on without me," he said with a disarming smile.

When he missed the first prayer meeting is a matter of dispute. Some say one day and some another. But all agree that he failed to show up a number of times. Not that he ever failed to provide someone to lead the service; it was just that, well, people kind of expect a pastor to be at prayer meeting. **A member recalls one explanation the pastor gave:** "A little job I had to get done at home," he said. "It wasn't much, but it was bugging the wife."

Then it was the first Sunday service Pastor Bob missed. The members do remember that date, because just the week before, Pastor Bob had preached about the local church being a 'body' from 1 Corinthians 12; and he spoke of the necessity of Christian fellowship—"so much the more as your see the day approaching," he had quoted. "The fact is," he explained to a member, "I'm not teaching a Sunday School class and another brother was preaching, and since my whole family was at home for once, I decided to take time out to be with them. Plus, I was really tired and probably wouldn't have gotten much out of the service anyway."

But this is not all! Pastor Bob stopped attending Sunday School Bible study! Moreover, the congregation also remembers the Sunday morning that Pastor Bob arrived fifteen minutes late for the church worship service. He didn't give any explanation—just marched up the aisle to the front and went on as if nothing had happened. Before long he was late more often than not. It got so you could almost count on his walking in with the other latecomers, 10-15 minutes late. **When a deacon ventured to speak to him about it, he just said he had gotten into the habit starting late and it was hard to kick the habit.**

EVEN SO, after awhile, Pastor Bob 'turned over a new leaf'— he started back in Sunday School. But after a few months, once again, he would walk in late. **The whole thing came to a head when Pastor Bob started SKIPPING the worship service and going home right after Sunday School; and then, finally, another Sunday came and he simply didn't show up for any of the Sunday services.** On the spur of the moment, members learned later, he had decided to go for a drive, since the fall colors were so beautiful. "Not many more days left," he said. "And I thought I'd not be missed, since I met so many members on the way."

Well, it was then that the church board met, talked over what it meant to be a pastor in their church. They decided to recommend the firing of Pastor Bob and to seek out a much more committed and dependable pastor. THE CHURCH AGREED! PASTOR BOB WAS GONE! "He doesn't even know what membership in the church means," said one of the board members. "He doesn't even realize the importance of the church," said another. The secretary summed it all up in the minutes of the meeting, after the vote to dismiss him had been passed: **"It was clear that Pastor Bob cannot be the Pastor here if he insists on acting just like many of our members!"**

SUICIDE

It seems that there is never a good time to write on this subject. Nevertheless, in the midst of one of our dear families being in a time of grief over the loss of a loved one— maybe all of us need and could benefit from some Bible-based thoughts. We EACH need to beware of and guard against this growing tragedy. We EACH need to be alert and available to help others in their times of struggle. CONSIDER THE ALARMING STATS:

Suicide Deaths:The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) collects data about mortality in the United States, including deaths by suicide. In 2010 (the most recent year for which data are available), 38,364 suicides were reported, making suicide the 10th leading cause of death for Americans. **In that year, someone in the country died by suicide every 13.7 minutes.**

Suicide Rates by Age: In 2010, the highest suicide rate (18.6) was among people 45 to 64 years old. The second highest rate (17.6) occurred in those 85 years and older. Younger groups have had consistently lower suicide rates than middle-aged and older adults. In 2010, adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 24 had a suicide rate of 10.5

Suicide Rates by Sex: For many years, the suicide rate has been about 4 times higher among men than among women. In 2010, men had a suicide rate of 19.9, and women had a rate of 5.2. Of those who died by suicide in 2010, 78.9% were male and 21.1% were female.

Suicide Rates by Race/Ethnicity: In 2010, the highest U.S. suicide rate (14.1) was among Whites and the second highest rate (11.0) was among American Indians and Alaskan Natives. Much lower and roughly similar rates were found among Asians and Pacific Islanders (6.2), Blacks (5.1) and Hispanics (5.9).

Suicide Rates by Geographic Region/State: In 2010, suicide rates were highest in the West (13.6), followed by the South (12.6), the Midwest (12.0) and the Northeast (9.3). Six U.S. states, all in the West, had age-adjusted suicide rates in excess of 18: Wyoming (23.2), Alaska (23.1), Montana (22.9), Nevada (20.3), New Mexico (20.1) and Idaho (18.5). Four locales had age-adjusted suicide rates lower than 9 per 100,000: New York (8.0) and New Jersey (8.2) in the Northeast, and Maryland (8.7) and the District of Columbia (6.8), in the Southeast.

Suicide Methods: In 2010, firearms were the most common method of death by suicide, accounting for a little more than half (50.6%) of all suicide deaths. The next most common methods were suffocation (including hangings) at 24.8% and poisoning at 17.3%.

Suicide Attempts: No complete count is kept of suicide attempts in the U.S.; however, the CDC gathers data each year from hospitals on non-fatal injuries resulting from self-harm behavior. **In 2010, the most recent year for which data is available, 464,995 people visited a hospital for injuries due to self-harm behavior, suggesting that approximately 12 people harm themselves (not necessarily intending to take their lives) for every reported death by suicide.** Together, those harming themselves made an estimated total of more than 650,000 hospital visits related to injuries sustained in one or more separate incidents of self-harm behavior. **Because of the way these data are collected,** we are not able to distinguish intentional suicide attempts from non-intentional self-harm behaviors.

But we know that many suicide attempts go unreported or untreated, and surveys suggest that at least one million people in the U.S. each year engage in intentionally inflicted self-harm. As with suicide deaths, rates of attempted suicide vary considerably among demographic groups. While males are 4 times more likely than females to die by suicide, females attempt suicide 3 times as often as males. The ratio of suicide attempts to suicide death in youth is estimated to be about 25:1, compared to a about 4:1 in the elderly.



Are you thinking, confessing, and feeling that life isn't worth living anymore? Do your problems seem too big to handle? Does it seem that no one cares? Have you dug a hole so deep that you see no way out? Do you feel you cannot face the possible shame and/or other consequences of your actions? Often these feelings of despair entice people to think about suicide.

I. LET'S DO SOME STUDY: What does the Bible say about suicide?

The Bible records SIX suicides: 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.

II. What does the Bible say about those who commit suicide?

God, the Giver of life, is the only one who is to decide when and how a person should die. **Obviously then, if an unsaved person commits suicide**, he has done nothing but hurry his/her journey to an eternity under the just and holy wrath of God. However, the suicide would have simply been a 'work' of or an expression of his/her lostness; rather than the ultimate cause of his/her destiny. Moreover, suicide is but a deadly climax to a long-term way of thinking and behaving.

WHAT ABOUT A CHRISTIAN WHO COMMITS SUICIDE? In reality, the Bible says 'nothing' on this subject; it gives no example. **SO, can a GENUINE Christian do such a thing? RESPONSE: I do not know!** I have found no Biblical grounds to give those still LIVING any assurance that if they commit suicide they will go to heaven. Neither, have I nor would I preach that a professing Christian, who has committed suicide, goes to hell.

God Knows.

REALITY: IF THE PERSON WAS TRULY SAVED— then they will be in heaven. Nothing can separate a GENUINE Christian from God's love, (Romans 8:38-39.

NEVERTHELESS, suicide is still a serious sin against God. It is always wrong. AS TO THE LIVING, serious doubts should be raised about the genuineness of faith of anyone who

claims to be a Christian yet is considering suicide. There is no circumstance that can justify someone, especially a Christian, taking his/her own life. Christians are called to live their lives for God, and the decision on when to die is God's and God's alone.

III. WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO BELIEVERS

God has a great plan for your life. God has created us in His image, (Genesis 1:26-27) **“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the [LORD](#), plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you [hope](#) and a [future](#)!”** (Jeremiah 29:11) God's plan is for life, not death. The Bible teaches that both physical and spiritual death are the result of [sin](#) and disobedience to God: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in [Christ Jesus](#) our Lord, (Romans 6:23).

I need to always ask myself, “Who is the AUTHOR of the voice, the ‘suggestion’, the thoughts that I am allowing in my mind?” Jesus teaches us that [death](#) and destruction are the work of “the thief” ([Satan](#)). JESUS said, “The thief comes only to steal and destroy!” (John 10:10). Jesus teaches us (John 8:44) [Satan](#) is a “[murderer](#)” and the “father of lies.” The thoughts, feelings and confessions of despair that can lead to suicide are SUGGESTED by some of satan's lies. **It is critical that we listen to JESUS:** “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full!” (John 10:10).

We must also remind ourselves that life comes from God and life belongs to God. It is never our place to take our own life or someone else's life. [by murder] CHRISTIAN: ***“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 ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)***

CONFESS FAITH! The solution to despair and hopelessness is not suicide, but [faith](#) in God! Too often we have limited **Romans 10:9-13** to being applicable only to those in need of coming to faith in Christ. However, in reality, these verses are also POWERFUL to hide in our hearts as Christians and to confess them with our mouths in the day of testing, trial, trouble, despair, discouragement or depression— for when we do, we will experience SALVATION, DELIVERANCE in that situation. **Our circumstances may or may not change. The people around us may or may not change. HOWEVER, we will be changed:**

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call

upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!"

Moreover, the Psalmist instructs us, (Psalm 33:20-22), *"Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee."*

WE MUST RECEIVE THIS GRACIOUS INVITATION OF JESUS, stated in Matthew 11:28-30:

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

FINALLY, BEWARE OF THE DEADLY DANGER OF HIDING!

When it comes to sin, (sinful thinking, feelings, deeds, etc)— HIDING is natural and deadly:

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (John 3:17-21)

PAIN is a wonderful gift to the physical body alerting us to something that is wrong and needs to be healed. There is no need to 'feel' condemnation about such pain! LIKEWISE, guilt and conviction is to the soul and spirit when we sin! And the GIFT of guilt and conviction is not in order to CONDEMN US— BUT SO THAT WE WILL LEAVE THE DARKNESS AND RUN TO THE LIGHT! **HOWEVER, in the deep depths of deception and demonic lies— it is common to HIDE!**

DON'T HIDE! COME TO THE LIGHT AND BE HEALED! FLEE TO CHRIST! FLEE TO THOSE WHO WILL GIVE YOU GODLY, BIBLICAL COUNSEL, ENCOURAGEMENT and who will walk with you as a fellow pilgrim... one who knows that he/she is also capable of falling!

MOREOVER, if you have never come to faith in Christ— COME TO JESUS NOW!

Matthew 11:25-30—

²⁵ At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

²⁶ Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

²⁷ All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

²⁸ Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light

Grace to you!

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