

Biblically Understanding and
Responding To Suicide

the
darkest
valley



The examples given in this booklet do not represent any one specific person or situation, however, they are compilations of real situations. All names have been changed.

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three experiences of suicide

there's nothing light about suicide. Its evil tentacles grimly destroy victims, then its dark heaviness levels those who loved. Heavy hearted, we agree, "This is a darkness that covers me," yet our God says the dark is not dark to Him.¹ We serve the God who shines light in dark. To the despairing, we carry His hope. To the desperate, we minister His comfort.

For biblical counselors and disciple-makers, Scripture is both the origin and offering of hope.² Thus, our search to better understand suicide will begin with biblical examples, and our approach to responding will commence from Scripture.

1 Psalm 139:11-12.

2 Romans 15:3-4

Careful though; the Bible dare not become simply a method or teacher. Christ is the Word made flesh, full of glory, grace, and truth. The Word of God is powerful, thirst-quenching, life-giving manna, the bread of life. Minister it well, in love, from your own saving relationship with Jesus, led by His Spirit.

In this chapter, we'll consider three distinguishable experiences of suicide—thoughts, attempts, and completion. First we will seek to understand the plaguing thoughts of death or suicide. Second, our focus will turn toward attempts to end life. Third, we will look at suicide completion.

EXPERIENCE 1

thoughts of death or suicide

Liza Jane didn't wake up thinking about death, but by mid-morning the idea had crossed her mind a few times. In the grocery store break-room, she said, "I'd rather be dead than deal with that new shipment." Given her light demeanor, her coworkers merely laughed agreement.

Alex sat at his desk, discouraged and defeated. Watching the clock, he noted it was nearly sermon-deadline time. All morning he hadn't been able to shake off one thought: Maybe his congregation would do better if he were dead.

Of the three distinguishable experiences regarding suicide, least dangerous are those like Liza Jane and Alex, with thoughts of death. True, they think death would bring relief from current struggles, but they are not motivated to act.

Still, when we hear thoughts of suicide, we must ask hard questions. Later, in the chapter on "Responding to Suicidality," you will find suggestions for practical conversations and other ways to help.

BIBLICAL examples of thoughts of death OR suicide

ELIJAH: Fleeing Jezebel's rage, Elijah asks God to take his life. He imagines death would bring relief. In a sober tone, 1 Kings 19 describes his fearful running, hiding, and his frustrated whining.

A quick glance back in 1 Kings reveals Elijah performing an incredible act of public, courageous faith. Yet bring in one angry woman and he goes into self-righteous social isolation, thinking, "I'm the only one." That's his perception. Really, he is not alone.

God has called Elijah to stand up to Jezebel, to serve in this new way. Stop focusing on past successes, and move forward, encouraged to commune with upbeat believers!

JOB: In Job 3, Job woefully curses the day of his birth, wishing he had never been born. Anyone reading Job 1 and 2 recognizes Job's horrible plight, but Job 42 reveals his real problem—pride.

Job, and who of us can fault him, focuses on the situation more than on God's hand. Job's friends, even Job, see God as somehow behind Job's affliction, but with wrong reasoning regarding God's purposes.

To Job's credit, he pursues God. He never gives up on his relationship with the Lord. He exemplifies dogged perseverance while facing terrible trials. Job's friends would have served him better by focusing on God and His sovereignty rather than on accusing Job.

JONAH: Jonah's desire for justice took him by the hand, robbed his joy, and dragged him into a pit of hopelessness.³ In Jonah 4:3 he prayed, "Therefore now, O LORD, please take

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Malachi 2:17 reveals that God is wearied by human obsession about justice.

my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” Though the whole nation of Ninevah came to know God when Jonah finally fulfilled his God-given task, unforgiveness and bitterness ruined it for Jonah. Jonah needed to repent of bitterness, embrace the sovereign mercy and forgiveness of God, then forgive the Ninevites.

PAUL: Paul provides a positive example. Imprisoned, he longs to be with the Lord, but is willing and eager to serve Him on earth. Though Paul’s problems are so great he would welcome death, he perceives trials as opportunity.⁴ The result? He magnifies and glorifies Christ. Paul desires God’s will more than personal comfort and safety.

Paul’s focus on God, not self, led him to the right view of his pain and problems. A suffering person needs this perspective on pain. God wants us to desire Him most. As with Paul, trials can draw us closer to God and help us speak for His glory.

EXPERIENCE 2

attempted suicide

After Jordan’s back surgery, she stockpiled painkillers in her medicine cabinet. One day, when Jordan’s husband arrived home from work, silence greeted him. Fifteen minutes later, she lay on a gurney in an ambulance. Emergency room workers were able to clear her stomach. The next day she was admitted to the psychiatric ward for observation.

Failed attempts at suicide, such as Jordan’s, create the need for close monitoring and medical intervention. Generally, half of the attempts at suicide are not first-time events. Studies show that suicide attempters are at great risk to repeat the attempt shortly after the first event. Up to 42% of adolescents who attempt suicide try again within two years of the original attempt.

EXPERIENCE 3

completed suicide

Every hunting season, Larry cleaned his rifle. As soon as the season ended, that was his routine. But it was March, months away from hunting season, when he removed his rifle from the gun case, cradled it between his knees, pointed it at his head and pulled the trigger. Right there in the living room where his wife and children watched TV.

Raymond, church treasurer and financial planner, loved to help and he helped many, until the day he hit a cement abutment, doing 65 mph on the thruway. The engine is in the back of antique Volkswagens, so the front crumpled into a giant metal grater that ended his life. The next day, quarterly reports and bank statements arrived, revealing that he'd gambled church and client monies. The reason behind his suicide quickly became public—utter financial ruin for his family, the church he'd robbed, and all who'd entrusted finances to his oversight.

Marsha's children found her hanging in the closet, the vacuum cord tight around her neck. The note on her dresser, unsigned, simply read: Good-bye.

Disturbingly, cases such as the above are but a few of many completed suicides.

BIBLICAL examples of

completed suicide

Six narratives of suicide completers—Abimelech, Samson, Saul, Ahithophel, Zimri, and Judas—each account shockingly tragic. God, by His Spirit, breathed these recountings to provide what we need for life and godliness.⁵ As we observe common traits amongst the completers, let them teach us.

ABIMILECH: Hostility, suspicion, and self-centeredness characterized Abimilech. Anyone dared stand against him? Just another person to murder.⁶ Until, to avoid being killed by a woman, pride drove him to suicide.⁷ God declares suicide the natural conclusion to his sinful lifestyle.⁸

From Abimilech's story, we learn of a hostile heart fed by prideful focus on what others thought. As a result, he believed suicide his only option.

SAMSON: Samson took the Nazarite vow, but broke it. His lust for women clearly led to his downfall. Surprisingly, the origin of Samson's marriage to a Philistine woman was "from the LORD, for God was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines."⁹ But the bride's father gave her to another Philistine, and Samson set out murdering Philistines. In a life of self-serving rebellion against God, he focused on ritual rather than the reality of God (i.e. thinking his strength was his hair).¹⁰ Samson seemed impossible to capture, until his impulsivity met the trickery of a Philistine woman, Delilah.

Finally, eyes gouged out, shackled, shaky due to grueling prison labor, Samson was placed on a circus-act display before thousands. But Samson begged God to return his strength, God granted the request, and Samson crashed the roof down on them all.¹¹ We're not told specifically why he desired death; possibly to avoid shame and the difficulties of blindness. Certainly his prayer reveals a hostile heart and desire for revenge. Some perceive Samson's death as a desperate, hopeless act of self-murder. Some appeal to the way his death brought God's judgment on His enemies. Either way, we discover that God even uses suicide to bring about His will.

SAUL: God clearly explains Saul's death as resulting from unfaithfulness and disobedience.¹² Saul was falsely humble

6 Judges 9:5, 21

7 Judges 9:54

8 Judges 9:56

9 Judges 14:4

10 Judges 13:2-7 recounts how Samson broke his vow. Judges 14:8-9 illustrates Samson's rebellion.

11 Judges 16:28-30

12 Saul even consulted a medium rather than God.

and self-focused; impulsive, impatient, and self-righteous in disobedience; socially isolated; hostile, jealous, and glory-seeking.¹³ Desperate to avoid humiliation and torture by the Philistines, Saul and his armor bearer commit dual suicide.¹⁴

Had Saul obeyed the Lord, he could have escaped the desolation of despair.¹⁵ But Saul made it his practice to live for self-glory, breach faith, and not seek the help of God.

AHITHOPHEL: Ahithophel spoke with wisdom; “as if one consulted the word of God.”¹⁶ King David esteemed Ahithophel’s counsel, but Ahithophel switched allegiance to David’s wicked son Absalom.¹⁷ Absalom did not heed Ahithophel’s sound counsel, which became God’s means of eventually bringing Absalom down.¹⁸ When Ahithophel realized his advice had been rejected, he killed himself.¹⁹

What do we learn from the example of Ahithophel? He spoke wisely, but did not seek God about the decision of whom to advise. His violent response to being rejected reveals self-centered desire for self glory. If we feel like quitting when our biblical counsel is rejected, we must study our motives.

Notice how Ahithophel “put his house in order” prior to hanging. This action is typical of suicide completers.

ZIMRI: After conspiring against his king, Zimri embarked on a killing spree, until he himself ruled as king of Northern Israel. His reign only lasted seven days, when Israel chose another king. Hopeless, Zimri set the palace on fire over himself.²⁰

Facing dethronement, Zimri’s pride riled up until burning by fire seemed the only escape from the black cloud hanging over him. God tells us he died because of the sins he had committed, the evil in which he had led Israel.

13 Self focus—1 Samuel 19:22; disobedience— 1 Samuel 13:5-14; selfishness—1 Samuel 15:22; hostility—1 Samuel 18:25, 19:1-10, 23:7-13
14 1 Samuel 31:1-6 and 1 Chronicles 10:1-14
15 1 Samuel 13:13, 14; 15:1-26
16 2 Samuel 16:23
17 2 Samuel 15:12, 31
18 2 Samuel 17:14
19 2 Samuel 17:23
20 1 Kings 16:9-13

When loss of position, or loss of reputation results in despair, that person is characterized by pride. Confessing pride as the root cause of despair shines hope through the cloud.

JUDAS: Wearing guilt and shame over a treasonous act of hypocrisy and greed, Judas said, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” When throwing the coins back into the face of Christ’s murderers did not assuage his anguish; Judas went out and hanged himself.²¹ Notice that Judas isolated himself from the others—he did not seek the counsel of the other disciples.

What do we learn from the example of Judas? Those riddled with guilt need help. Confession is only the start. Hope must be given that there can be new focus; that ruling desires such as Judas’ desire for money can be made new. Yes, it begins with confessing sin, then by faith receiving the forgiveness that flows from God’s love. Think of it! Judas could have dealt with his guilt by Christ’s forgiveness, like Paul.

In the biblical examples of completed suicide, God connects their deaths with repeated, sinful choices. Their stories reveal these common traits:

- Despair
- Depression, worry, fear
- Hostility, anger, bitterness, desire for vengeance
- Impulsivity, jealousy, deception
- Social isolation
- Pride
- Self-centeredness

understanding suicidality

What is “suicidality”? Suicidality means “being prone to intentions, thoughts and/or behaviors that lead to self-harm.”²²

In the literature of psychology, suicide is understood to connect with mood disorders such as depression and anxiety.²³ The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention states that “90% of all people who die by suicide have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder at the time of their death.”²⁴ Are mood disorders the root cause of suicidality?

²² This definition of suicidality is provided by Dr. Jeffrey Forrey, in his teaching at Trinity Theological Seminary.

²³ Sanchez, Laura E. and Lan T. Le. “Suicide in Mood Disorders.” *Depression & Anxiety* (1091-4269), vol. 14, no. 3, Nov. 2001, pp. 177-182. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=agh&AN=11773158.

²⁴ <https://www.theovernight.org/?fuseaction=cms.page&id=1034>, accessed July 5, 2017

Other writings present thwarted belongingness (social isolation) and perceived burdensomeness (pride) as combining with neuroticism (self-centeredness) to elevate risk of suicide.²⁵ Do thwarted belongingness and a sense of burdensomeness combined with neuroticism cause suicidality? Otherwise stated, do social isolation and pride combined with self-centeredness cause suicidality? Considering the biblical examples, yes.

Truly, the God who created us knows everything about us! We must seek His Word, where He has given us all we need for life and godliness.²⁶ Secular studies cited in this booklet reveal that observations by the social sciences merely echo what God has already stated in His Word.

GENERAL TRAITS IN SUICIDALITY

Let's think further about the biblical examples we reviewed.

- Despair—ABIMILECH'S suicide by sword evidenced utter hopelessness, where he thought ending his life the only path of action.
- Depression, worry and fear—ELIJAH becomes so fearful and worried, he prays that he might die. Elijah reveals that by heeding God and obeying Him, depression, fear and worry become joy, trust, and love.
- Hostility, anger, and bitterness—SAMSON prayed for strength to bring the temple down on himself and the Philistines in one final act of vengeance.
- Impulsivity, jealousy, deception—SAUL exhibited poor impulse control, irrational jealousy, and rash commitment to excessive behaviors including his death by sword.

²⁵ DeShong, Hilary L., Raymond P. Tucker, Victoria M. O'Keefe, Stephanie N. Mullins-Sweatt, and LaRicka R. Wingate. 2015. "Five factor model traits as a predictor of suicide ideation and interpersonal suicide risk in a college sample." *Psychiatry Research* 226, no. 1: 217-223. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed July 8, 2017).

²⁶ Timothy 3:16-17

- Social isolation—Though surrounded by the other disciples, JUDAS was on his own isolated program. ZIMRI was a socially isolated conspirator on a killing spree.
- Pride—AHITHOPHEL thought very highly of his reputation. As soon as his advice was rejected, he hung himself. Such prideful elevation of reputation is biblically described as “fear of man.” Pride was at the root of ABIMILECH and SAUL’S despair.
- Self-centeredness—ZIMRI had no loyalty to his country or king, rather he was completely absorbed in his own success. JUDAS’ suicide also evidenced self-absorbed lack of loyalty, hypocrisy, and greed. Guilt drove him to hang himself.

God specifically tells us that the deaths of Abimilech, Saul, Zimri, and Judas were the result of sinful choices. If we are to understand suicidality, we must recognize sinful root issues. But God has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation through Christ (rather than the ministry of counting trespasses against them). Our ministry is not a ministry of accusation, but rather a ministry of reconciliation.²⁷

It’s tempting to identify and speak first to the sin behind the suicide attempt. Consider Judas, who knew full well his guilt. Imagine intercepting his stumbling path to the potter’s field. Would pointing out his guilt be the first step to offer hope? We readily see that a hope-filled conversation with Judas would first have directed him to the cross.

If we ignore sin, we lose an opportunity to speak of the cross and forgiveness. If we address only sin, not only do we close the door to reconciliation, we also deepen the pit of hopelessness. In the urgency of suicidality, we need connection and relevance. That said, we do well to understand the heart of suicidality, but all the while, the hope of Jesus Christ must be at the forefront of our thoughts and words.

common motivations in suicidality

After a completed suicide, we can read notes and draw interpretive conclusions, but never truly know the heart behind the event.²⁸ After attempted suicide, though still we cannot fully know the heart behind it, we can ask questions and hear stated motives, with the goal of helping turn those motives Christward.

Interested in motive behind suicide attempts, psychologists Alexis May and David Klonsky designed the "Inventory of Motivations for Suicide Attempts (IMSA)."²⁹ They categorized motive into two overriding categories: 1) Problems within a person, and 2) Problems between people. Inner-man issues and relational issues. Suicide attempters motivated by inner-man issues were found to use more lethal methods. Those motivated by relational problems chose less lethal methods, more likely to be thwarted by human intervention.

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE BECAUSE OF INNER ISSUES: Inner-man issues that motivated more lethal suicide attempts are listed below, in order of more often cited to less often cited. Note the similarities to the biblical examples.

- Social isolation (ie. escape bullying, deal with loneliness)
- Depression, worry, fear
- Self-centeredness
- Pride, fear of man
- Despair
- Hostility, anger, desire for revenge (ie. punish survivors)

²⁸ Jeremiah 17:10

²⁹ May, Alexis M., and E. David Klonsky. "Assessing Motivations for Suicide Attempts: Development and Psychometric Properties of the Inventory of Motivations for Suicide Attempts." *Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior* 43, no. 5 (October 2013): 532-546. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed July 8, 2017).

A popular drama “Thirteen Reasons Why” explores Hannah Baker’s suicide note, in the form of thirteen tapes.³⁰ Her tapes are prolonged expressions of bitter anger, wherein her suicide is motivated by vengeance against those she perceived as mistreating her.

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE BECAUSE OF INTERPERSONAL PROBLEMS: The following list represents interpersonal motivations toward suicide. They are listed in order of more often cited to less often cited:

- Self-centeredness (Help-seeking, cry for attention, desire to control relationships, expression of loneliness)
- Hostility and Pride (interpersonal influence, other-focused reasons such as either the desire for revenge or the desire to imitate others)
- Despair (Hopelessness)
- Impulsivity

Those driven to suicide because of interpersonal problems choose methods less likely to lead to suicide completion. The less lethal attempts correlate with higher social orientation, greater connection to people, and greater desire for improvement in relationships. Women, being generally higher in relational orientation, more often attempt suicide without completion, while men more often complete suicide.

An example of a relationally motivated suicide attempt is present in Dana’s story. Her parents both boasted success in time-consuming careers. Rather than add the stress of working through marital problems, they decided to divorce. Dana found her mother’s sleeping pills and ingested them. Thankfully, the housekeeper reached Dana in time and emergency personnel were able to clear her stomach. Later Dana explained that she wanted her parents to stop and think about their decision.

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While insightful, the drama is often vulgar and generally very unwholesome.

COMPLETED SUICIDE: Suicide notes of completers indicate a desperate desire to escape or avoid unpleasant circumstances. In studying suicide, Thomas Joiner concluded that desensitization to physical pain is a factor in suicide completion.³¹ The completer seeks to avoid other types of pain, such as punishment, a sense of burdensomeness, or unwanted change of lifestyle. Suicide completers prefer physical pain to the pain of loneliness or low belongingness or bullying, or the existence of unresolved guilt and shame. The false fixed beliefs of completers blind them to the limitations of inner pain, sorrow, and misery.

Motive and intent are really only by known by the One to whom everyone must give account. His Word, the living and powerful Bible, reveals intent and motive. The living Word, Jesus Christ, understands and sympathizes with every weakness, including the motives that drive to suicide.³² It is He whom we imitate in lovingly caring for and helping those caught up in suicidality.

prevalent attitudes in suicidality

To help us answer the question of whether a person is prone to suicide, note the common attitudes of suicidality. Four attitudes that increase risk of suicide are:

1. Previous exposure to suicidal thoughts and behaviors increases risk of suicide.
2. A sense of unendurable psychological pain in the present, leads to a false belief that the only two choices are pain or death.
3. An attitude of ambivalence toward life and death.
4. An attitude of despair or a hopeless outlook toward the future makes death look inviting.

³¹ Joiner, Thomas. *Why People Die By Suicide*. Harvard Univ. Jan. 2006. c.270p. bibliog. index. ISBN 0-674-01901-6.

³² Hebrews 4:11-16

typical situations of suicidality

Enrique always had trouble relating well with people, until he met Maria. Well! She was bubbly, funny, and kind. What relief he felt at the wedding! He would never again have to enter a room feeling like an outcast. No matter the setting, he could count on Maria to say something clever and witty. All was well, until Maria told him she had met someone else. The day the divorce was finalized, Enrique jumped from the roof of the high-rise building where he worked.

It helps to be aware of situations common to suicidality, such as:

- Loss or change in close relationships (whether through death, divorce, separation in marriage, or break ups in dating) combined with difficulty in relating with people.
- Diagnosis of a chronic and/or painful physical problem (ie. AIDS, cancer, spinal cord injury, head injury, kidney problems leading to dialysis).
- Drastic changes in financial or material wealth. Work-related stress and financial woes are common factors preceding suicide completion.³³
- Taking and stopping prescription psychotropic medications increases rate of suicidality.
- Drug and alcohol use increase the risk of suicide.
- Destructive eating habits, such as those described by the diagnosis bulimia nervosa or anorexia nervosa, have been connected with heightened rate of suicide, however, some of these risks might be explained by impulsivity, substance use, or the anxiety associated with the eating issues.³⁴

33 DeJong TM, Overholser JC, Stockmeier CA: Apples to oranges?: a direct comparison between suicide attempters and suicide completers. *J Affect Disord* 2010, 124:90–97.

34 Steven Dubovsky, MD, Suicide — New Data on Causes and Cures; Year in Review | Psychiatry, January 4, 2010, <http://www.jwatch.org/jp201001040000007/2010/01/04/suicide-new-data-causes-and-cures> (accessed July 8, 2017)

- Poor support systems during negative life events.
- Public humiliation or a recent shaming experience.³⁵

Teen suicides correlate with:

- Early parental death, or a parent who died by suicide.
- History of severe childhood abuse or neglect or perceived low nurture and support levels.
- Peer victimization, social rejection, bullying, or suggestive text messages.³⁶
- Confusion about sexual orientation and identity.³⁷
- Grade failure, school suspension, disciplinary problems, or unwanted change of school.
- Suicide or attempted suicide by a classmate or entertainment celebrity. Copycat suicides occur for several weeks following the suicide of an entertainment celebrity.³⁸
- Delayed puberty, physical deformity, or sudden impairment (ie. Adolescent epilepsy with seizures).
- Obesity, real or imagined.
- Preoccupation with death related themes, or involvement in Satanism or the occult.

Is there anything sadder than a pre-adult suicide? Every cry for help from a young person requires serious attention.

³⁵ Packman, Wendy L., Rebecca E. Marlitt, Bruce Bongar, and Tracy O'Connor Pennuto. 2004. "A comprehensive and concise assessment of suicide risk." *Behavioral Sciences & The Law* 22, no. 5: 667-680. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed July 8, 2017).

³⁶ Dodd, Johnny, Chris Harris, Steve Helling, and Jeff Truesdell. 2017. "DID A TEEN'S TEXTS DRIVE HER BOYFRIEND TO SUICIDE? FATAL ROMANCE. (Cover story)." *People* 87, no. 27: 50-53. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed July 8, 2017).

³⁷ James, Sandra. 2015. "Cheryl A. King, Cynthia E. Foster and Kelly M. Rogalski: Teen Suicide Risk: A Practitioner Guide to Screening, Assessment, and Management." *Journal Of Child & Family Studies* 24, no. 3: 842-844. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed July 8, 2017).

³⁸ Jeong, Joo, et al. "The Effects of Celebrity Suicide on Copycat Suicide Attempt: A Multi-Center Observational Study." *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology*, vol. 47, no. 6, June 2012, pp. 957-965. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1007/s00127-011-0403-7.

BEHAVIORS PRECEDING SUICIDALITY

Even if suicide is not specifically mentioned, recognize that suicidal tendencies are possible with any person exhibiting signs of hopelessness or other suicidal attitudes and behaviors. Typical behavioral clues preceding suicidality include:

- Putting one's affairs in order through drawing up or updating a will, increasing life insurance coverage, planning a funeral.
- Writing a suicide note. Writing a suicide note more often precedes suicide completion than suicide attempt.
- Giving away valued possessions, or making large contributions to charitable organizations.
- Acquiring a means to kill oneself such as a sudden decision to buy a firearm, a sudden and strong urging of a doctor for "sleeping" pills.
- A sudden drinking of excessive alcohol.
- Withdrawing from friends/family, lack of enjoyment in activities.
- Sudden, uncharacteristic changes in behavior such as violent actions, neglect of personal appearance, personality change, eating and sleeping habits.
- Sudden cheer after depression, or sudden improvement in mood without reason for it.
- A previous attempted suicide. Reattempters are the most likely to attempt suicide.³⁹
- Unusual anxiety, agitation.

39 Chandrasekaran, R., and J. Gnanaselane. "Predictors of Repeat Suicidal Attempts after First-ever Attempt: a Two-year Follow-up Study." *Hong Kong Journal Of Psychiatry* 18, no. 4 (December 2008): 131-135. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed July 13, 2017).

- High degree of preoccupation with detail, type, and preparation of suicidal plan.
- Evidence of scheduling and experimentation.

Be aware of teen pre-suicidal statements, such as: "I won't be a problem for you much longer," "Nothing matters," "It's no use," or "I won't see you again."⁴⁰

Alcohol use or drug use prior to the act increases the likelihood of suicide completion. Suicide completers are more often male, to the extent that being female is a protective factor which precedes suicide attempt rather than suicide completion.⁴¹ However, alcohol abuse by female adolescents raises the ratio of suicide completion by females closer to the level of male suicide completion.⁴²

methods of suicidality

In the biblical examples, these lethal methods were used:

- Sword-thrust (ABIMILECH, SAUL, ARMOR BEARER)
- Hanging (JUDAS and AHITHOPHEL)
- Buried alive in a crumpled building (SAMSON)
- Set house on fire over him (ZIMRI)

Today's more lethal methods include hanging, jumping from heights, pesticides, chemical poisoning, gas poisoning, drowning, firearms, crashing a vehicle at high speeds, and immolation (sacrifice by burning, or bombing). Less lethal methods, those chosen most often by suicide attempters,

⁴⁰ Horowitz, Karyn. 2009. "Dispelling the myths surrounding teen suicide." *Brown University Child & Adolescent Behavior Letter* 25, no. 11: 1-7. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed July 8, 2017).

⁴¹ Joo, Soo-Hyun, Sheng-Min Wang, Tae-Won Kim, Ho-Jun Seo, Jong-Hyun Jeong, Jin-Hee Han, and Seung-Chul Hong. 2016. "Factors associated with suicide completion: A comparison between suicide attempters and completers." *Asia-Pacific Psychiatry* 8, no. 1: 80-86. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed July 7, 2017).

⁴² Marttunen MJ, Henriksson MM, Aro HM, Heikkinen ME, Isometsa ET, Lonnqvist JK: Suicide among female adolescents: characteristics and comparison with males in the age group 13 to 22 years. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry* 1995, 34:1297-1307.

include drug poisoning, stabbing, or body mutilation (ie. slitting wrists).⁴³

When responding to one who speaks of suicide, a key line of questioning asks into the lethality of a planned method. Keep in mind that the highest predictor of suicide is a previous attempt. While the method chosen may not have been lethal the first time, it may prove accidentally deadly in the reattempt.⁴⁴

Globally, the suicide completion rate for males is higher than females. In comparing Victoria, Australia to Hong Kong, the ratio of male completion in Victoria is nearly three times higher than that of females (2.9:1). In Hong Kong, greater male completion is still higher (1.5:1). In the presence of psychiatric disorders, the ratios draw closer. However, without psychiatric record, male:female completion ratios jumps globally. Interestingly, in Victoria, males complete suicide eight times for every female attempt (8.2:1), while in Hong Kong, twice as often (2:1). The all around heightened completion rate for females in Asia can perhaps be attributed to the more lethal methods used, such as pesticides in rural mainland China, and jumping from high buildings, or carbon monoxide poisoning by burning charcoal in Hong Kong.⁴⁵ Overall, the fact that females choose less lethal methods results in a lower suicide completion rate than males.

43 Meerae, Lim, et al. "Difference in Suicide Methods Used between Suicide Attempters and Suicide Completers." *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, vol. 8, no. 1, 15 Dec. 2014, pp. 73-81. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1186/1752-4458-8-54.

44 Packman, W. 2004, *ibid.*

45 Liu, KaY., Eric Y. H. Chen, Ada S. Z. Cheung, and Paul S. F. Yip. 2009. "Psychiatric history modifies the gender ratio of suicide: an East and West comparison." *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology* 44, no. 2: 130-134. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed July 7, 2017).

responding to suicidality

When someone mentions suicide or intent to kill self, lay aside everything else. Stop. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to be your Counselor. Then, ask questions.⁴⁶ Gather complete and thorough information.⁴⁷ A helpful line of questioning can be remembered by the acronym SOUL STUDY:

- **SUICIDE**—Note any verbalization of suicide. Inquire as to the existence of and details regarding any past suicide events, what was going on, and what happened so that it was not completed. Ask questions such as: *Do you have a plan to take your life? Have you ever tried to hurt yourself before, even in a small way like taking pills? Have you attempted suicide before? Do you know anyone who has attempted suicide?*

46

Proverbs 18:2, 13

47

McGlothlin, Jason, Betsy Page, and Kelsey Jager. 2016. "Validation of the SIMPLE STEPS Model of Suicide Assessment." *Journal Of Mental Health Counseling* 38, no. 4: 298-307. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed July 9, 2017).

- ORGANIZATION OF THOUGHTS—Ask questions about the pervasiveness of suicidal thoughts and attitudes. Query pointedly and directly into thinking and planning. This is not a time to mince words. Ask questions such as: *Have you gotten so low that you've wished you were dead or thought of taking your life? If so, how often?*
- USAGE OF METHODS—Query into the nature and comprehensiveness of any plans for suicide. Inquire about method and preparation, noting lethality and availability. Ask questions such as: *Do you have a plan to kill yourself? What is the plan? Have you gone through with any parts of the plan yet?*
- LOSS AND HOPELESSNESS— Ask about actual or perceived losses of people, finances, objects, positions. Use a simple 1-10 scale to assess desire to live, emotional distress, emotional pain. Ask questions such as: *What do you think would happen as a result of killing yourself? Have you written a note yet? Have you started to write a note?*
- SUBSTANCE USE—Obtain details about alcohol use, prescription drug use and compliance with prescriptions, non-prescription drug use.
- TRAITS, MOTIVES, AND ATTITUDES—Ask assessment questions along the lines of the traits, motivations, and attitudes listed in this book: Despair, Depression, Worry, Fear, Hostility, Agitation, Bitterness, Impulsivity, Feeling isolated or cut off, Loneliness, Self-centeredness, Jealousy, etc.
- UNDERSTAND CIRCUMSTANCES—Learn the current and past situations that have led to thinking of suicide. Ask questions such as: *What's going on in your life? Do you feel hopeless about the situation? Is there anything that would happen to keep you from harming yourself?*
- DISCIPLESHIP—Determine the resources and support systems of family and church community that would

mitigate the risk of suicide and provide support for ongoing growth in the peace and joy of Christ. The church is God's wonderful support system, embedded with conviction and encouragement to right thinking (biblical preaching and teaching) and accountability (discipleship). Ask questions such as: *How does God figure into the situation? Have you considered what God would want you to do about the problem? Tell me about your church.*

- **YIELDEDNESS TO GOD AND HIS WORD**—Determine areas where there is need to biblically renew the mind. Ask questions about ability and understanding regarding spiritual disciplines: Bible reading, studying, meditating, memorizing, prayer, service, fellowship. Questions you ask will help you provide relevant and specific direction and instruction in Scripture.

While it may be uncomfortable to ask questions, not asking is far more dangerous. You are not putting ideas into anyone's mind, rather you are caring enough to study the person well.

When the suicidal person is an adolescent:

- Simply and directly, follow the SOUL STUDY line of questions (above).
- Take the answers seriously. Do not make statements such as: "But you're so young, you have your whole life ahead of you," "Lots of adolescents feel suicidal but grow out of it," or "When I was a kid..."

If the person is resistant to seeing life any other way than through the gloom of despair, and has a viable, organized plan, do not leave him or her alone. Enlist family members, police, or paramedics for twenty-four hour surveillance.

When you have opportunity to minister insights from Scripture, also work with the pastor, elder, or deacon for an ongoing support system. Consider putting together a SWAT (Suicidal Watch Awareness Team) for the person.

responding after a suicide attempt

When responding after a suicide attempt, ask questions. A helpful paradigm for questioning is this adjusted version of the SOUL STUDY questions.

- **SUICIDE ATTEMPT**—Ask for details of the attempt, and the person’s intentions at the time of attempt. Ask whether any suicidal thoughts are still present, and if so, move into the SOUL STUDY questions presented at the beginning of this chapter. Is the attempt perceived as a logical event? Does the person say he or she would attempt it again?
- **ORGANIZATION OF THOUGHTS**—Ask questions about the thoughts and attitudes that led to the event. Was there any final act that evidenced anticipation of death, such as a suicide note?
- **USAGE OF METHODS**—Query into the nature and comprehensiveness of the attempt, as to how much effort and time went into planning or whether it was impulsive. Ask whether the method was dangerous or thought to be. Ask about proximity of others at time of attempt, whether he or she expected to be rescued, and whether help was sought. Learn whether any precautions were taken against intervention.
- **LOSS AND HOPELESSNESS**—Is the crisis merely averted or is it being resolved? Use a simple 1-10 scale to assess present desire to live, emotional distress, emotional pain.
- **SUBSTANCE USE**—Obtain details about alcohol use, non-prescription drug use, prescription drug use and compliance with prescriptions.
- **TRAITS, MOTIVES, AND ATTITUDES**—Ask assessment questions along the lines of the traits, motivations, and attitudes listed in this book: Despair, Depression,

Worry, Fear, Hostility, Agitation, Bitterness, Impulsivity, Feeling isolated or cut off, Loneliness, Self-centeredness, Jealousy, etc.

- **UNDERSTAND CIRCUMSTANCES**—Learn the current and past situations that led to the attempt. Does the person perceive that there is desire by others to be rid of him or her?
- **DISCIPLESHIP**—Determine the supportive involvement of family and church community. Determine whether the person is willing to learn from mature Christians, rather than perceive discipleship negatively.⁴⁸
- **YIELDEDNESS TO GOD AND HIS WORD**—Determine areas where there is need to biblically renew the mind. Ask questions about spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading, studying, meditating, memorizing, fellowship, service. Answers will help you provide relevant, specific direction and instruction in Scripture.

responding to general traits in suicidality

Mental health professionals believe the best way to prevent suicide is through early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of depression and other mental health conditions.⁴⁹ U.S. Pharmacist states: “Typically, depressed patients are treated with antidepressant medication, and in some cases, they may also receive psychotherapy or counseling.”⁵⁰ The primary method of assistance provided by those who adhere to psychology is psychotropic medications, which numb emotions

⁴⁸ Matthew 28:19–20 defines discipleship as baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything Christ has commanded.

⁴⁹ <https://www.uspharmacist.com/article/pharmacotherapy-of-major-depressive-disorder>, accessed July 5, 2017 “Multiple therapeutic approaches to treating depression include the Texas Medication Algorithm Project (TMAP), the Sequenced Treatment Alternatives to Relieve Depression (STAR*D) trials, and the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Treatment Guidelines. All approaches utilize SSRIs, SNRIs, mirtazapine, bupropion, MAOIs, or electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) alone or a combination of adjunctive drugs such as lithium, TCAs, olanzapine, risperidone, or lamotrigine.”

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

rather than working on improving attitudes, motives, and intentions.

The Bible provides all that is needed for life and godliness, through its great and precious promises.⁵¹ God tells us to use great care in pondering, thinking over, searching, studying, arranging, and organizing His words of delight. We are to speak those words in such a way that nails it.⁵² Do you believe God? Are you passionate about motivating with the hope of Scripture? Do you diligently minister the hope of Jesus Christ?

responding to motivations toward suicide

Motivation toward suicide evidences rebellion against our created purpose. God created us to glorify Him and enjoy Him.⁵³ Even the mundane is for God's glory. Not processing the mundane thankfully is to dishonor God.⁵⁴ We were not created to love self more and do what makes us feel better, but rather we were created to love God and do what gives Him glory.⁵⁵ God is glorified by righteous, discerning, accurate, growing love.⁵⁶ We need to help the hopeless to focus on glorifying God by loving others. The act of suicide is never an act of love, rather self-absorption.

We need renewed thinking! The reality is that pain, sorrow and misery are limited. But they are always part of life in a sin-cursed world. We must accept that there will always be difficulty in the work role for men, and in the motherhood role for women.⁵⁷ Until the redemption of our bodies, physical health is not guaranteed.⁵⁸ A realistic world view acknowledges that, because of mankind's sin, creation is subject to the devastations, disasters, futility, death, and

51 2 Peter 1:3-4
52 Ecclesiastes 12:13-14
53 Isaiah 43:7, Philippians 4:4
54 1 Corinthians 10:31
55 Isaiah 43:7
56 Philippians 1:9-11
57 Genesis 3:17-19
58 Romans 8:23

decay that entered with sin, and will not be set free until Christ's return.⁵⁹ Suicide will not stop pain. We need the perspective that pains and miseries are limited for those who know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Christians endure earth's pain and trials for heaven's joy.

Corresponding to the general traits and motivations we've identified, Appendix A provides passages that speak hope from the word of God in the context of the traits common to suicide that we have observed: Despair, grief, and trials; depression, worry, and fear; hostility, anger, and bitterness; Impulsivity, discipline, and self-control; social isolation, alcohol use (remember that when alcohol or drugs are involved, the risk of suicide rises); pride, burdensomeness, and a critical spirit; self-centeredness. In Appendix A, each passage is followed by a summary question that can help steer thinking or generate discussion toward hope.

responding to prevalent attitudes in suicidality

Consider the biblical response to prevalent attitudes in suicidality:

- Despair—the Bible is a message of hope (Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 15:13).

God's sovereignty and goodness should impact the way we view trials and pain in life.

Job didn't know the reason for all his trials, but he kept the purpose of bringing God glory at the front of his mind. We know that God wanted what was best for Job, which included his trial.

The trials we face are not unique to us. God's people have faced them successfully before, and God promises always to provide a way of dealing with the difficulty in a manner that will glorify Him and bless us. We are

59 Romans 6:23, 8:20-21

never tested beyond our ability to bear. For example, Paul viewed his imprisonment as a chance to magnify Christ.⁶⁰

We can't let people slide into thinking their hopeless responses are OK. There is another way. Place them in position of responsibility for their response. They are not helpless; there is always a response that gives God glory.

See Appendix B for a paradigm to instill hope.

- Previous exposure to suicidal thoughts and behaviors—Renewing the mind is a key change process in Scripture (Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:23, Colossians 3:10).

Our world is currently subject to Satan's blinding and deceiving schemes, and the gospel is veiled to the perishing (2 Corinthians 4:3-4; 11:7-15).

- An attitude of ambivalence toward life and death—Observe whether the person you are speaking with is open to suggestions for how life could be better. We must work with people as we would our own children.

Jesus Christ is life, and the ministry He gives to Christians is reconciliation with God (John 14:6, 2 Corinthians 5:14-21). Satan must be resisted (1 Peter 5:8-9). Take hope from the fact that Satan is overthrown by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:7-11).

- A sense of unendurable psychological pain in the present, leading to a false belief that the only two choices are pain or death—Christ gives meaning to pain (Colossians 1:24), and in His victory over death, redefines it (Revelation 20:11-15, Ephesians 2:1, 2, 5).

As Christians, we will be ridiculed, persecuted, and discriminated against by non-Christians and "Christians." Suffering will happen. Suffering can be brought on by either blasphemous or God-glorifying behavior, and it can be responded to in either

60 Philippians 1:12-30

blasphemous or God-glorifying behavior. Let suffering be an opportunity to deal with the pain for God's glory (1 Peter 3:13-17; 4:12-19).

We learned earlier that inner man problems result in more preparation and lethality of suicidal method, than interpersonal problems. This statistic provides evidence that teaching a person to focus more on self is certainly not the answer.⁶¹ Pain is healed by the forgiveness of Christ's cross (1 Peter 2:21-24).

- Hopelessness toward the future makes death look inviting. Biblical hope has a future aspect (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Hopeless people believe that life will always be this hard, but trials in life are temporary, limited by God's sovereign love for us. Once His purposes are fulfilled, the trials will subside. If we succumb to temptation, God's discipline will be more painful (Hebrews 12:11). Every moment of suffering is an opportunity to embrace it as a tool of God's training.

responding to typical situations in which suicidality occurs

The church can't ignore the difficult situations in which people find themselves. We need to share their sufferings. They need to know we care. Sheep must know they'll be protected.⁶² We want them to hear and understand that the problem isn't the problem; the problem is the response to the problem. God intends for us to learn and grow from trouble. But, unless they know we love them with the love of Christ, they won't hear us. So take advantage of the difficult situation and show tangible love. Meet a need. Hear a cry. Be generous, but be sure the recipient knows it is Jesus' love they are experiencing.

61 Selimbegović, Leila, and Armand Chatard. 2013. "The mirror effect: Self-awareness alone increases suicide thought accessibility." *Consciousness And Cognition: An International Journal* 22, no. 3: 756-764. PsycINFO, EBSCOhost (accessed July 8, 2017).

62 John 10:7-14

We need to help the hurting one see God in the trial, and help him or her consider what God is doing. In this world, we will have trouble. When our attitude is right, we accept trouble as God's good discipline, we learn from it, and we let it develop greater Christ-likeness in us.

Helping the hurting one requires becoming involved in his or her inner world. How does he or she process problems? Being involved means working to understand inner man thought processes that see the situation as hopeless.

Teach people to look for the good that God is bringing about through troublesome situations. They need to come to see the trials as a good gift, to be counted joy, because it adds what is missing or chips off what doesn't look like Jesus. There is, however, some desire that stands in the way. That desire must be understood as the idolatry that it is, and God must be desired the most.⁶³

We will need to confront, but do so only when they know that you love them as they are, with an agenda of hope and change for their lives. This means you will have to point out sinful responses to troublesome situations. It's always easy to give advice from a distance, but when in it, it's hard to know how to respond. You need to "walk a mile" in the hopeless one's shoes; this will help you balance involvement and confrontation.

Calling sin what it is gives great hope. When sin is confessed, God forgives and grants repentance, leading to the healing, joy, and peace that are so desperately needed.⁶⁴

You will need to provide biblical guidelines for dealing with their troubling situations. Biblical examples can be discussed, such as Paul (2 Corinthians 4:7-18; Philippians 1:12-30) and Jesus (Matthew 26:36-46; Hebrews 12:2-3).

63 James 1:2-17

64 2 Corinthians 7:10-11, 1 John 1:9, 1 Peter 2:24

Responding to Behavior Clues of Suicidality

Remember the key role hopelessness plays in suicidal behavior, and the importance of ministering hope through Scripture.⁶⁵

When suicide is specifically mentioned in a conversation or is obvious from the person's behavior, or the person is in any way a danger to others, do whatever is necessary to reduce the danger (remove weapon, call police, etc.). Be very direct and thorough in your questions. This shows you take the person seriously and want to help.

Following the SOUL STUDY line of questioning, analyze the person's situation, the actual extent of his problems, and the likelihood of acting on them. Be sure to follow the entire line of SOUL STUDY questioning. As has been stated, ensure that the suicidal person with a lethal plan in place has someone with him at all times (family, friends, emergency or hospital staff, etc), until the hopelessness and ambivalence toward life has been dealt with.

People may deny suicidal thinking at first, but if they continue in a depressed state or come out of it suddenly without corresponding change in circumstances, and give indications of hopelessness, do not hesitate to readdress the SOUL STUDY questions.

As you identify ways thinking is erred, and confront irrational thoughts and perceptions of hopelessness, help the person see the connection between pain and unfulfilled desire. When desires are perceived as needs which cause pain when unmet, there is a motivation

65

Romans 15:4

problem. Something is wanted more than God's glory. Desire must be brought around to what glorifies God rather than what glorifies self, desires must be adjusted so that God's glory comes first.

Biblically counter these typical errors in thinking made by suicidal people.

- A critical spirit that draws negative conclusions.
- Self-absorbed focus. Every suicidal act is an expression of self-centeredness.
- Seeing problems as absolutely negative, without hope or faith.
- Giving too much importance to negative events.
- Blaming self for areas where there is not culpability before God.
- Thinking in absolute terms about people, events or issues where the Bible does not.

Prioritize individual stressors so as to deal with the worst first. Reinforce the sovereignty and love of God for believers or His mercy for non-believers—after the person knows he has been heard and the reality of pain has been acknowledged.

If the person is not a believer, use problem-based evangelistic appeal to illustrate his or her need for salvation. Point out the desperate ultimate need of salvation, and the practical benefits of having a right relationship with the Lord. After a profession of faith occurs, begin discipleship concurrently with biblical counseling.

When a Christian claims hopelessness:

- Does he or she not know God as He is revealed in Scripture? Does he or she define God as he or she supposes He is, or as he desires Him to be?
- Does he or she ignore or misunderstand God's promises?
- Does he or she impose his or her own time frame on God's fulfillment of His promises?
- Is he or she more concerned about present happiness or comfort than living for the glory of God?

Continue biblical counseling for whatever problems led to the attempt. Keep going until there is significant improvement in both life and outlook, and evidence of the ability to locate and apply life to biblical principles and commands.

helping those left BEHIND

Lyra's mother finds the note a week later, the day after the endless wake and funeral. She can't remember entering Lyra's room, never mind reaching under the pillow. All the same, she sits on the edge of the bed—note trembling in shaking fingers, shoulders hunched and beaten by grief, heart so heavy it feels her chest will burst. The note reads: "I'm going to make your life easier and end mine. You never loved me anyway. Good bye." From that moment on, haunting guilt chases her.

Ben's parents find their boat out in the bay, and then divers find Ben down in the water, an anchor tied to his leg. Yes, he is apologetic, but that part of the note fades behind his statement that he is finished with the bullying at school. Over. Just like any peace of mind his parents previously enjoyed.

deliberately change focus onto christ

Suicide, the tsunami wave with burning questions in its wake. Filter questions through the comfort of knowing that God does not want suicide for anyone.⁶⁶

In a final moment, could the loved one who so desperately and impulsively ended life have cried out for forgiveness? The final answer is this: We are not the judges, but a perfect and just God finally judges all sin perfectly and justly. In the end, all will agree with God and bend the knee.⁶⁷

If focus remains on the loss, and/or the selfishness of the one who took his/her life, expect increasing weariness and loss of heart.⁶⁸ However, by God's grace, the grieving one can move focus away from self's broken heart, onto Jesus Christ broken on the cross for us. Jesus promises rest for aching souls that do not carry burdens alone, rather yoked with Him.⁶⁹

How can we yoke with Christ? First, we learn and adopt Christ's motives. What motivates Christ? In every situation, the glory of God motivated Jesus.⁷⁰

The enemy blinded the beloved lost one from seeing the glory of God. We, the grieving, can and must battle blinding discouragement. How? Live for the glory of God, not the grief of our hearts. In the great darkness of loss, let God's Word teach us and God's Spirit empower us to shine the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.⁷¹

Yes, we the overtaken with grief can see and shine the glory of God. Into the unspeakable agony of our stories, rays of God's beauty shine in, holy and tender. With deliberate, intentional,

66 John 10:10
67 Philippians 2:10-11
68 Hebrews 12:3
69 Matthew 11:28
70 John 7:18, 8:50-54, 11:4, 15:8
71 2 Corinthians 4:4-6

determined focus on God, by the power and grace of God, we can deny the temptation to ruminate endlessly. The eyes of our broken hearts see God; and heal.

- God is omnipotent (Colossians 1:9-18, Ephesians 3:20-21). This tragedy does not stop God from powerfully working to reveal His glory. Nothing will thwart God's purposes. Depend on God's power.
- God is good (Psalm 145). Circle all the words in Psalm 145 that describe ways to communicate God's goodness, then tell someone every day, in some way, about the goodness of God. Speak of God's goodness.
- God is love (Romans 8:31-39). Not even this can separate us from God's love. God is a loving Father for His children, even in allowing the trial. Nothing touches our lives without first being tested by God's love. God is not to be seen as capricious, sadistic or mean. God has His children's welfare firmly in mind, that we would seek Him. He calls us to have faith in His goodness and in His plan for the future. Receive God's love, and become a vessel to share God's love.
- God is perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4-5). God is absolutely right and just in everything. He can be trusted that this too will come out right, judged in the end by a perfect God. Proclaim God's perfection.
- God is great (Job 38-42). In his grief and trial, Job took his eyes off of God. God knew Job needed to see His hugeness. Hike up a mountain, or arise early and watch sunrises. See God's greatness.
- God is immutable (Isaiah 46:9-13, Psalm 90:1-2). He is unchanging. Not even the tragic acts of man change God. Take refuge in God's immutability.
- God is all-knowing (Psalm 139, 147:5, Hebrews 4:13-15). Nothing happens that surprises God. Understanding

and trusting that He knows all things is a comfort. Trust that God knows and sympathizes.

- God is sovereign (Acts 17:24-27). When a loved one completes suicide, those left behind are stripped of control or power. However, God controls all the universe and everything that happens, even the most tragic situation. Relinquish control to God, who is perfect, good, and loving, and you can rest.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Matthew 11:28-29

appendices

appendix a

BIBLICALLY COMBATING DESPAIR, GRIEF AND TRIALS

1. *John 11:35—Jesus wept.*

Jesus knew the agony of death and the great cost of defeating it. How did He comfort the grieving? _____

2. *John 16:20—Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.*

Sorrow is turned to rejoicing in Jesus, in the midst of w_____ and l_____.

3. *James 1:12-15—Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

In the space below, identify what upsets you: _____

You can endure any trial, unless some desire entices you away from steadfast faithfulness to God. Whatever stops joy in your life is likely connected to an idolatrous desire.

- 4.** *1 Corinthians 10:13-14—No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*

There is a way of escape and endurance. From what are the beloved to flee? _____

When you feel upset and unable to endure, the way of escape includes identifying desires that have become idols. What desires have you elevated to idolatry? _____

- 5.** *James 1:2, 16-17—2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ... 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

The person who can intellectually choose joy in the midst of trials recognizes that God turns the trial into a good and perfect gift. What trial are you experiencing in which you find it hard to choose joy? _____

Have you considered this trial a gift? _____

- 6.** *Romans 5:3-5— 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.*

Sufferings produce hope...if we follow this format: We endure the suffering (meaning we persevere without buckling under it, blaming others, or bailing out).

Endurance produces _____.

Character produces _____.

Have you rebelled against the suffering God gives you as a good gift? Or, are you enduring it well, without blaming others or bailing out?

7. *Psalm 23:6—Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

What follows you all the days of your life, followed by dwelling with the Lord forever? _____

8. *John 14:1-4,6—“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going.”...6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

What assurance does Jesus give that calms troubled hearts? _____

9. *Psalm 73:16-17—But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, 17 until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.*

Perceptions of hopelessness and pessimism begin with wrong understanding. In whose presence can we discern them correctly? _____ The way to enter God’s presence is through prayer. Make it a habit to pray daily and filter every problem through prayer.

10. *Habakkuk 3:17-18— 17 Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.*

Though all is lost, where is joy found? _____
_____ When loss becomes overwhelming, recognize that desire for what was lost has become greater than desire for the Lord.

- II.** *2 Corinthians 1:4-5—[Christ] comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.*

What is the purpose for suffering? _____

It takes walking a mile in someone's shoes to really empathize. Sometimes God gives the gift of trials just so we can understand how to comfort another person.

to combat despair, grief, and trials, choose the above passage(s) that most speak(s) to your heart. Write it out below, and on cards to keep with you at all times. Read and meditate on it at least 10-20 times per day. If your mind wanders, say it aloud. Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:3 tell us to meditate on it day and night for the blessing of joy in God.

BIBLICALLY COMBATING DEPRESSION, FEAR, AND WORRY

- 1.** *2 Timothy 1:7—for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

Fear is not God's spirit. What three things describe the spirit God gave us? _____

- 2.** *Romans 8:15—For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*

You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, rather the Spirit of _____. Christians are adopted children of the Heavenly Father. Do you have a relationship with the Father where you cry out to Him?

- 3.** *Hebrews 13:5b-6—Be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*

Discontentment leads to fear and worry. Contentment brings courage and confidence. Have you encountered (a) difficult situation(s) in which you worried or grew fearful? Can you identify what you wanted that led to the fear and worry? What would contentment look like in that situation? _____

4. *Psalm 27:1—The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

If I want the attitude of fearing none, the LORD must be my light, my salvation, and the _____ of my life. I can't do it, but I can trust God as my strength.

5. *Joshua 1:9—Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*

Is it an option or a command that we be strong and courageous? _____

Who is with us to remove fear and dismay? _____

6. *Proverbs 19:23—The fear of the LORD leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.*

What is the secret to resting satisfied and being safe from harm? _____

7. *Proverbs 29:25—The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.*

Fear of man is a _____. What is true about whoever trusts in the Lord? _____

8. *Proverbs 14:27—The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.*

From what trap does fear of God turn us? The snare of _____. Fear of God leads to life. What earthly people do you need to fear less and turn away from, so that you can fear God more? _____

- 9.** *Ecclesiastes 12:13-14—The end of the matter; fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.*

What will happen in response to every deed? _____

- 10.** *1 John 4:18—There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.*

What casts out fear? _____ Love takes the initiative, does something concrete to serve others. If you are fearful, get busy serving!

- 11.** *1 Peter 5:6-7—Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

Deal with discouragement and despair by casting cares on God, remembering that He cares about you. The first part of this is to _____ yourself. If you don't humble yourself, pride will stop you from casting your worries and anxieties on God.

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

Do you think about "what if's"? Do you stew over problems? Instead, pray and supplicate, with thankfulness. The result will be that you experience the _____ of God.

- 13.** *Genesis 50:20—As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.*

What does God mean it for? _____
God wants to bring it about that many people are kept
_____.

- 14.** *Romans 8:28-29—And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

God intends and works all things for good if we love Him and live for His purposes. To whose image are we being conformed by these good things? _____

- 15.** *Proverbs 21:30—No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the LORD.*

Here is a great reason to stop worrying and stop fearing. How many things can avail against God that He doesn't intend? _____
Worry, fear, and anxiety are a complete waste of time and energy. Instead, trust the Lord.

to combat depression, fear, and worry, choose the above passage(s) that most speak(s) to your heart. Write it on cards to keep with you at all times. Read and meditate on it at least 10-20 times per day. If your mind wanders, say it aloud. Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:3 tell us to meditate on it day and night for the blessing of joy in God.

BIBLICALLY COMBATING hostility, anger, and bitterness

- 1.** *Proverbs 14:17a,29—A man of quick temper acts foolishly. ... 29
Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who
has a hasty temper exalts folly.*

What is the difference between a person who acts
foolishly and a person of great understanding? _____

- 2.** *Proverbs 29:11—A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man
quietly holds it back.*

What is the difference between a fool and a wise person?

- 3.** *James 1:19-20—Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person
be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;*

We are to hear quickly, but be _____ to speak
and _____ to anger.

- 4.** *Proverbs 15:1—A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word
stirs up anger.*

When we sense wrath rising, what type of answer are we
to give? _____ This does not
refer to a soft tone while speaking cutting, demanding, or
sarcastic words. It refers to a tender heart of mercy.

- 5.** *Proverbs 22:24-25—Make no friendship with a man given to
anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and
entangle yourself in a snare.*

Who are we not to be friends with? _____

Why not? _____

- 6.** *Proverbs 29:22—A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.*

What does an angry person do? _____

- 7.** *Ephesians 4:31-32—Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

After we stop being angry, what three things are we to do instead? _____

- 8.** *Matthew 5:21-26—So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

A biblical response to humans is part of worship. Are you experiencing hostile thoughts and anger? First, be _____ to your brother. Seek reconciliation.

- 9.** *Colossians 3:13—bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

Even if someone is giving you a hard time, you must forgive as the _____ has forgiven you.

- 10.** *Hebrews 10:14,18—For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. ... 17 then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."*

Christ's death perfects us to His holiness. As He remembers our sins no more, we remember the forgiven sins of others no more. Is there someone whom you need to forgive as Christ has forgiven you? _____

- 11.** *Luke 17:4, 10—and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him." ... 10 So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"*

When you don't have faith to forgive, do it out of obedient duty, as a _____ of the Lord.

to combat hostility, anger, and bitterness, choose the above passage(s) that most speak(s) to your heart. Write it on cards to keep with you at all times. Read and meditate on it at least 10-20 times per day. If your mind wanders, say it aloud. Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:3 tell us to meditate on it day and night for the blessing of joy in God.

BIBLICALLY COMBATING impulsivity and lack of self-control

- 1.** *Proverbs 25:28—A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.*

A city without walls had no defense when attacked by an enemy. Lack of self-control, or impulsivity, invites the attack of the enemy.

- 2.** *1 Peter 1:13, 5:8—[NLT] So think clearly and exercise self-control... Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.*

The battle is serious and dangerous. What is the goal of the enemy as he prowls around? He is looking for someone to _____.

- 3.** *Titus 2:11-12—For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...*

By the grace of God, what kind of training are saved people committed to? We renounce _____ and _____. We strive for self-controlled, upright, and godly living.

- 4.** *1 Timothy 4:7b-8—Train yourself for godliness, for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*

In the battle, what kind of training is of value in every way?

- 5.** *2 Peter 1:5-6—For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,*

6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness...

Even if we exhibit faith, virtue, and knowledge, we still need self-control. You can have faith, do good things, and have knowledge, but you still need to make effort to control your impulses. In what area do you need greater self-control? _____

- 6.** *2 Timothy 3:1, 3—But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control...*

Areas of concern in which to train: Loving others more than self, Generosity, Humility, Kindness, Obedience, Gratitude, Holiness, Care for others, Gracious speech, and Self-Control. Which area do you need to grow in the most?

To combat impulsivity and lack of self-control, choose the above passage(s) that most speak(s) to your heart. Write it on cards to keep with you at all times. Read and meditate on it at least 10-20 times per day. If your mind wanders, say it aloud. Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:3 tell us to meditate on it day and night for the blessing of joy in God.

BIBLICALLY COMBATING SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

- 1.** *1 Peter 3:9-11—Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. 10 For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.*

If you don't love life and don't want to live, you haven't learned to repay blessing for evil. It is time to turn away from evil and do good. Is there anyone from whom you feel cut off or isolated? In what way could you bless that person? _____

- 2.** *Ephesians 4:15-19—15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. 17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.*

Note the stark contrast of verse 15-16 with verse 17-19. Do you think of ways to work together with others so that Christ's body grows in love? Or, do you think futile, dark, and alienated thoughts? _____

If so, you must no longer walk that way, but go to someone who will speak the truth in love with you.

3. *John 15:12-15—This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

You can have an intimate walk with the Father when you do what He commands. What does He command? _____

Laying down your life to love others means rejoicing in suffering and living for the benefit of others. It is selfishness, never love, that deals with pain and isolation by attempting to end life.

4. *1John 4:7—Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.*

What is the attitude of a Christian toward others?

_____ Love gives, lust takes. If you focus on how little you are being loved rather than how much you need to love others, you elevate your lust and desire. Take them down. Begin to give love, the way God has loved you by sending His Son to die for you and forgive you. You can love others when you forgive as Christ forgives you.

to combat social isolation and loneliness, choose the above passage(s) that most speak(s) to your heart. Write it on cards to keep with you at all times. Read and meditate on it at least 10-20 times per day. If your mind wanders, say it aloud. Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:3 tell us to meditate on it day and night for the blessing of joy in God.

BIBLICALLY COMBATING alcohol and peer pressure

- 1.** *Psalm 1:1-2—Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

You won't be blessed if you hang out with those walking away from the Lord, or sit with scoffers who speak ill of the Lord and His body. What should be the highest delight of the friends you choose? _____

- 2.** *1 Corinthians 15:33—Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."*

Bad company _____ (or corrupts) good morals.
"Wicked friends lead to evil ends."

- 3.** *Proverbs 23:29-30—Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? 30 Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine.*

What leads to woe, sorrow, strife, complaining, wounds without cause, sadness? _____

- 4.** *Proverbs 23:20—Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat.*

What two types of people are we to avoid? _____

5. *Proverbs 23:31-35—Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. 32 In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. 33 Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. 34 You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. 35 "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink."*

Though the effects of alcohol are devastating, the drinker does not learn his lesson. Read Isaiah 28:1-8 for another description of where drinking and drugs take you. What would a wise person do rather than drink or do drugs? _____

6. *Ephesians 5:17-18—Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.*

What type of person gets drunk with wine or uses drugs to control their mind? _____ It is the will of the Lord that we rather be filled with His Spirit.

to combat peer pressure and use of alcohol or drugs, choose the above passage(s) that most speak(s) to your heart. Write it on cards to keep with you at all times. Read and meditate on it at least 10-20 times per day. If your mind wanders, say it aloud. Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:3 tell us to meditate on it day and night for the blessing of joy in God.

BIBLICALLY COMBATING PRIDE, BURDENSOMENESS AND CRITICAL SPIRIT

1. *1Peter 5:5-7—Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

If you are struggling to submit, you are prideful. God _____ the proud. Humble yourself. A clue that you are proud might be that you are anxious and unaware of His care for you. What act of obedience would evidence that you humbly submit yourself to God and those over you? _____

2. *Ephesians 4:1-2—I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love...*

Even in the worst situation, Paul urges us to walk in humility, patience, and bearing with one another in _____. When we perceive ourselves as burdens, lust for people taking care of us and being there for us has replaced love.

3. *Psalms 131:1-3—A Song of Ascents. Of David. O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. 2 But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. 3 O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forevermore.*

The opposite of prideful preoccupation with things that are under God's sovereign rule, is a calm and quiet soul.

“Weaned” refers to one who has been given everything that is needed. “Child” brings to mind the trusting repose of an infant sleeping snugly in parental arms. Pride is the cause of our distress and turmoil. In verse three, what solution is given? _____ in the _____ from this time forth and forevermore.

4. *Romans 12:9-11—Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.*

Do you see people with prideful eyes? _____
A clue would be if you focus on ways they don't love you. Pride and a critical spirit go hand in hand. Do you see people with humility? The way you perceive people says everything about the way you treat them. Humility does not hurt others, rather it loves, honors, and eagerly serves.

to combat pride, burdensomeness, and a critical spirit, choose the above passage(s) that most speak(s) to your heart. Write it on cards to keep with you at all times. Read and meditate on it at least 10-20 times per day. If your mind wanders, say it aloud. Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:3 tell us to meditate on it day and night for the blessing of joy in God.

BIBLICALLY COMBATING self-centeredness

- 1.** *Luke 9:23-26—And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

You need to deny yourself if you want to follow Christ. In order to deny yourself, to what do you personally have to say no? _____

- 2.** *Colossians 3:1-3—If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

When problems seem devastating, some desire is rising up in us. We can deny ourselves the self-indulgence of being upset by problems when we set our minds on being crucified with Christ, and being hidden in Him. When you feel upset, recite Colossians 3:3. Write it out here: _____

- 3.** *Philippians 2:3-5—Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,*

A victim mindset focuses on how others are treating you. A victor mindset, like Christ's, does not focus only on your own interest, but also the interests of _____.

4. *1John 5:1-3—Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*

Love is a commitment (or attitude) to give sacrificially of oneself for the welfare of others, according to God's Word. When we love, then suffering, sharing, and serving are sweet and not a burden.

5. *Romans 12:5, 10—So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ...Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*

Christians are about others. We need to confess self-centered focus, and grow in love and honor toward others. Whom can you serve today as an act of unselfish love, without thinking about their response? _____

Suicide, while dark and tragic, is the end game of a greater darkness—self-focus and self-centeredness. The world is deceived that “self-esteem,” “me-time,” and “self-care” are the answer. In Christ we walk in light, with focus on other's needs above our own, and care for others above ourselves.

Be careful that serving others does not become an outward show. Quickly confess any bitter and selfish thoughts. Christ is faithful to forgive you and cleanse you of all unrighteousness.

to combat self-centeredness, choose the above passage(s) that most speak(s) to your heart. Write it on cards to keep with you at all times. Read and meditate on it at least 10-20 times per day. If your mind wanders, say it aloud. Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:3 tell us to meditate on it day and night for the blessing of joy in God.

1 John 1:9—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 5:1, 4—Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ... For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

appendix B

instilling hope



past aspect of shining hope

HOPE REMEMBERS GOD'S POWER AND FULFILLED PROMISES OF THE PAST.

Hope is reasonable for God's people because He is faithful to the promises He gives. Hope is based on faith in the objective reality of the immutable promises of God who cannot lie.

present aspect of shining hope

HOPE ENDURES PRESENT EXILE, TRIALS, AND DISCIPLINE WITH PATIENT JOY IN JESUS.

Hope patiently views present trials as explained by Paul in Romans 5:3-5 and bulleted below:

- Affliction = a trial is going on.
- Endurance (stick-to-it-ivity) = In steadfast faithfulness, you act in obedience to God even though it makes no sense.
- Proven character = You prove that you have faith in God, based on God's immutable character and promises.
- Hope = You experience God's love. Christian hope stems from a relationship with a loving Heavenly Father who is working out His purposes even in incredible trials.

future aspect of shining hope

HOPE LOOKS FORWARD TO GOD'S PLANS AND PURPOSES, AND THE BRIGHT SHINING GLORY AHEAD.

Hope is the perspective that sees current trials in the light of eternity. This forward looking perspective is not natural, for hope is rooted in what is not yet experienced.

As in Romans 8:18-19, we wait in eager expectation for the time when today's trials won't seem like trials in light of the glory we'll know then.

Romans 8:24—In this hope we were saved, waiting patiently in hope for what we do not have.

