

A Biblical View of Suicide

By David DeWitt

Suicide is the act of killing oneself voluntarily and intentionally, for a non-sacrificial reason, when death is not otherwise imminent.

Biblical Examples of Suicide

- Samson, just prior to his death, called to the LORD and said, “O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes” (**Judges 16:28**). Whether Samson committed suicide depends on his motives. If it was just revenge, then it was suicide. If he was desiring to serve God, then his death was sacrificial, not suicidal.
- Ahithophel was a counselor of King David who defected and killed himself during Absalom’s rebellion. But “when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and arose and went to his home, to his city, and set his house in order, and strangled himself...” (**2 Samuel 17:23**).
- When King Saul was wounded and dying, he said to his armor bearer, “Draw your sword and pierce me through with it, otherwise these uncircumcised will come and pierce me through and make sport of me.” But his armor bearer would not. So Saul took his sword and fell on it. When his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him (**1 Samuel 31:4-5**). While Saul did kill himself, his death should probably not be considered a suicide, since it appears that he was in the process of dying. His armor bearer, however, certainly committed suicide.
- Zimri, a man who reigned seven days over Israel, killed the king of Israel and all the previous king’s sons. Then Omri and all Israel with him went up from Gibbethon and besieged Tirzah. When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king’s house and burned the king’s house over him with fire, and died (**1 Kings 16:17-18**). This is another clear instance of suicide.
- Judas committed suicide. “Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that he had been condemned, he felt remorse... And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself” (**Matthew 27:3-5**). Judas’ suicide may be depression-caused, since we are told that he felt remorse.

Is Suicide a Sin?

- **Suicide is a sin because it concludes God did not have our best interest in mind.** Suicide is disagreeing with God about when we should die. “Who are you, O man, who answers back to God?” (Romans 9:20-21). Even when evil men were trying to kill David, and when David felt remorse over his own sin, even when Paul was hungry, beaten, and afraid, even when Job lost everything including his children, even when Jeremiah could not stop weeping over Jerusalem, they all found a way to survive. And they not only survived, they were all able to learn, grow, and praise God for the pain and sorrow in their lives (Psalm 51:4; 119:71; Jeremiah 48:5; 1 Corinthians 4:11-13; 2 Corinthians 1:5; 11:24-28).
- **Suicide is a sin because it destroys an image-bearer.** Man was made in the image of God. This is the reason that God gave for taking a murderer’s life. “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man” (Genesis 9:6). As image-bearers, people have intrinsic value, assigned by God. It is true that this verse is specifically forbidding murder, and suicide is not murder, but the reason murder is sinful, is because shedding the blood of an image-bearer is wrong, and suicide sheds the blood of an image-bearer.
- **Suicide is a sin because it is an act of selfishness.** We should feel great compassion for those suffering from depression, whatever the cause. It’s a horrible condition, not to be treated lightly or mechanically as if a person could simply choose to move out of it. Nonetheless, we cannot condone suicide as a way out. Acting according to your own selfish desire is sinful. “Do nothing from selfishness...but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3). The Bible says that we should love our neighbor and serve one another (Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:13-14; James 2:8). Suicide is loving yourself and serving yourself. People are depressed and attempt or commit suicide not because they hate themselves but because they love themselves. Paul said, “no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it” (Ephesians 5:29). If we didn’t love our own flesh, then our situation would not matter. It is out of self-love that we become depressed and suicidal.