

Suicide, Attempted Suicide, and Depression

By Dave DeWitt

For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death (2 Corinthians 7:10).

New York dietitian, 27, hangs herself after posting suicide note: ‘I’m really sorry mama’

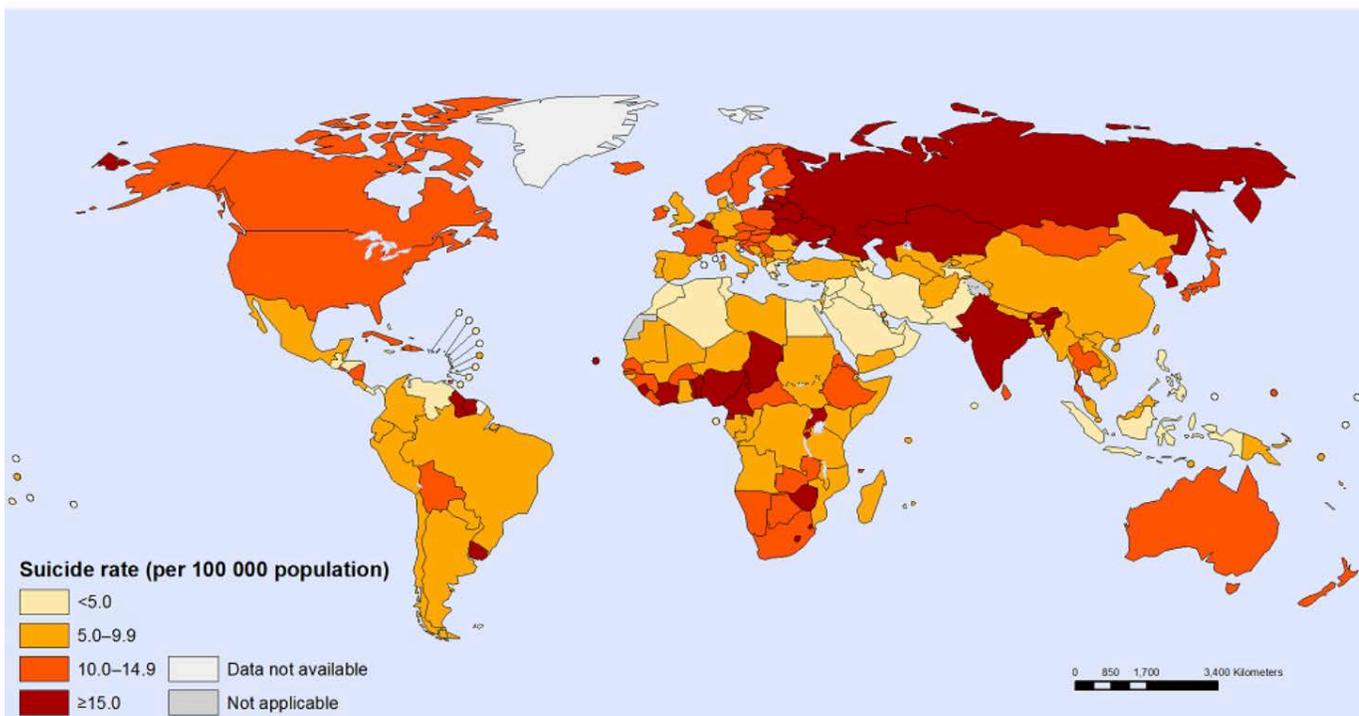
The following is from the suicide note of Tara Condell, posted before she hanged herself, February 1, 2019.

“I’m really sorry mama. I Hate the Word ‘Bye,’ But See You Later Maybe? ...I have written this note several times in my head for over a decade, and this one finally feels right. No edits, no overthinking. I have accepted hope is nothing more than delayed disappointment, and I am just plain old-fashioned tired of feeling tired. I realize I am undeserving of thinking this way because I truly have a great life on paper. I’m fortunate to eat meals most only imagine. I often travel freely without restriction. I live alone in the second greatest American city (San Francisco, you’ll always have my heart). However, all these facets seem trivial to me. It’s the ultimate first world problem, I get it. I often felt detached while in a room full of my favorite people; I also felt absolutely nothing during what should have been the happiest and darkest times in my life. No single conversation or situation has led me to make this decision, so at what point do you metaphorically pull the trigger?” [From an article by Tina Moore and Natalie Musumeci, “New York Post,” February 1, 2019, underline mine.]



Global Suicide Statistics

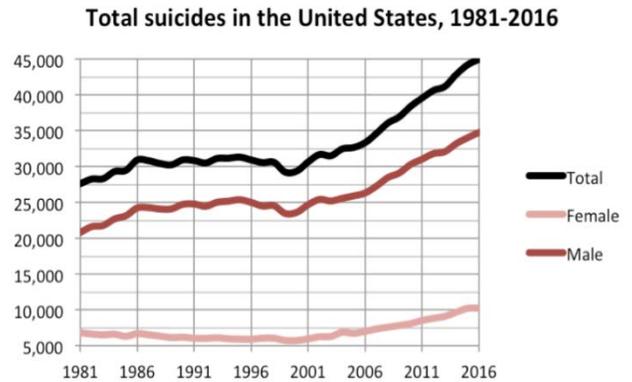
Age-standardized suicide rates (per 100 000 population), both sexes, 2016



A graph entitled “Suicide by Country 2019” [from worldpopulationreview.com.] listed Lithuania as #1, Russia #2, France #17, India #21, Poland #22, and the United States #27 in suicides per percent of the population.

Globally, close to 800,000 people die due to suicide every year, which is one person every 40 seconds.

However, there are indications that for each person who died by suicide more than 20 others attempted suicide. That means suicide attempts are up as much as 1200% in the last 45 years, and there are currently 16,000,000 attempted suicides every year globally, one every 2 seconds. Men commit suicide more than women but women attempt suicide more than men. [Above map and statistics from the World Health Organization (who.int).]



The following statistics are from befriender.org, worldpopulationreview.com, and save.org.

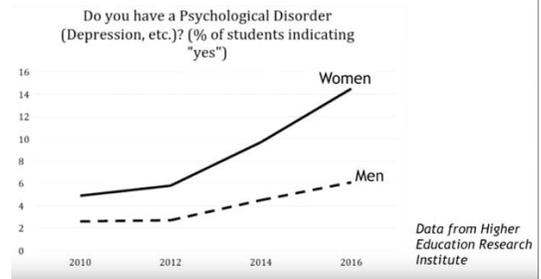
Depression and suicide increases were not detected before 1945. In the last 45 years (since the mid-1970s), suicide rates have increased by 60% worldwide. They increased gradually since the 1970s, decreased a bit around the turn of this century, then steadily increased at an alarming rate since the year 2000.

Although suicide rates have traditionally been highest amongst elderly males, rates among young people have been increasing to such an extent that they are now the group at highest risk in a third of all countries. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in the world for those ages 15-24 years. Youth suicide is increasing at the greatest rate. Mental health disorders, as in depression, are associated with more than 90% of all cases of suicide. Most agree that depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide. Although not everyone who is depressed attempts suicide, the vast majority of suicides, and suicide attempts, are from depressed people. So it seems that actual suicides are the tip of a very large iceberg of attempted suicides and depression.

Suicide Statistics for Teenagers

Posted by Ardee Coolidge on July 13, 2017 (care-net.org),

Teen suicide has risen over 25% in the last six years. A study of depression among teenagers published in the *Journal Pediatrics* last November found that the number of teens reporting a Major Depressive Episode (MDE) increased 37%, from 8.7% in 2005 to 11.5% in 2014. *Time Magazine* reported that the Los Angeles Unified School District had 5,000 reported incidents of suicidal behavior in students last year, compared to 235 incidents in the 2010-2011 school year. That means depression was 21 times higher in 2017 than it was in the 2010-2011 school year.



Suicide Statistics for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexuals in the USA

- **Lesbian, gay, and bisexuals** are 3 times more likely than heterosexuals to attempt suicide at some point in their lives.
- **Medically serious attempts** at suicide are 4 times more likely among LGBTQ youth than other young people.
- **41% of trans adults** said they had attempted suicide, according to one study. [USA Suicide statistics from save.org.]
- Nearly half (42%) of LGBT people had sometimes or often thought of suicide. One-third (33%) reported at least one suicide attempt. [williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu]

- I also have a personal statistic I have been given by medical personnel. All of them tell me that LGBTs are miserable people. One nurse told me, “Every single gay or lesbian I have ever treated is on antidepressants.”

[Above statistics from a study by Anthony R. D’Augelli, Scott L. Hershberger, and Neil W. Pilkington. (guilfordjournals.com).]

Suicide Statistics Connected To Abortion

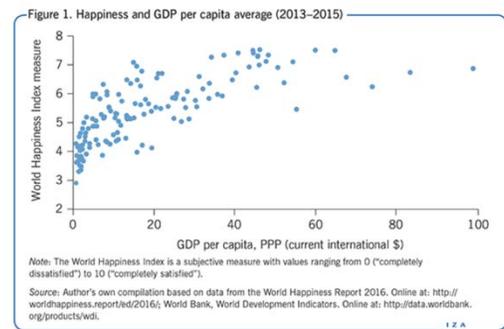
Pregnancy actually weakens suicidal impulses, but there is strong evidence that abortion dramatically increases the risk of suicide... A teenage girl is 6 times more likely to attempt suicide if she has had an abortion in the last six months than is a comparable teenage girl who has not had an abortion. One study showed that women who had undergone an abortion experienced an 81% increased risk of mental health problems, and nearly 10% of the incidence of mental health problems was shown to be attributable to abortion. The reason for the percentage gap is that most abortions are done on women with multiple problem issues. [Hilgers, et al, *New Perspectives on Human Abortion* (Frederick, Md.: University Press of America, 1981) 156.]

Depression Is Not a Disease

Depression cannot be said to be a disease, because it is not primarily a biological disorder—that is, the root cause of the symptoms are not usually physical. How do we know? Well, here’s one way: *People born since 1945 are 10 times more likely to suffer from depression than those born before.* That is an astounding figure, and it cannot be explained away by people going to their doctor more, or depression being diagnosed more easily, as these were taken into account in the study. Human biology doesn’t change that quickly. What it does show clearly is that most depression is non-biological. Depression has biological effects, but studies now show that less than 10% of depression is biologically caused. [Quote from Human Givens, 2003, J. Griffin & I. Tyrrell, (clinical-depression.co.uk)]

Suicide Cannot be Directly or Exclusively Related to Poverty

Many poor countries, like India, are high in suicide, but so are relatively wealthy countries, such as much of Europe, Australia, and North America. Russia, the second highest of all countries globally, has modernized its major cities. Also, many poorer countries in South and Central America are comparatively lower in their rates of suicide. If we turn the question around and ask about happiness, it appears that as the GDP of a country increases, so does happiness, but only from the very poorest to a moderate GDP. After that, as a nation increases in wealth, the happiness index does not change. [Chart from Barbara M. Fraumeni (wol.iza.org).]



The same is true for individual wealth. Happiness rises dramatically from poverty to moderate income. After that, happiness does not increase with income. In America, the leveling off point is about \$75,000 annual household income [cnbc.com]. Between that and, say, being a billionaire, there is no increase in happiness. [I have been told that in Eastern Europe the level off point is about \$10,000 annual family income, but I cannot verify that.]

From the above information we can conclude,

- Suicide rates are lowest in Muslim countries, except those bordering southern Russian, and generally lower in strongly Roman Catholic countries like Italy, Spain, Portugal and those of South and Central America.
- Suicide is not related geographically to north/south or east/west. All regions of the world have countries with both high and low suicide rates.

- Although depression can usually be treated medically, and chemical imbalance can cause depression, there is no evidence that the dramatic increases in suicide and depression since the 1970s are due to physiological changes. Less than 10% of depression today is biologically caused.

Developing a Biblical Definition of Suicide

What Suicide Is Not

Suicide is not an unforgivable sin. There is only one sin called unforgivable in the Bible, “...*he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him*” (Luke 12:10). This statement was made by Christ after He was accused of casting out demons by the power of Satan, thus attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. Whatever way this passage might be applied today, it clearly has nothing to do with suicide.

Suicide is not a sentence to hell. Hell is for sinners, and we are all sinners (Romans 3:23; 6:23). It is not just one particular sin that sends people to hell. Neither is it the only sin we do not repent of. Our lives are full of sins we don't repent of. Hell is for sinners. Heaven has nothing to do with sin. Heaven is for those who have received Jesus Christ as God and Savior (John 1:12; 3:16; Romans 8:1) because He paid for all our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Suicide is never the will of God. All of our days are numbered by God, and no one dies before it is God's time (Psalm 139:16) because God is in control of all deaths.

- *The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up* (1 Samuel 2:6).
- *...He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else... For in Him we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17:25, 28).
- *I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand* (Deuteronomy 32:39).

But just because God does not stop suicides, in fact, His plan includes them, does not mean that a suicide decision is in the will of God. You can never assume that just because something is in the plan of God it's in the will of God. For example, *The Lord is...not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9). Yet *unless you repent you will all likewise perish* (Luke 13:3-5).

Suicide is not euthanasia.

Suicide is “the act or an instance of taking one's own life voluntarily and intentionally.”

Euthanasia is “the act or practice of killing or permitting the death of hopelessly sick or injured individuals (such as persons or domestic animals) in a relatively painless way for reasons of mercy.”

Suicide involves the death of someone who is not otherwise dying. [Quoted definitions from Merriam-Webster Dictionary.]

Suicide is not self-murder. Murder is the “unlawful premeditated killing of one human being by another” (New Oxford American Dictionary). Therefore, there is no such thing as “self-murder.” For example, a “suicide bomber” is actually just a murderer since the primary intention was killing other human beings. Murder, by definition (biblical or otherwise), necessitates and intends (premeditates) the killing of one person by another person, whatever the means. Suicide, therefore, is not self-murder. The Bible condemns murder (Exodus 20:13; Numbers 35:30). The Bible does not directly address the morality of suicide.

Suicide is not killing oneself sacrificially. For example, it could be said that Jesus (Matthew 17:22-23; John 10:18; 12:27) voluntarily and intentionally took (in the sense of gave over) His life, but it was sacrificial, not suicidal.

Therefore, our definition of 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). This was clearly suicide.

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.

Applying the Bible to Depression and Suicide

Although suicide occurred occasionally throughout history, ancient literature seems to be basically silent on the subject of depression.

Anxiety is "a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease."

Depression is "feelings of severe despondency and dejection." [New Oxford American Dictionary]

These are not exactly the same. According to the dictionary definitions, we all experience anxiety from time to time, and it can usually be controlled without help. Depression cannot be controlled without help. With anxiety, there is always "light at the end of the tunnel." With depression, there is not. The Bible does not discuss depression or evaluate suicide morally or theologically, but it does discuss anxiety. So we shall attempt to make applications from biblically described anxiety to today's depression.

Old Testament Anxiety Applied to Depression

Depression can be a result of violating our conscience.

Genesis 3:6-8. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit from the tree of *the knowledge of good and evil* (Genesis 2:9-17), they gave the human race a conscience. They immediately felt shame so that *they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings* (3:7). Before that, they only knew obedience and disobedience, now they had a conscience that knew *good and evil*. Now, their actions had a morality that created anxiety. So, they *hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden*.

Depression can be a result of thinking our situation will never change.

In Psalm 30:5, David claimed that *weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning*. *Weeping*, which could be a path to depression, wasn't depressing because it was only for a short time and was connected to *night*. David may only be using *night* and *morning* metaphorically, but my experience is, and most guys I meet with tell me, that things look the worst around 3:00 in the morning. Life looks much different after 6 A.M. Time is a moving stream. Whatever your situation, things will change. This is confirmed by Ecclesiastes 3:4 which says, *there is A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance*.

Depression can be a result of not being thankful.

Psalm 42:5. *Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence.*

The psalmist repeated this phrase three times (also 42:11; 43:5). Depression comes from a loss of hope, but that can be resolved by gratitude and praise, which breaks the bonds of isolation. Depression is averted when there is something to be thankful for and someone to be thankful to. Thankfulness assumes you are not alone. The desperation of the psalmist did not lead to depression because it was resolved by hope (desired expectation) of help from the knowledge of the omnipresence of God. A hopeful psalmist becomes grateful and gives praise to God *for the help of His presence*.

Psalm 50:23 *He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me.*

Depression can be a result of not having an eternal perspective.

In Psalm 139:23-24, David prayed, *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.* David understood that anxiety resides in the heart. He connected anxiety to his sin (*any hurtful way in me*) and realized it was resolved by being led *in the everlasting way*.

Notice, David seemed to assume his *anxious thoughts* came from his *heart*. The Hebrew word לֵב (*leb*) for *heart* is translated *conscience* when David felt guilt for cutting the hem off of Saul's robe in the cave (1 Samuel 24:5). Although, like any word, *heart* has a different emphasis depending on the context, in the Old Testament it often connected to our conscience.

Depression comes when hope is lost.

Psalm 42:5 *Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence.* Depression is like walking down a hall and all the doors are closed, locked, and we are left alone. But the psalmist reminds himself to hope in God because He is always present.

Jesus Addressed Anxiety

Like the Old Testament, the New Testament does not deal directly with depression, but talks about anxiety. The common word for **anxiety** in the New Testament is μεριμνάω (*merimnao*) "to have an anxious concern, based on apprehension about possible danger or misfortune" (Louw and Nida Lexicon). Although this is not depression, it has many similar characteristics. Next, we shall look at five things Jesus said about anxiety and attempt to apply them to depression.

1. Some depression is avoided by focusing on one day at a time.

- **Matthew 6:34.** *Do not worry [μεριμνάω (*merimnao*) having anxiety, worry, or concern] about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*
- **Luke 8:14.** *The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries [μεριμνά (*merimna*), worries, care or anxiety] and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.*
- **Luke 10:41.** *But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried [μεριμνάω (*merimnao*) having anxiety, worry, or concern] and bothered about so many things"*
- **Luke 21:34.** *Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries [μεριμνά (*merimna*), worries, care or anxiety] of life...*
- **John 12:25.** *He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.*
- **John 14:1-2.** *Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places...*

There are two common things that unnecessarily cause mental anguish. Anger, which is about the past, and worry, which is about the future. Anger does not usually cause depression but worry often does. Jesus said that in the end you cannot add to your life anything that God does not provide, and God will provide what He has predetermined to provide, so it is futile to worry about it. Jesus is not discouraging normal planning and preparations (*calculate the cost* - Luke 14:28). He is discouraging taking on tomorrow's problems today.

Suppose you have a lingering problem, something like a sickness, lawsuit, relationship issue, family difficulty, or business complication. The question to ask is, "Have I done what I can reasonably do about this problem today?" If not, then do the thing you need to do about it, today. But if nothing more can or should be done today, then put it out of your mind until tomorrow. For example, suppose you have a terminal illness. You are going to die. Everybody has to die. But are you going to die today? Probably not. Today you have to live. So, don't take on dying today, if you're not dying today.

Jesus was working, teaching, and debating the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, as well as teaching His disciples during His last week of physical life on this earth. When it became the day of His horrible death, He suffered horribly. He prayed, “*Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour*” (John 12:27). But before that, He was mentally focused on what He had to do that day. His anguish never resulted in depression. Obviously, He knew about His crucifixion all through His ministry. But He avoided depression because He was able to *not worry* [μεριμνάω (*merimnao*) having anxiety, worry, or concern] *about tomorrow; [knowing] for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own* (Matthew 6:34).

2. Some depression is avoided by changing an earthly focus to a heavenly focus.

- **Matthew 6:19-20.** *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.*
- **John 16:33.** *These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*

The most dynamic point of Jesus’ teaching, the thing that turned all of rabbinic Judaism on its ear, was that Jesus gave everything an eternal, heavenly perspective. With Jesus, it was all about *the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 5:10), *your reward in heaven* (Matthew 5:12; Luke 6:23), *glorifying your Father who is in heaven* (Matthew 5:16), *storing up for yourselves treasure in heaven* (Matthew 6:20; 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 12:33; 18:22), *what happens in the resurrection in heaven* (Matthew 22:30), *rejoicing that your names are recorded in heaven* (Luke 10:20), *joy in heaven* (Luke 15:7), *sin against heaven* (Luke 15:21), *judgment from heaven* (Luke 17:29), the fact that He said He came *down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me* (John 6:38, 41-42; 51ff), *He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal* (John 12:25). Then he was *taken up to heaven* and will return from *heaven* (Acts 1:2, 11). The only thing Jesus placed on a par with heaven, was the inerrant Word of God—it is *easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail* (Luke 16:17; 21:33).

We can conclude that, if asked about depression, Jesus would agree that a contributing factor is the lack of an eternal perspective, a focus on this life on this earth.

3. Some depression is avoided by controlling our heart.

- **Matthew 15:18-19.** *But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the **heart**, and those defile the man. For out of the **heart** come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.*
- **Matthew 6:21.** *...where your treasure is, there your **heart** will be also.*
- **Mark 3:5.** *After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of **heart**.*
- **Mark 6:52.** *for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their **heart** was hardened.*
- **Luke 6:45.** *The good man out of the good treasure of his **heart** brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his **heart**.*
- **Luke 24:25.** *And He said to them, “O foolish men and **slow of heart to believe** in all that the prophets have spoken!”*
- **John 14:27.** *Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your **heart** be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*

As mentioned above, the word *heart* in the Old Testament is usually more like conscience (1 Samuel 24:5). But the Greek word for *heart*, especially in Jesus’ teaching, is more like our core desires. And Jesus said we could control our core desires. *Heart* is usually a translation of καρδιά (*kardia*). In the gospels,

the word is never used of the physical organ that pumps blood but metaphorically about a condition of the mind, connecting our personality and our spiritually. *Heart* can mean the center of our being, our hope, feelings, or understanding. But usually, most of the time, Jesus uses the word *heart* to represent our basic desires (Matthew 22:37-39). The best definition, in most contexts in the Gospels, is

Our heart [καρδία (*kardia*)] is our core desires rooted in our spiritual values.

Jesus also taught that our core desires (our heart condition) is within our control. He said, *Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful* (John 14:27). So, we can conclude that if a person is depressed, it is probably a long-term core desire (heart) problem, which has not been controlled. And the way to control our core desire is to put our *treasures* somewhere they do not cause depression.

4. Some depression is avoided by focusing our attention outside ourselves.

- **Matthew 22:37-39.** *And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

The three-fold formula for happiness is:

- (1) Focus on serving yourself and you will be miserable.
- (2) Focus on serving others and you will be happy, but disappointed.
- (3) Focus on serving God and you will be happy and not disappointed.

5. Some depression is avoided by seeing our value through humility—being dependent upon God.

- **Matthew 11:29.** *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart...*

Pride is value independent from God. Humility is value dependent upon God. Therefore, a key to overcoming depression would be to see our value as, and only as, assigned by God. It’s like a parent putting a child’s crayon drawing on the refrigerator with a magnet. It has no independent value, but it has assigned value because the parent assigned value to it. Seeking independent value will only lead to things like depression (“*Vanity of vanities,*” says the Preacher, “*vanity of vanities! All is vanity*” – Ecclesiastes 1:2). So, we can then conclude that one answer to depression is to see our value as dependent upon, not independent from, God.

The Apostles Addressed the Subject of Anxiety

There are a few additional comments on anxiety from the apostles that can be applied to depression

1. Some depression is avoided by following your conscience.

- **Romans 2:14-15.** *For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.*

As we learned (from Genesis 3), Adam and Eve gave us a conscience in the Garden of Eden when they ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Paul confirmed that everybody has that conscience (Romans 2:14-15). Our natural conscience has nothing to do with our social upbringing. We all have it from birth. Paul often described his own mental condition, and what we could apply to mental health, as a *good* or *blameless conscience* (Acts 23:1; 24:16; Romans 9:1; 1 Timothy 1:5, 19). Our conscience can be weakened (1 Corinthians 8:7) or *seared* (1 Timothy 4:2), but it takes effort because that is not the way our minds come out of the womb. If we don’t know (or know about) the Bible, our conscience will tell us what actions are sinful by *accusing or else defending them*. When we commit personal sin, we violate the accusations of our conscience. That can cause anxiety, which over time can lead to depression.

2. Some depression is avoided by being anxious about the problems of other believers.

- **1 Corinthians 12:25.** *so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care [μεριμνάω (*merimnao*) having anxiety, worry, or concern] for one another*

- **2 Corinthians 2:3-4.** *For out of much affliction [θλίψις (thlipsis) tribulation, affliction or distress] and anguish συνοχή (sunochē) distress, anguish or dismay] of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.*
- **2 Corinthians 7:10.** *For the sorrow [λυπή (lupe) to be distressed, grieved, or in sorrow] that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow [λυπή (lupe) to be distressed, grieved, or in sorrow] of the world produces death.*
- **2 Corinthians 11:28.** *Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern [μεριμνά (merimna), worries, care or anxiety] for all the churches.*
- **Philippians 2:20.** *For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned [μεριμνάω (merimnao) having anxiety, worry, or concern] for your welfare.*

It is an amazingly simple, but profoundly effective, solution to depression. Instead of avoiding anxiety, have anxiety for the cares of others in the body of Christ.

3. Some depression is avoided by taking our anxiety to God in prayer.

- **Philippians 4:6.** *Be anxious [μεριμνάω (merimnao) having anxiety, worry, or concern] for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*
- **1 Peter 5:6-7.** *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety [μεριμνά (merimna), worries, care or anxiety] on Him, because He cares for you.*

A Summary of Applications from the Bible for Avoiding Anxiety

- (1) Believe (trust) God and believe (trust) Jesus—*Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me* (John 14:1).
- (2) Don't violate your conscience—the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them (Romans 2:24-15).
- (3) Realize your current situation will change, life is a moving stream—*weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning* (Psalm 30:5).
- (4) Be thankful—*He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me* (Psalm 50:23).
- (5) Be humble—see your value as dependent upon God, not independent from God—*humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you* (1 Peter 5:6-7).
- (6) Don't hope (set your desired expectation) in something less than God—*Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence* (Psalm 42:5).
- (7) Have a heavenly perspective—*store up for yourselves treasure in heaven...where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* (Matthew 6:19-20).
- (8) Don't look to this world for peace—*These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world* (John 16:33).
- (9) Don't bring tomorrow's tribulations into today—*Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own* (Matthew 6:34).
- (10) Focus your thoughts outside yourself, be anxious for the tribulations of other believers—that the members may have the same care [μεριμνάω (merimnao) anxiety or worry] for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25).
- (11) Tell God about your anxiety—*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God* (Philippians 4:6-7).

The Big Question: What Is Causing the Huge increase in depression?

The big question is, What is causing the drastic global increase in depression that can lead to suicide, especially since 1999? To put it simply:

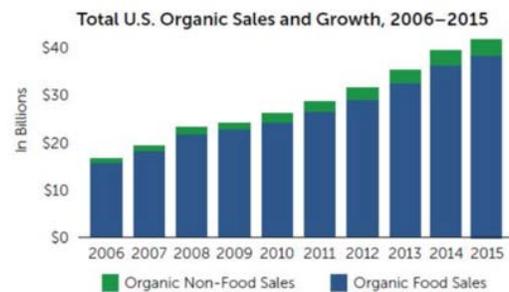
- Some (more apt to be progressive liberals) blame the conservatives because they believe the conservatives interfere with the progressive evolution to a global society.
- Some (more apt to be traditional conservatives) blame the technology which causes those progressive changes. “It’s the fault of those video games and the social media, they are ruining the minds of our kids. We need to take their phones, pads and computers away and get them out playing ball.”
- I (Dave DeWitt) say it’s sin. I’m suggesting that the problem causing the huge increase in suicide is sin (defined as “anything contrary to the character of God”). Sin leads to personal depression. Conservatives didn’t cause this problem and technology can facilitate both good and evil, but it is not the cause of either.

Let’s take a closer look.

Liberal progressives believe the problem is that the conservative world is intolerant of the modern progress which, if allowed to develop, would lead to, evolve into, a global utopia. A global utopia requires a global government, a global morality, a socialist economy, a redefinition of the family, complete sexual freedom, and religious tolerance. Just to take one example, they believe LGBTQ people are depressed because the conservatives won’t accept them. But that answer is problematic:

- (1) The LGBTQ population is not only accepted but promoted in films, books, TV shows, politics, businesses, and churches. Have you ever seen anything in the public media recently, say, in the last year, that has said anything negative about LGBTQ? The huge push for their acceptance has not lowered their depression or suicide rates.
- (2) There is no evidence that social intolerance itself leads to depression or suicide. For example, there is a strong social intolerance for people who believe in creation, absolute truth and the Bible. This is especially true on most university campuses, most of the media, and large cities. But believers in creation, absolute truth, and the Bible do not have a higher suicide rate, even in those areas where they are severely criticized. Conversely, LGBTQs living in those areas are accepted, but no evidence suggests they commit less suicides in those areas.
- (3) Since LGBTQs are one of the biggest contributors to the suicide rate now (since 1999), either there are more of them now, which progressives deny, or they were less depressed and suicidal in the past, when they stayed “in the closet.” The LGBTQ participation in the suicide rate was less in the past, but certainly acceptance of the LGBTQs was not greater in the past. We must therefore conclude that LGBTQ activity, all by itself, contributes to suicide, attempted suicide, and depression.

Traditional Conservatives are more apt to connect depression and suicide to technology. For example, Jonathan Haidt titles his presentation of teenage depression as, “Social Media is Giving Kids Anxiety” (youtu.be). Clearly, we have had an exponential increase in both depression and the use of social media. But that hardly proves one causes the other. For example, the rise in organic food sales also parallels that of depression. Should we then suggest that organic food sales causes depression? Unlikely! More likely it’s the sin of parents causing collateral damage for their kids. Kids are depressed because they have parents who get divorced, don’t believe in God, don’t read the Bible, don’t seriously follow any religious morality, who are fighting with each other, living with a boyfriend or girlfriend, using recreational drugs, watching pornography, using blasphemy, or encouraging LGBTQ sexual choice. Kids are depressed because of their own sins and the damage caused by sinning parents, not technology.



Parents must decide how much social media is good or bad for their children depending on the age, disposition, and temperament of their child. But it's the sin nature that causes depression, not the technology. Most conservatives argue that guns don't kill people, people kill people. It is inconsistent to say "guns don't kill people," and say it's technology that causes sin. There is no evidence that turning the pages of a book is less depressing than turning the pages on an iPad. Technology is just a vehicle which may allow depressed kids to escape their parents' sin. But it can also help them learn Bible stories and biblical morality.

I suggest sin causes depression. That's not to say those who are non-biologically depressed, and attempt or commit suicide, are the greatest sinners. Actually, those with a more sensitive (less hardened) conscience may be more depressed by the gap between their sin and their conscience. Depression comes as a result of a whole host of things, such as those mentioned in the "Avoiding Anxiety" list above. In general, when we focus on ourselves, or when we are forced to focus on ourselves, or when we focus on getting rather than giving, we will cultivate depression.

Sin is behind depression. But we all suffer from three areas of sin:

- (1) The curse that resulted from Adam's sin
- (2) Collateral damage from the sin of others
- (3) Our own sin

Depression has skyrocketed because the world is getting morally worse (if good and evil are defined biblically). The proof is:

- The percent (not just the number) of people committing sin is greater.
- The tolerance/acceptability of sin is greater.
- The advocacy of sin is greater.

The darkest of sins, those that are an abomination to God, such as lying, homosexuality, murdering babies, and destruction of the family, are not just tolerated and accepted. Today those sins are being advocated, promoted, prescribed, and championed as something people should be forced to accept. Those opposing these gross immoral sins are often fired, recommended for punishment, or given re-training.

June 7, 2019, Samantha Schmidt [washingtonpost.com] commented,

As recently as 2004, polls showed that the majority of Americans — 60 percent — opposed same-sex marriage, while only 31 percent were in favor, according to the Pew Research Center. **Today, those numbers are reversed: 61 percent support same-sex marriage, while 31 percent oppose it.** "You can't find another issue where attitudes have shifted so rapidly," said Don Haider-Markel, a political science professor at the University of Kansas who has studied public opinion of LGBT rights over the years.

Evangelical LGBTQ activist Brandan Robertson said,

Just 5 years ago it would have been okay to say homosexuality is a sin and an abomination. **Today you would be hard-pressed to find any major evangelical leader who would say that publicly.**" [washingtonpost.com. June 7, 2019]

Also, prophecynewswatch.com reported the following impact of radical feminism.

But there is a radical feminism that despises males. That deplores the nuclear family. That demeans motherhood. That views babies as unwanted intrusions (and merely a clump of cells while in the womb). That holds all men guilty. As expressed by the radical feminist Robin Morgan, "I feel that '**man-hating**' is an honorable and viable political act, that the oppressed have a right to class-hatred against the class that is oppressing them. "Or, in the words of Andrea Dworkin, "**Marriage as an institution developed from rape as a practice.**" This is the spirit of

radical feminism, the man-hating spirit, the spirit of Jezebel. And it is intimately connected to the spirit of witchcraft.

Here is a real situation, given to me by a man I study the Bible with. He said, I gave a guy, who I am training at work, a ride home. He started telling me about **his girlfriend, whose former wife had a baby with a man she was not married to** and the two wives were raising the child. His girlfriend got the biological father of the child to sign off custody and now the girlfriend and her former wife, who is now seeing a guy who is beating her, are fighting over custody of the child, who is handicapped and receives government money for whoever has custody. Oh yeah, and their dog is sick and puking all over the house.

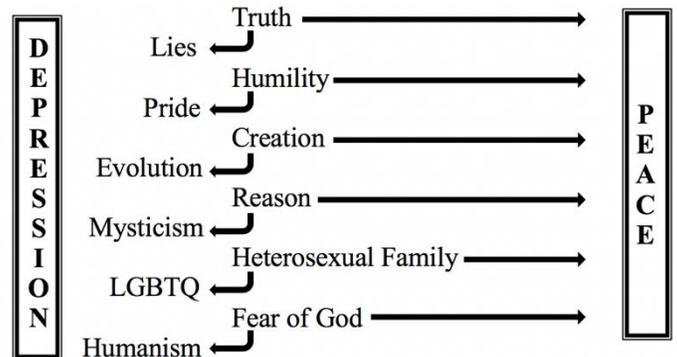
Here’s how sin causes depression. God created the universe to operate by His holy character. His character is described for us in the Bible, and we are told how to live to please God. It’s God’s universe, so He gets to decide what is good and bad.

If we live by what God calls “good,” we will have peace, even in the midst of a cursed universe. If we don’t, we will create a lifestyle that can lead to depression.

For example, God tells you to live in truth. *The truth will make you free* (John 8:32). But you can choose to tell lies, and that might work, for a while, but it is not the way God made the universe. So after a time, it will remove your peace, lead to problems, anxieties, and a lifestyle that can end in depression, and in time *brings forth death* (James 1:15).

Suppose I used my pen to stir my coffee. That would work, for a while. But then it would ruin my pen and put ink in my coffee, because that’s not what ink pens were made for. I can ride my bicycle on the interstate highway and that will work, for a while. But soon I’ll get run over, because that’s not what bicycles, or interstates, are made for. That use of an ink pen or bicycle is absolutely wrong, not just a matter of personal choice.

If we violate the way God made us to operate, we will be headed in the direction of loss of peace, more anxiety, and eventually depression. We could continue with violating other ways God made the universe. We can change from humility to pride, from creation to evolution, from reason to mysticism, from the heterosexual family into LGBTQ tolerance, or from the fear of God to human rights. All that will seem to work, for a while, until it doesn’t, until it leads to depression and death.



Proverbs 8:36 *But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death.*

Romans 2:9-11 *There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.*

Philippians 4:8-9 *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you*