

# Survivors of Suicide Related Issues

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Hello. I'm Pastor Ken Dignan and it's my privilege to be able to share with you today in our practical theology for pastoral ministry. I've been a pastor for thirty-five years and at this time the filming of this class for Christian Leaders Institute. And it's a very great opportunity for us to get into the Word of God. I've studied theology in many different facets and through the university and through seminaries now. I have a bachelor's degree in Bible and pastoral. I have a master's degree in New Testament studies, and pastoral counseling. And I have a doctor's degree in theology, my ThD. So I've had a great opportunity to study and to learn the things of God's word and to make it a lifelong practice. That when we study the word of God and study spiritual truth, it really makes a difference and we really take it seriously. But also, it's such a great blessing.

And this is a special aspect of practical theology. Pastoral practice is important. And this particular one today deals with survivors of suicide related issues. And it's a very important topic that we had tried to understand. And it's a problem that really needs addressing. I want to share some issues related to survivors of suicides. There's an organization that I work with myself and a group that my wife and I direct and lead called SOS, survivors of suicides. And the American foundation for suicide prevention states that in the United States, a person dies by suicide every sixteen minutes claiming over thirty-two thousand lives each year.

That's a lot of people. You wouldn't really think of that. And it's estimated that a suicide attempt which is someone that would try and attempt at taking their own life is every forty-five seconds. So that's a large population affecting---and if you can get these stats and wrap your mind around it---affecting one million people, close to one million people every year. Now, that's mind-boggling to think that that many people every year attempts, and that's even in the United States, that attempts to commit suicide and to take their own life every forty-five seconds.

So within every minute, there's someone tries at least to take their own life and that suicide is the third leading cause of death among fifteen to twenty-four year olds. And that is a very, very alarming, a very sobering statistic that's backed up by stats in our country with the American Mental Association. And it's the third leading death among fifteen to twenty-four years of age and that it's the second major cause of death among college students. So that's like showing that you might think you'll learn everything in college. But I was either struggling with that.

In a recent study in a long-term impact of child abuse, adult women who said that they were physically or emotionally abused as children were more likely to have mental problems, suffer from

depression and to have attempted suicide. Boys commit suicide more often than girls. But no one is immune. And in one recent survey of high school students, 60 percent said that they had thought about killing themselves. Above 9 percent said they had tried at least once to take their own life. That's another astounding statistic that we see.

You might want to ask yourself why is the youth suicide rate gone so high in the recent years. Well, there's some thoughts, there's some ideas that are brought out in a recent study. And some can say it's because it's easier to get tools for suicide. Boys often use firearms or ropes to cut themselves. Girls usually use pills. Drugs or alcohol can tend to be easier to get for kids by. They begin taking them at a much earlier age and that's a very sad thing. The pressure of modern life, the pressures are great than could be imagined.

The younger a child is, the greater in earlier times, they said it's almost adult like pressure with our boom and technology, with young children now even able to know how to surf the web, use computers, have cell phones. I've seen myself some two year olds know even how to use the iPad. And that's amazing that at that young of age, they're becoming computer savvy and almost up in alarming opportunity to see some stuff that they shouldn't see and to feel some pressure that they shouldn't feel.

There's tremendous competition for good grades and scholarships that's out there today. So because admission is very stiff into some of the great colleges or universities in our country. And there's more violence that kids are exposed to. Immediately any type of violence you'll see it anywhere, anyway when you have the ability to on your iPhone to even pull up video, live images, immediately when something terrible is happening. So there's more violence in the newspapers, television, through media and the media outlets them.

There's a real lack of parental interest. And that might be another problem. Many children grow up in divorced households or others both their parents work and their families spend limited time together. According to one study that I came across, 90 percent of suicidal teenagers believed their families did not understand them. And that's a sad thing to not feel you're understood. And it's a common teenage complaint. That's out there and that really plays a factor in a lot of kids where they have might been to take their own life.

Young people also reported that when they tried to tell their parents about it, their feelings of unhappiness are there and they feel like a failure. And their mother or father denied or ignored their point of view. So they feel like they were up against the brick wall and didn't make any difference and no one cared. And it's a very dangerous road to be on. And if you feel that way, it's alarming. And even

young people today do feel that in greater quantity because I think they're just trying to grow up too fast and they're dealing with adult-like pressures that they shouldn't be involved in.

So you look at the word depression. That's great out there today. And many children are depressed and they don't feel there's hope. And if you start out very young in your depresses, think what it's going to be like when you get into your twenties, thirties, forties, etc. If you deal with depression that early of age, you might to think to yourself, "If I'm going to feel like this for the rest of my life, some say why is it not worth it?" Take the spiritual nature out of it. That's even more dangerous. That if you feel like you're just a little evolved or just the same as an animal, boy, that doesn't give you a lot of comfort for the afterlife for the end of life or for hope to live so that you can prepare for a better place to go to into your past as you know Christ the Savior, as you know the Lord.

So if your teenager's been depressed, you should look for closely for signs. There's a very important thing that he or she might be depressed. Ask as their personality changes dramatically. Look at their personality and if you see a dramatic change in their personality, it's something you need to be aware of. Ask yourself, "Is he/she having trouble having trouble with the boyfriend or the girlfriend?" Are they having trouble getting along with other friends? Relational difficulties are a sign of alarm. Are they having a hard time getting along with parents, adults, adult authorities whether it's at school or with athletics, or whatever? And they've withdrawn from people that they used to feel close to.

That's something to be very concerned about. Is the quality of their schoolwork getting worse? Have they failed to live up to their own or someone's standards and when it comes to school grades or whatever? Do they always seem to be bored? Are they having trouble concentrating? Ask yourself. Is he or she, child or daughter, always seem to be acting in rebellion or unexplained in severed way? if you have a daughter, is she showing signs of possible pregnancy?

It's hard to believe that some parents don't even know or can't even see but they spend so little with their children, and they're able to hide it. How? I don't know. But they're able to even hide it the fact they could be pregnant. I've heard a child deliver a baby. Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years old and the parents were shocked. The parents didn't even know it. They had no clue at all and they were just dumbfounded and found out their child delivered a baby. And that's very strange too that even to happen.

So these are life-like, adult-like pressures in a child. Ask yourself. Has your child run away and having a problem with running away? Is your teenager abusing drugs or alcohol? And things like that get in to the chemical what they call chemical imbalance or a substance abuse problem. And there is some dual diagnosis depression within manic depression which is also another word for what we use to call

bipolar. And there is problems with that. Drugs and alcohol are used to camouflage the feelings that a young adult might have where they would not take medicine but rather instead feel the numbness of alcohol or drugs. So that's a very important thing for you to be aware of that if that's involved, then you should do something about it.

Are there times of a lot of complaining of headaches or stomachaches? They may not be real but they're psychosomatic illnesses. They're brought on by an emotional problem which affects your physical, chemical imbalance. Have their eating and sleeping habits been changing? And that happens and that can happen. Have their appearances changed for the worse? Are they giving away, handing out some of their prized possessions, giving them away, not seeming to care about any important things? A child has a favorite bat, a favorite athletic piece of equipment they might have, a favorite bicycle, and now all of a sudden, they don't care. They're giving all away their prized possessions.

Are they writing poems about darkness, about sadness, about death? Are their dreams becoming more morose or dark? Do they talk about suicide even jokingly or seriously? Have they said such things that "This is the last straw? I can't take it. I can't take it anymore. Nobody cares about me." Do you hear that more often? Threatening to kill oneself precedes four out of five suicidal deaths. Have they tried to commit suicide before? So you need to ask yourself all these things that you see.

In America, twenty million suffer from serious depression and we know there's a direct link between the precedent suicidal attempts. It estimates that more than 90 percent of those who die by suicide have suffered from depression or other mental illnesses. So I think that's a very important thing for us to be aware of if that's there, you need to ask yourself why it's there and what you're going to do about it, what can you do about it? So these statistics and principles and truths are very alarming. And it's very scary. It is.

The National Institute of Mental Health abbreviated NIMH, The National Institute of Mental Health, estimates that twenty-four million Americans live with a diagnosed mood disorder while forty million American adults are diagnosed with anxiety disorder, annually you can say or just as a whole. That's scary. Twenty-four million Americans live with a diagnosed mood disorder while forty million American adults are diagnosed with an anxiety disorder whether that might be, ADHD, OCD, manic depression, schizophrenia disorder. That's a lot of people, a lot of people suffering with mood and mental disorders.

The depression of bipolar is an important alliance. It's said that potential triggers that worsen anxiety most commonly disrupt the sleep patterns, and stressful social situations and being in crowded areas are very scary. Other anxiety inducing situations included the workplace, pressures, familial

problems and special occasions such as holidays and birthdays. So these kind of things upset people a lot. They're hard to deal with. A lot of expectations. And if you suspect that your teenager might be thinking about suicide, do not remain silent. Please. Suicide is preventable. Some may have called it a permanent problem or a permanent solution to a temporary problem. A permanent solution to a temporary problem.

You're thinking about the things that make you upset, they might be real, and they might be valid. But remember that they're not permanent. It will and can and should get better but if you end in suicide, it won't get better. So that tells us to be very cautious and to give a lot of care. Ask your teenager about it. Don't be afraid to say the word suicide. Say, "I hear you're talking about suicide." Getting the word out in the open sometimes is helpful. Laying it on the table and saying, "Okay, this is very serious. I'm very concerned about you and I want to know. Do you have suicidal thoughts?" And if they do, then you need to deal with it and get it out in the open there but suicide is preventable.

But of course, you can't watch your loved one twenty-four hours a day. I even hear of people in prison that are on the suicide watch. And their belts are taken away, they have no shoelaces. But still some way if they're death bent, you get out there, they're really dead bent on it. Sometimes it happens even if you're looking for it really closely. But reassure your loved one that you love them, remind them if it's a boy, more males attempt and are successful at suicides than females. Remind them no matter how awful their problem seems, it can be worked out and you will be willing to help with anything you can do.

Ask them to talk about their feelings. Listen carefully. Do not dismiss their problems or get angry with them. Please, it's important. Remove all lethal weapons from your home including guns, pills, kitchen utensils, ropes. Seek professional help from a doctor, psychiatrist, therapist, a minister. Ask your teenager's pediatrician to give you some ideas if they're likely younger to guide you through an earlier talk about suicide.

A variety of all patients hospitalized treatments and programs are available. Take them now because once a suicide is taken place, you can't get that chance back again. Don't worry about responding right away because sometimes, lack of action can be too late. If you don't attend at church, it's important to realize that church can be sure to help you. So be sure to seek one out and begin attending a church regularly with your family so you can have better spiritual growth and support.

Helping with the unique grief issues, we need to be able to understand that. And that's important. And we'll talk about that even further in the Bible. But spirituality often from the Bible and a deeper faith in Jesus Christ can understand and has helped many deal with the issues of manic depression called

bipolar or we'd say suicide and also then if you go through grief. So what we're talking about these and few upcoming lessons in this course series for practical theology.

And I think a Bible pastor, they sought to me right now that I would share would be Philippians 4:4-8. It says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say it, rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious in anything but in every situation by prayer and thanksgiving. Present your request to God. And the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep guard over your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

It says, "Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatsoever is admirable. If anything is excellent or worth of praise, think about such things." That's a great word for us today. John 14:27 says, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I don't give it to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled neither let them be afraid."

2 Timothy 1:7 tells us, "For God has not given us His spirit of fear. He isn't giving a spirit of fear or anxiety but a spirit of power" dynamite is a Greek word *dunamas*. "The spirit of love and of a sound, whole, well-balanced mind." I think of the Gaderian Demoniac in the Bible days. And the Gaderian Demoniac was in Genesaret when Christ was traveling. He got off the boat that. He was on the Sea of Galilee and had landed on a town called Genesaret. He got off the boat and a disheveled, kind of a scary looking man, wild-eyed, with scars all over him. He ended up being a cutter which we hear of more and more today that young people are involved in.

Majority of more women they say are cutters than the young men. But they will just cut themselves with razorblades or scissors or knives, make scars of themselves. And once they can feel guilty about stuff, and it's an out relief of their feelings of anxiety and fear and unworthiness and they need to be punished. So they punished themselves and it's so sad.

But in the Gospel of Mark 5 beginning of verse two, "And when Jesus had come of the boat," it says, "Immediately they met Him, a man out of the tomb who had an uncleaned spirit, who was dwelling among the tombs and no one could bind him." Not even chains because he's often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains have pulled the part by him. And the shackles haven't been broken into pieces. And neither could as it says with, neither could anyone tame him. He was out of control. This sounds like a terribly bound person to Satanic possession, domination and really terrible chemical imbalance.

And he lived in the mountains, it says, and there were tombs in these mountains and he would cry and cut himself constantly, regularly with stones. It's a pitiful sight of a human being that could happen.

And he ran to Jesus. And Jesus when he saw him, he yelled, Come out, come out of him. Come out of this man, unclean spirit.” And the unclean spirit yelled, “Who are you?” because Jesus had been dealing with it. And the spirit spoke out of the man, “I am legion” for there were hundreds of demons inside of this man. Some could have said, maybe even thousands.

For some reason in the spiritual realm, evil spirits want to be embodied in either a human being or an animal. They don't feel right unless they have some type of earthly body to take over because they have only spiritual bodies in themselves. But they can somehow enter into a body of a human being or an animal. This is very scary somewhat very unnerving spiritual truths that we have encountered with on a mission field or whether here on America or wherever. It doesn't make any difference if you're a community with universities or if you're a third world country in the mountains.

There is spirituality. There is spiritual warfare that goes on and I myself have taken part in deliverances a number of times in my ministry and it's not a pretty picture. It's not something you go to seek out on your own. So you really want to know the word of God. Be strong. Courageous in Christ and be able not to be shied away from it. Because there's something that you just don't want to enter into lightly.

They came to Jesus and it says and they left the man when Jesus has rebuked the evil spirits out of him. They asked if they can even enter in some swine in a farmer that had pigs. And there were many of them, they ran off of a cliff when the demons entered them. And they died. The people in the community came back to Jesus and when they came back to Jesus, these people in the community had said, they saw the man with the unclean spirit and says they had marveled because they saw him seated. He hadn't sat before. He was always running around wild. They saw him seated in a piece of mind with clothes on and in his right mind.

So that's something important thing that we can see. So what do we do now? Well, it's very important that we can create this support system. And a support system is great on your church with being a local pastor. Reach out to people in your community who have a mental and emotional and mood disorders, alcoholism, drug abuse. Don't just wake people up. These are by products and these are symptoms of a very serious problem and we need to be able to get all of it and there is help.

But if someone has experienced a suicide in their family, be there for they would be suicide survivors, those who survived a suicide of a loved one who died. And it's also a term used for those who tried to attempt to use suicide and didn't die. But they lived and that's a very sad thing. So again, be very cautious. And if you meet people and it's a survivor of suicide, take these thoughts to heart. I myself have written a book called *Ryan's Story*, a practical illustration of what we'd gone through because I

myself can speak as an authority on this not only because of my study and not only because of my heart and my own experience. But the experience of losing a loved one myself, my twenty year old son Ryan who passed away this February 14<sup>th</sup> 2002 and he was twenty years of age.

So, this is serious and something that could not take lately. And it's something that is a kind of somewhat consumed my ministry and my life since this happened. And I'd like to use it a platform to help the pastors and churches be aware to get out there in the front lines of this terrible thing that can happen to a person's life and their family. God bless you. And thank you for enrolling in these wonderful classes. And I appreciate the privilege of being one of the teachers for CLI. Contact me, of course, if you're on the class and anything we can do you to help you and we'll you keep on your assignments. We'll keep you going forward. God bless you in Jesus' name. Amen.