

# Suicide

One of the major teachings of the Bible is that it's a serious sin to shed innocent blood:

**Proverbs 6:16-17:** “These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,”

God *hates* the shedding of innocent blood. It's an abomination to him. In fact, this is such a serious abomination that it defiles the land itself:

**Numbers 35:33:** “So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.”

This is a big deal. Once the land is defiled it casts out its inhabitants. God told the Israelites the reason He was giving them the land of Canaan was because its original inhabitants had defiled the land:

**Leviticus 18:28:** “That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.”

Sadly, the Israelites didn't listen to this warning. Manasseh, the king of Judah, shed a tremendous amount of innocent blood. This brought God's judgment upon the entire nation:

**2 Kings 21:16:** “Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.”

The shedding of innocent blood was such a serious sin that God refused to pardon it. Even though Manasseh repented (2 Chronicles 33:12-13), there was no way to spare the nation from God's wrath:

**2 Kings 24:1-4:** “In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him. And the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servants the prophets. Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the Lord would not pardon.”

Shedding innocent blood is a serious sin. It's so serious that it causes God to destroy entire nations. No unrepentant murderer will be saved:

**1 John 3:15:** “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”

Now, the Bible doesn't condemn governments which execute people who are guilty of certain exceptionally evil actions. It also doesn't condemn self-defense. However, the topic of this study is killing people who are *not* guilty of a crime that's punishable by death.

Killing an innocent person is murder. There may be all sorts of reasons why it's tempting to kill an innocent person. Maybe he's causing you problems that would go away if he was dead. Maybe he's suffering, and that suffering would end if their life ended. Maybe he's having a terrible effect on society but can't be prosecuted. It may seem beneficial to kill him – but it *must not be done*. Murder is a serious sin.

That same principle applies to killing yourself. Shedding innocent blood is a serious sin. It's wrong to kill someone else to end their suffering, and it's also wrong to kill yourself to end your own suffering. God doesn't give us that right.

## ***Moses and Elijah***

There are two people in the Bible who asked God to kill them. The first is Moses:

**Numbers 11:11-15:** “And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is

too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.”

Moses was greatly upset by the actions of the Israelites, and he prayed these things in a time of immense stress and frustration. However, he never should have asked God to kill him. The reality is that Moses was actually asking God to kill an innocent person who hadn't done anything worthy of death. It's wrong to ask God to kill innocent people.

If we find ourselves in a situation where we're experiencing terrible suffering or stress, there are all sorts of other prayers we could pray. We could pray for healing, or help, or God's spirit, or grace. We could even pray that God would fix the situation. But praying that God would kill us is the wrong approach to take.

When Moses prayed this prayer God didn't kill him. Instead God gave him the help he needed to keep going.

The other person in the Bible who prayed that God would kill him is Elijah:

**1 Kings 19:4:** “But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.”

Like Moses, Elijah prayed these things when he was extremely tired, frustrated, and felt defeated. However, this was another case where someone was asking God to kill an innocent person who hadn't done anything worthy of death. That's the wrong thing to do.

In this situation God didn't grant Elijah's prayer. Instead God gave him the help he needed to keep going (which is the

same thing He did with Moses).

## **Examples**

There are a number of people in the Bible who killed themselves. All of them were wicked people who killed themselves for terrible reasons. None of them are examples that should be followed.

Perhaps the most famous person is Judas. After he betrayed Jesus, he didn't turn away from his sins and go on to faithfully serve Him for the rest of his life. Instead he hanged himself:

**Matthew 27:3-5:** “Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.”

This was the wrong thing to do. Peter also betrayed Jesus; he was asked three times if he knew Him and he denied it each time. When Peter realized what he had done he was filled with remorse and wept. However, Peter didn't kill himself. Instead he repented, changed his ways, and faithfully followed Christ.

That's what Judas should have done. However, instead of doing the right thing he killed himself and was lost:

**John 17:12:** “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might

be fulfilled.”

**Hebrews 10:39:** “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

Judas didn't make anything better by killing himself. Instead he made things a great deal worse. There's no escape or forgiveness for those who are in Hell.

Another person who killed himself was King Saul:

**1 Samuel 31:3-5:** “And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.”

The reason Saul gave for killing himself was to prevent the Philistines from abusing him. Did that plan work? No, it didn't. After he died the Philistines found his body, cut off his head, and nailed his corpse to a wall for public display:

**1 Samuel 31:8-10:** “And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. And they put his armour in the house of

Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan.”

Saul led a wicked and proud life, and he died a wicked and proud death. He consistently rejected God's will and did as he pleased, even in death.

The third person who killed himself was Abimelech:

**Judges 9:53-54:** “And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A women slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.”

Abimelech had his armorbearer kill him (which was a form of assisted suicide) for a stupid and proud reason: he didn't want a woman to receive credit for killing him. He thought if he committed suicide then he would be spared that fate, but he was wrong. Centuries later people still spoke of the woman who killed Abimelech:

**2 Samuel 11:21:** “Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.”

These aren't wise and godly people whose examples we should follow. All of these individuals were wicked men who made terrible choices and died for terrible reasons.

A lesser known example is Zimri. He became king of Israel by assassinating the previous king:

**1 Kings 16:8-10:** “In the twenty and sixth year of Asa king of Judah began Elah the son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah, two years. And his servant Zimri, captain of half his chariots, conspired against him, as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza steward of his house in Tirzah. And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead.”

After that murder, Zimri got to reign over Israel for seven whole days. That's how long it took the rest of the nation to come against him for what he had done. Rather than face them Zimri decided to burn himself to death:

**1 Kings 16:15-18:** “In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah. And the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. And the people that were encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king: wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp. And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died.”

Zimri wanted to escape the consequences of murdering the king, so he killed himself. That led to even greater eternal consequences (since he never repented of his evil).

## ***Enduring Suffering***

There are many godly people in the Bible who suffered terrible things. *None* of them committed suicide. In fact, suicide wasn't even considered to be an option! Instead suffering was depicted as something people had to endure. These people cried out to God in their pain and they were miserable, but they didn't kill themselves. They kept going – because killing an innocent person is a serious sin.

One example is Jeremiah. He hated his life and wanted to die:

**Jeremiah 20:14-18:** “Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide; Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?”

Jeremiah *really* hated his life, but he didn't think suicide was an option. He wanted to die but he didn't take his own life. Instead he cried out to God and suffered.

Another example of this is Job. He very much wanted to die:

**Job 6:8-9:** “Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to

destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!"

Although Job didn't ask God to kill him, he was clearly hoping that God would do exactly that. Job was deeply miserable. He experienced enormous suffering:

**Job 6:2-3:** "Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up."

**Job 30:15-19:** "Terrors are turned upon me: they pursue my soul as the wind: and my welfare passeth away as a cloud. And now my soul is poured out upon me; the days of affliction have taken hold upon me. My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest. By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat. He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes."

**Job 30:30:** "My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat."

Job lost his children, his wealth, and his health. He was in terrible pain and had no hope. He wanted to die, but he didn't kill himself. In fact, that was never considered to be an option. Job believed he had to continue to suffer until God delivered him, so that's what he did. He endured it, even though it was unbearable.

That's the Biblical model: Christians must endure times of suffering. When terrible things happen we must cry out to God and seek His grace so we can get through our trials. God hasn't

given us the option of escaping suffering by killing ourselves. That's a wicked thing to do.

It's not easy to endure suffering. In fact, it may be the most difficult thing we can do. That's why we need Christ in order to do it:

**Philippians 4:12-13:** “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

This famous verse isn't about winning football games (even though people routinely misapply it in that context). It's about enduring terrible times. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us – including enduring suffering.

## ***Edge Cases***

The topic of suicide (and its close relative, euthanasia) covers a lot of ground. Since the Bible is full of people who suffered terrible things, that gives us many examples we can learn from.

Does God allow people to kill themselves because they're depressed, sad, or full of grief? No. In those times God commands us to cast our cares upon Him, for He cares for us. God can help us through those times.

Does God allow people to kill themselves because they're going to die anyway? For example, suppose someone is given a diagnosis of cancer and told they'll die in six months. Can they go ahead and end their life? The answer is no. It would be very wrong to say “My neighbor is going to eventually die anyway, so I'll just go ahead and kill him now”. *That same logic applies to yourself*. Besides, what if God decides to cure you? What if you live much longer than anyone thought? In those times we must

cry out to God and seek His grace. We must pray that God will use our suffering to draw others to Him, and be an example that others can follow. Suicide isn't an option.

Does God allow people to kill themselves because they have a poor quality of life, and their suffering would end if they were dead? No, He doesn't. The Bible is full of people who experienced unbearable suffering (such as Job), and those people weren't given the option of ending their life. There are times when God calls people to suffer. He can work through that suffering to accomplish His will and do great things.

God doesn't allow people to kill themselves to avoid suffering. Instead the Lord uses suffering to build the character in our life that He wants us to have:

**Romans 5:3-5:** “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

This means suffering isn't worthless! Instead it's valuable. It's one of the ways God causes us to grow into the people He wants us to be.

There may be times when God sends suffering into a person's life to test them:

**1 Peter 1:6-7:** “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”

**James 1:2-4:** “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

If Christ calls us to partake in His sufferings (by suffering in this world) then that's what we must do. Suffering for the sake of Christ isn't meaningless! Instead it's important, and will be greatly rewarded when He returns:

**1 Peter 4:12-13:** “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

**Hebrews 11:35-37:** “Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

There are times when God calls us to suffer. However, the reward He will give us for faithfully enduring that suffering is

much greater than the pain:

**Romans 8:18:** “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

That doesn't mean suffering is easy, but we don't have to suffer alone. When we suffer we can cry out to God and He will hear us:

**2 Corinthians 1:5:** “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.”

**2 Corinthians 1:7:** “And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.”

Suffering is one of the ways that we can come to know Christ better:

**Philippians 3:10:** “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;”

Suffering can even be an act of worship to Christ:

**Colossians 1:24:** “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:”

There are times when God uses our suffering to bring people to Him and save their souls. In those times our suffering is

playing a vital role in saving people from everlasting torment:

**Philippians 1:12-14:** “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

When these times come we must not reject the suffering and choose suicide. God hasn't given us that option! Instead He's commanded us to reach out to Him by faith and rely on Him to get us through that time.

After all, God did make us this promise:

**Romans 8:28:** “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

This includes times of great suffering and pain. One day God will use our suffering for good, even if it seems impossible at the time.

## ***Is It Unforgivable?***

There are some who teach that suicide is an unforgivable sin. Their argument is that you can't go to Heaven if you have unrepentant sin, and it's impossible to repent if you're dead. Therefore suicide is a sin that can't be forgiven.

The problem with this line of thinking is that it's based on a faulty assumption. When we go to Jesus, repent of our sins, and ask Him to save us, He gives us His perfect righteousness. The death of Jesus on the cross paid the penalty for *all* of our sins.

When God looks at us He doesn't see our actions; instead He sees the perfect righteousness of Christ.

That means our salvation doesn't rest on our actions. We don't maintain our salvation by doing good things, and we can't lose our salvation by doing wicked things. Our salvation isn't based on our works:

**Ephesians 2:8-9:** “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

**Galatians 2:16:** “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

It's simply not true that if a Christian sins and then suddenly dies, he'll go to Hell because he didn't repent of his sin before he dropped dead. If that were true then it would mean our salvation depends on our works, and the Bible is extremely clear that it depends on *Christ's* works, not on ours. The death of Christ forgave *all* our sins! Jesus paid *everything* that we owe. Nothing was left undone.

Does that mean we're free to sin as much as we want? Absolutely not:

**Romans 6:1-2:** “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

Christians must not sin. We must do what's right in the sight of God. Why? Because we've given our life to Christ, and

He commands us to obey Him. Sin isn't an option for us because our lives don't belong to us anymore. Instead they belong to God.

Although we can't lose our salvation, Jesus will hold us accountable for the things we've done. One day every single Christian will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We will be held responsible for everything we've done, both good and bad:

**2 Corinthians 5:10:** “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

It's true that the sins of a Christian won't send them to Hell. That's because Jesus already paid the price for their sins. But Christians will be held accountable, and that's not a light matter. When we finally stand before Him, the one thing we'll care about in that moment is pleasing and glorifying Him. When He is our Judge we won't want to be guilty of any sin – and we'll *especially* not want to be guilty of murder (which is what suicide really is). The judgment of the everlasting and almighty God may not matter to people in their time of grief and pain, but it will matter *enormously* the moment after they die.

People may think suicide will make their life better, but that's a lie. It just trades one problem for a much bigger one. When the wicked die they immediately go to Hell. No matter how much they were suffering previously, their torment in Hell will be *vastly* worse. Suicide means they traded lesser suffering for greater suffering. What they should have done instead is gone to Christ for forgiveness and grace (which ultimately leads to everlasting life and eternal joy).

Likewise, suicide doesn't make the life of Christians better either. Christians who kill themselves must stand before their Judge right after having committed the act of murder, which is tremendously evil in God's sight. If they had instead endured their

suffering and sought His grace then He would have helped them and rewarded them – but instead they chose murder.

Suicide isn't an option for Christians. Instead we must call out to God, for He cares for us:

**1 Peter 5:7:** “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

That's the way we must live.

## ***End Of Life Care***

There's one other edge case that needs to be covered. Sometimes a person has come to the end of their life and are being kept alive by some piece of advanced technology. What does God require us to do in that situation?

Now, there are different levels of this. Some people can live a normal life if they're given medication or some kind of implant. In those cases it would obviously be wrong for them to kill themselves. Since they have what they need to keep living, they shouldn't throw that life away and choose death. God has given them the precious gift of life, and they must take advantage of it and use it for His glory.

Even if the life leaves a lot to be desired, it's still more useful to the church to be alive than dead:

**Ecclesiastes 9:4:** “For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.”

The mightiest and most powerful person in the world becomes utterly powerless once they die. At that point they can no longer take any part in the things that happen under the sun. The living have a *tremendous* advantage over the dead. They can do a great many things for God in this world that the dead can't.

It's true that it's better to die and be with Christ than to be

in this world. However, Paul still desired to remain alive because *that was more useful to the church*:

**Philippians 1:23-26:** “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.”

Paul didn't choose the option that made him the most comfortable. Instead he chose the option that was the most beneficial to the church.

What about people who are in a coma? Well, sometimes those people recover. That means they're still alive – and it's our duty to protect those who need help, not put them to death. It may be easier for everyone to kill them, but that's a horrific way to live. God hasn't given us the option of shedding innocent blood.

The most difficult cases are when it's not clear if a person is alive or dead. Thanks to modern technology, a person's body can be kept alive when it seems that death may have already occurred. The Bible has a very specific definition of death:

**James 2:26:** “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

It's not always easy to know where to draw the line. However, if the person is dead and their spirit has departed then keeping their body alive doesn't do anyone any good. There may come a time when life support isn't actually supporting that person's life. If lifesaving measures aren't saving a life then it may be time to end them.

The overall principle is that we must choose *life*, not

death. We must help those who need our help, not kill them.  
That's what God has called us to do.