



SUICIDE PREVENTION

Hope When Life Seems Hopeless



June Hunt



HOPE
for the Heart

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Hopeless

JUNE HUNT



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Suicide Prevention: Hope When Life Seems Hopeless

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Dear Friend,

I remember the scene like it was yesterday. From my freshman days in college, I still remember my simple question. “*Rosie, are you all right?*”

I had just walked into my dorm room after dinner on campus ... but *something seemed very wrong*. What I saw looked strange at first—then startling. My sweet, joyful roommate was sprawled across her bed, awkwardly angled and glassy-eyed. She did not respond to my question and when I attempted to rouse her, she was like a limp doll.

Instinctively, I looked around the room for any indication of trouble. Sure enough, there was a stash of bottles—*open* bottles—once containing pills. Apparently, this mound of missing pills was all mixed together, dissolving inside Rosie’s stomach.

Immediately my heart began to race. Time was of the essence. Her life was in the balance. I ran across the street back to the cafeteria where I had earlier seen my brother, Ray.

“*Please, God, keep him in the cafeteria! Don’t let him leave!*” Within moments, I dashed through the tall wooden doorway and then abruptly stopped. “*Lord, help me find him,*” I pleaded.

Scanning the heads of hundreds of students, I stood frozen, feeling as if my heart would beat out of my chest. Finally, spying his short blond hair, I hurried to him and blurted out, “*Rosie attempted suicide! Quick—help me!*”

We rushed back to my dorm and up to the 3rd floor. Scooping her into his arms, Ray carried her out to my car. Driving as fast as I could, we took her to the college health clinic.

The medical staff began pumping Rosie's stomach. I sat in the waiting room and prayed for what seemed like an eternity. Finally a doctor came out and pronounced, "*She's going to make it.*" Whew—we made it in time! Thankfully, her life had been saved.

In the wee hours of the morning, I returned to our room *alone*. After collapsing fully clothed on my bed, I began ruminating for over an hour on what had just happened. To begin with, Rosie was the last person I would have linked with suicide. Then I had this realization: Someone I consider a precious friend now seems like a stranger. Here is someone I know and love, and yet I know nothing about the most painful part of her life—the part of her heart that's lost all hope. What could possibly have caused her to want to end her life?

And that led me to another realization: All around us there are people with *hidden pain*—and some have lost all hope. They feel so helpless and hopeless that they're looking for a way to escape.

For many days, Rosie stayed in the clinic recuperating from her overdose and being evaluated by doctors.

Every evening, as I visited her, we would talk for hours. During one of our earlier conversations, I asked, "*Rosie, what has been so painful that you lost your will to live?*" Her answer deeply grieved me, filling my heart with both pain and compassion.

Rosie had experienced the haunting trauma of *childhood sexual abuse*, and the sickening memories had been tormenting her soul. She had suffered alone—she had never told a soul.

But that very evening, she had taken her first step toward healing. She had shared “the secret.” The victimizer’s power is in manipulating the victim to keep *the secret*. Yet now the secret was out! I also shared her painful truth with a caring, responsible relative—her uncle who was committed to helping Rosie deal with the difficult family dynamics.

Even though her life was saved, there was so much I did not know about helping someone who struggles with suicide. How I wish I’d known *then* what I know *now*. So many struggle with the devastation of feeling *powerless* to stop the pain. Most people who commit suicide don’t really want to die; *they just want the pain to stop*.

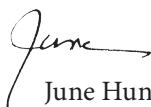
If you are in such pain, my first words of counsel are, “*Tell someone.*” It’s vital that you tell someone what’s causing you such pain because only then can hope, help, and healing begin to occur. Jesus says, “*The truth will set you free*” (John 8:32). Plus, you will no longer be alone in your torturous struggle.

Regardless of where you are in your life right now, if God is leading you or preparing you to come alongside a struggler who has lost hope, pray to have the right heart—*God’s heart*. His heart is tender and full of compassion toward those experiencing deep pain. The Bible says, “*The LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion*” (Isaiah 30:18). He feels the emotional, spiritual,

and physical agony that engulfs the lives of those teetering on the brink of absolute hopelessness. And from God's tender heart springs forth words of wisdom; life-transforming truths that truly affirm "life."

As you read these words on this significant subject, you will learn how to better reflect God's heart to help those who are hurting, and you will gain practical insight on what to say and what to do. My prayer is that the truths in this book will have a powerful impact in your life, equipping you to literally save the life of someone struggling with thoughts of suicide.

Yours in the Lord's hope,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "June". The signature is written in black ink and has a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

June Hunt

*"There is surely a future hope for you,
and your hope will not be cut off."*

(Proverbs 23:18)

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Hope When Life Seems Hopeless

“I just want to die.”

This aching admission has been spoken too many times—and with tragic results. These five words reveal a soul mired in the depths of despair. All hope is gone, and all too soon, so is life itself.

No group is exempt from wanting to walk down this dark path of “escape.” Male and female, young and old, rich and poor—all are found among these fatal statistics. Yet most people contemplating suicide don’t really want to die—*they just want the pain to stop*. Their burden seems too heavy to bear.

If you’re struggling, if you’re desperate, if you’re contemplating taking your life, realize this: The Lord longs to heal your heart and restore your hope. In absolute honesty, go to God about your pain.

Say to Him ...

**“I am in pain and distress;
may your salvation, O God, protect me.”
(Psalm 69:29)**



DEFINITIONS

Does life seem impossible? For over a million people each year who die of suicide, the answer is *yes!* And that figure is more than all the casualties of homicide and war combined!¹

Think about this statistic—seriously: On average, one person dies by suicide every 40 seconds somewhere in the world, while up to 20 others are attempting the same act.² That's an extraordinary number of people desperately choosing death!

Have your desires been dashed by the pain of depression and despair? Have your hopes been smashed by hurt and heartache? Have you searched without success for a lasting solution?

Honestly, are you struggling with thoughts of suicide? Have you begun to believe the lie that self-inflicted death would be better than God-given life?

Realize, the Lord looks upon you with tender compassion and genuine concern. He cares about your every need. You can learn how to experience the meaningful life He has planned for you. He has a perfect plan for you; a plan to free you from the shackles of suicidal thinking; a plan based on truth, not on lies. Jesus desires to free you from destructive thoughts and choices. He said ...

**“You will know the truth,
and the truth will set you free.”
(John 8:32)**

WHAT ARE Different Types of Suicide?³

Just to hear the word *suicide* evokes a myriad of feelings ranging from shock and sadness to guilt and grief. The initial response after suicide is often: *Oh no! Why would anyone resort to such an irreversible act?*

We feel a sense of tragic loss when we discover that suicide has snuffed out one more life forever. To help someone fight the persistent desire to “end it all” (a desire called suicidal ideation), there is much we need to understand about suicide. Since God is our Creator, we need to know God’s heart on life and death—and that means our own life and death. Throughout the Bible, life and death are presented in different contexts, but never does God say we are to pursue death.

**“I have set before you life and death.
... Now choose life, so that you
and your children may live.”
(Deuteronomy 30:19)**

The Five Sides of Suicide

► Suffering Suicide

- *Suffering suicide* is a deliberate act of killing oneself while in an extreme state of despair.⁴ (In Latin, *sui* means “oneself” and *cide* means “to kill.”)
- Suicidal sufferers are afflicted with “tunnel vision”—the only option they see is death. They

cannot see any hope that their painful life will be any different in the future.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: Judas hanged himself in remorse after betraying Jesus.

“When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse. ... Then he went away and hanged himself.” (Matthew 27:3, 5)

▶ **Supported Suicide**

- *Supported suicide* (also called “assisted suicide”) is a deliberate choice of killing oneself with the assistance of another person.
- Supported suicide (sometimes referred to by terms like “euthanasia” or “mercy killing”) is an attempt to avoid a painful or undesirable future.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: The evil king Abimelech asked his soldier to kill him with a sword in order to avoid the humiliation of military defeat. This hurried request to his armor-bearer was for “assisted suicide.”

“Draw your sword and kill me, so that they can’t say, ‘A woman killed him.’ So his servant ran him through, and he died.” (Judges 9:54)

▶ **Symbolic Suicide**

- *Symbolic suicide* is a deliberate act of killing oneself while being influenced by a ritualistic custom or a sense of honor due to an excessive identification with a certain person, family, or nation.

- Symbolic suicide is found in different cultures and enacted in different ways. Types of symbolic suicide include hara-kiri, suttee, and copycat suicides.

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES:

- *Hara-kiri* (*hara* means “belly” and *kiri* means “cutting”) is the Japanese ritual of “honorable suicide” by ripping open the abdomen with a knife (disembowelment) in response to bringing dishonor on one’s family.
- *Suttee* (also *Sati*) is the Hindu custom of a widow cremating herself on her husband’s funeral pyre to demonstrate her ultimate act of fidelity. This practice can be either voluntary or compulsory, depending on where the widow lives. Today in India, suttee is forbidden by law, although some widows still choose this suicidal act, and still others are pressured to do so.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: After regaining his supernatural strength, Samson—one of Israel’s judges—pushed against the temple’s two central pillars, knowing he would be killed. But he also knew the collapse would kill the Philistines—the enemy of God and His people.

“Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, ‘Let me die with the Philistines!’ Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.” (Judges 16:29–30)

▶ Shared Suicide

- *Shared suicide* is the deliberate act of two or more people who kill themselves based on a prior commitment to do so.
- Suicide pacts are previously arranged deaths that typically take place at the same time, for the same cause, using the same method.

HISTORICAL EXAMPLE: In AD 70 after Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, the Jews were taken captive and many were dispersed to other nations. However, around 960 zealots escaped to Masada, a fortress situated on a massive isolated rock 900 feet high. In AD 73 the Jews of Masada knew their stronghold could not withstand the overpowering Roman siege. Rather than allow their wives and children to be tortured, abused, or sold as slaves, they chose to die of mass suicide.⁵

Knowing that these Jewish zealots were well acquainted with the Psalms, no doubt they could identify with these words:

“The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow.” (Psalm 116:3)

▶ Slaughter Suicide

- *Slaughter suicide* is the deliberate act of killing one or more people while committing suicide simultaneously or immediately following the act of murder.
- Slaughter suicide is called “homicidal suicide,” which includes killings committed by groups such as kamikaze pilots and suicide bombers.

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES:

- *Jihad suicide bombers* seek to fulfill the Islamic directive in the Qur'an against all non-Islamic people: "Fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war) ... Fight those who believe not in Allah" (Surah 9:5, 29). Those who die as jihadists are "guaranteed" their place in paradise (along with 70 of their relatives), bypassing the normally required time in hell, and they are given 72 virgins to enjoy.
- *Kamikaze* ("divine wind") *pilots* in Japan carried out their suicide missions during World War II by flying their war planes into enemy targets such as ships and ammunition depots. These pilots believed they were guaranteed a place with their ancestors and believed their highest service was to die for the Emperor who was regarded as God. (In 1945, following the Japanese defeat, the Emperor pronounced on the radio, "I am no longer to be considered a deity.")

CULTURAL EXAMPLE: On Tuesday April 20, 1999—in celebration of Hitler's birthday—two sadistic high school students in long, black trench coats killed thirteen people at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. After the hate-filled massacre—especially targeting Christians—they both committed suicide. Known as cruel bullies, these two killers lived out this Scripture:

"Bloodthirsty men hate a man of integrity and seek to kill the upright." (Proverbs 29:10)