

Suicide and Self-Harm

By Jack Greenoe

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Genesis 1:27 in the section **It's in the Book**. Especially note the comments on God's creation of humans in His image and His relationship to humans. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: How do you think God views human life and the intentional, premature ending of life? Since God is spirit and not restricted to a human body, what does it mean to be made "in His image?"

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to 1 John 4:9 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Why did God create humans in the first place, and why does He love us the way He does?

Assignment Three

Read Psalm 31:14. Write God a note of trust. Express not only your trust in Him alone for salvation, but also your trust in Him for every aspect of your life – even when things do not go the way you expected. Prepare to share your note when your group meets.

Scripture to Memorize

"In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him." 1 John 4:9

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand that ending a precious life that was created in God's image is the equivalent of murder, is evidence of an attitude that rejects the lordship of Jesus, and doubts God's ability to deliver someone from seemingly hopeless circumstances.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

What if your dad attended the funeral of a man with whom he had worked for eight years? What if your dad told you the man had experienced a divorce, the loss of a job and financial problems—and then decided that suicide would end his problems. What thoughts would go through your mind?

What if one of your friends mentioned that similar thoughts were going through her mind? What if she were involved with drugs and some other moral failures? What if she had broken a law that would cause embarrassment for her entire family? What if she seemed ready to end it all? How would you respond if someone you knew mentioned this temptation?

Created in the Image of God

Read Genesis 1:27 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 27. God created man in His own image. Contrary to Darwin's theory of evolution, mankind did not evolve from a common ancestor through a series of blind and random mutations over an unbelievably long period of time.

God created mankind. He designed man to reflect His love. The image of God does not refer to a physical image because God is spirit (John 4:24). The image of God refers to the fact that God designed mankind to reflect His moral attributes.

Thus, it makes sense that God would not be pleased when someone created in His image decided to end his own life. Suicide is a variation of homicide (murder). God is clearly not pleased with murdering oneself or someone else because the image of God is directly related to the value of human life. God considers everyone precious.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on what they learned about being created in the image of God.

Discussion Questions

What kind of circumstances would lead someone to commit suicide or harm himself? Why would God be displeased about people committing suicide if suicide were seen as a simple solution to certain problems? What are the conditions attached to God's love?

On Your Own

Since God speaks through His Word, find several Bible verses that describe the characteristics (moral attributes) of God. List them below.

The Love of God

Read 1 John 4:9 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 9. the love of God. In Greek, the original language of the New Testament, four different words are translated with our English word *love*. The word used in verse 9 refers to unconditional love and not one based on family affections, romantic passion or fondness. God loves us unconditionally.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share why God created mankind in the first place and why He loves us the way He does.

Discussion Question

What is the significance of God's sending Jesus as a replacement to pay for our sins? How does that impact how we view suicide?

On Your Own

God loves His children unconditionally. When thoughts of despair and loneliness enter your mind or the mind of a friend, you should understand them simply as a misunderstanding of God's love. Realizing the price God paid should convince us that He loves us even when human relationships cause us heartache. Find verses in your Bible that describe God's love for you. Write a few below.

Studying the Passage

Verse 9. Made manifest among us. Here the word for *manifest* literally means "to make visible." By sending Jesus to earth to be the ultimate sacrifice for our sins and by teaching His followers how God expects us to live, God demonstrated His love for us. **God sent His . . .**

Son. God's love for humanity in their sinful, fallen state caused Him to send Jesus to earth to become the sinless, sufficient and satisfactory substitute for us. He loved us so much that He paid the ultimate price for our release from the bondage to sin. **we might live.** Greek uses two different words for *life*. One represents biological life that is characteristic of all humans. One almost always refers to spiritual life that is available only to believers. The word in this verse is the latter.

Once we have trusted in God's Son for forgiveness of our sins and once we fully understand how much He loves us, we have hope and purpose in life. With that hope and purpose, we should have no desire to end a human life created in His image. Suicide, the intentional act of ending one's life before natural death, should be examined from a biblical perspective.

What It Is

Make no mistake about it, suicide is sin. Biblically, ending one's own life is overstepping our bounds. David expressed to God, "My times are in Your hand" (Psalm 31:15). Suicide is the equivalent of murdering oneself, and it demonstrates a misunderstanding of God's love and a distrust in God's deliverance.

What It Is Not

Suicide, contrary to popular thought, does not instantly send a person to hell. It is not the unpardonable sin. Scripture states that there is no unpardonable sin other than the rejection of Jesus as Savior and Lord (i.e., blasphemy of the Holy Spirit; see Matthew 12:31).

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now read a note they wrote concerning Psalm 31.

On Your Own

Thank God for making you in His image and exactly the person you are and are becoming. In the space below, write Him a thank-you note for what He has done for you up to this point and for the plans He has for you.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

No moral failure negates God's love and forgiveness. That is a powerful truth. Life is a gift from God, not a video game where one can simply push "new game" after losing to the computer. Someone cannot ask for a "do-over" when it comes to suicide. Taking one's life rushes eternal judgment to the point where its victim has no opportunity to repent of his or her sin and seek God's forgiveness.

Believers should never consider suicide, but they also should do whatever is necessary to prevent others from ending their lives prematurely. For those who have never committed their lives to Christ, their eternity hangs in the balance.

People contemplate suicide because they have lost hope and purpose. Someone who knows and follows Jesus has reason for both. The Bible tells the stories of six people who selfishly committed suicide. None of them were obedient to God. All of them were involved in dishonorable activity.

Scripture also tells the stories of the prophet Elijah, King Solomon and the apostle Paul. All felt a measure of despair in life, but none of the three was so self-centered that he ended some temporary trials by taking his own life.

The Bible declares that the purpose of mankind is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. God provides redemption for people who trust in Him. This restoration allows believers to fulfill the reason they were created. Believers can have lives full of hope because of the saving work of Jesus, and we can share that hope with a world that tends to be hopeless.

Follow up Questions

How does the fact that you were created in the image of God affect your feelings about suicide?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to teenagers who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.