

SUICIDE: WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO KNOW - INTRODUCTION (Video 5:27)**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

PRE-VIDEO: Consider doing an overview of expectations and guidelines for your group prior to starting each new course.

1. What do you hope to gain from this course on suicide? What reservations, concerns, fears, or questions do you have about this topic?
2. Do you find this to be a strange topic to discuss in the context of a group focused on Christian apologetics? Why or why not?
3. Are you, a friend, or a family member personally affected by suicide? Please share if you are comfortable. Please share how the group can pray for you or them.
4. Why do you think mental health issues have become more prevalent in our culture today?

POST-VIDEO:

1. Jon used the relationship between John Newton and William Cowper as an example of how one can make an impact in the life of a struggling friend. Describe some ways we might be able to help a struggling friend or family member.
2. Explore examples from Scripture of people who struggled with anguish like Cowper (e.g., 1 Samuel 1:7–10; 1 Samuel 30:4–6; Psalm 31:9–13; Psalm 102:1–7; Luke 22:39–44; Matthew 26:37; Romans 9:1–5; 2 Corinthians 1:8–10; Job 1:20–22, 2:13–3:10, 6:8–15; Ecclesiastes 1:12–18, 2:18–23; 1 Kings 19:4–5; John 11:35).
3. What did Jon say is true, even if a person feels like they are alone in their struggle or that no one understands?
4. How do we know each person is of infinite value and worth? (See Genesis 1:26–28; Genesis 5:1–3; Genesis 9:6; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:13–15; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 4:4–7; James 3:9.)
 - a. Practice encouraging someone with these truths. Take a few minutes with a partner and tell them (in your own words) their worth. Use this as an encouragement to one another and as a practice to communicate this to others in the future.
5. What do we learn about our emotions from the previous two discussion points?
6. How can we communicate these two truths to friends or family members who might be struggling with these kinds of feelings (i.e., alone, not understood, not cared for, not valuable)?
7. How can diving deeper into Scripture that reveals pain and suffering actually help us with our own pain and suffering? Share some examples from Scripture and how they've helped.

ACTION POINTS:

- Listen to “The Imago Dei in Man” with Alan Shlemon: <https://www.str.org/w/the-imago-dei-in-man-1>
- Listen to “How Can I Comfort Christian Families that Have Lost Loved Ones to Suicide?” with Greg Koukl and Amy Hall: <https://www.str.org/w/-strask-how-can-i-comfort-christian-families-that-have-lost-loved-ones-to-suicide->

SUICIDE: WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO KNOW - WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? (Video 6:13)**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS****PRE-VIDEO:**

1. Share some reflections on the Action Items from the last session (either the podcast on the image of God in man or the podcast on comforting families that have lost loved ones to suicide).
2. What are the two foundational points from the last session? Why are these important?
3. What is the one thing that every human being shares with one another that makes them valuable? Why is this so important for us to learn and think carefully about?
4. Share any stories or updates with your involvement in the lives of those struggling with this issue.

POST-VIDEO:

1. The video gave a lot of statistics. Did any of these stand out to you? Why? Did you find any of them surprising?
2. How can we increase our trust in God and the process of sanctification? How can we help those who struggle with depression to trust God and the process of sanctification?
3. What role does suffering play in our sanctification? Look at these passages together to gain a biblical perspective on suffering:
 - Romans 8:16–39
 - 1 Peter 4:12–19
 - 2 Corinthians 4
 - James 1:2–4
 - Psalm 88
4. Why do you think this issue is not talked about much in the church? How could the church address it better? What role might we as individuals play in this?
5. Jon said that lives can be saved when we shine the light of the gospel on this issue. What might it look like to do this? (This is not to cast stones, but rather to evaluate in light of the fact that we are the church.) What role does objective truth play in this?

ACTION POINTS:

- Watch “Here’s What We Can Learn About Pain and Suffering from Paul” with Jonathan Noyes: https://youtu.be/XT3hWlJmv-E?si=4o3a2Ej_Humr1d6u
- Read “We Are the Body of the Wounded Healer” by Amy Hall: <https://www.str.org/w/we-are-the-body-of-the-wounded-healer>

**SUICIDE: WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO KNOW -
WHY DO PEOPLE CONTEMPLATE SUICIDE? (Video 11:50)****DISCUSSION QUESTIONS****PRE-VIDEO:**

1. Share some reflections on the Action Items from the last session.
2. What benefits can be gained from enduring suffering? What virtues can be learned from living in a broken world?
3. How can reason help us manage our emotions when we are overwhelmed?
4. Share any stories or updates with your involvement in the lives of those struggling with this issue.

POST-VIDEO:

1. Jon gave a long list of reasons for why people might contemplate suicide. What reasons from the list he gave stood out to you? He also said that the list goes on. Are there any reasons you can think of that he didn't mention? Consider sharing reasons that you or those you know have given for contemplating suicide.
2. What is presumed in the lie that a person would be better off dead?
3. Why do non-Christians lose hope and believe the lie that they would be better off dead?
4. Where do meaning, purpose, and hope come from in a naturalistic worldview? What worldview does provide meaning, purpose, and hope?
5. Jon listed many celebrities who recently took their own lives. Did any of these stand out to you? Why did they stand out? What impact have you seen these have on people or culture around you?
6. Jon said that naturalism can't deliver on its promises because, at its root, it is a materialistic, narcissistic view of reality. What are some of the promises it makes that it can't deliver on?
7. How does the Christian worldview offer hope like no other worldview can? Read through the following passages to see what Scripture says. Role-play with a partner what you would say to offer someone hope.
 - Romans 8:35–39
 - 2 Corinthians 4:16–18
 - Matthew 7:24–27
 - John 16:33
 - John 1:9–13
 - Revelation 7:13–17
 - Hebrews 12:1–3

ACTION POINTS:

- Read "Suicide and the Need for Hope" by Jonathan Noyes: <https://www.str.org/w/suicide-and-the-need-for-hope>
- Read "The Only Way to Satisfy the Longings of Your Soul" by Jonathan Noyes: <https://www.str.org/w/the-only-way-to-satisfy-the-longings-of-your-soul>

SUICIDE: WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO KNOW -
WHY DO CHRISTIANS CONTEMPLATE SUICIDE? (Video 26:48)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PRE-VIDEO:

1. In the previous session and in the article “Suicide and the Need for Hope,” Jon said that if naturalism is true, then our only hope is ourselves, and our salvation comes only from our own effort trying to generate meaning from various things. What are some ways people you know have sought meaning and purpose on this view?
2. Why is it important for us to remember and continually remind ourselves of the truth expressed by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 2:1–11?
3. Share any stories or updates with your involvement in the lives of those struggling with this issue.

POST-VIDEO:

1. “Just because we are Christians does not mean we are not susceptible to the lies of the world around us.” Does this statement surprise you? How can we keep ourselves from being deceived by the world, and how can we help our brothers and sisters in Christ remain grounded in truth?
2. Jon gave a list of Christians who have recently taken their own lives. What do you think causes Christians to lose hope when hope is central to the Christian worldview? Consider sharing your personal story or encounters. Stop and pray for those people or families if needed.
3. How can we keep from being overwhelmed by loss and trials? How can we help our brothers and sisters through loss and trials?
4. The other reason Christians might lose hope is through legalism, adding a layer of dos and don’ts on top of God’s grace. What truth of the gospel do we need to remember to counter legalism? Are you comfortable or uncomfortable with this truth? Discuss the confusion we as Christians often have between the gospel and the results of the gospel.
5. Jon mentioned several examples of people in Scripture who struggled to the point of despair: Solomon, Elijah, Jonah, and Paul. Which of these accounts stands out to you? How does their life give you hope?
6. “Don’t confuse the moment with your story.” How might you go about comforting someone with this truth? Practice with a partner how you would go about communicating this truth in a compassionate and understanding way. Talk about what you would do in addition to what you would say.
7. What did you think of the idea that our hope is not found in repentance, but rather in a person’s acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ?
8. Hope is not found in naturalism nor in legalism. Read Romans 8:38–39. What is Paul convinced of that we need to be convinced of as well? How can we help each other remain convinced? Why do you think we need to be reminded of this so often?

ACTION POINTS:

- Listen to “Being Alive Hurts. Why Can’t I End My Existence?” with Greg Koukl and Melinda Penner: <https://www.str.org/w/-strask-october-23-2017>
- Listen to “What Does the Bible Say About Suicide, Especially Christian Suicide?” with Brett Kunkle and Melinda Penner: <https://www.str.org/w/-strask-february-29-2016>

SUICIDE: WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO KNOW - WHAT CAN WE DO? (Video 15:10)**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS****PRE-VIDEO:**

1. In Greg's comments in the #STRask podcast episode "Being Alive Hurts. Why Can't I End My Existence," he addresses two sides to this question. What are the two sides? Why is it important to hold these two truths together?
2. In the #STRask podcast episode "What Does the Bible Say About Suicide, Especially Christian Suicide?" Melinda said, "God's forgiveness is not like a lily pad, but a safety net." What did she mean by this, and how does this picture fit with your understanding of God's grace?

POST-VIDEO:

1. Has this session on suicide changed your perspective or increased your understanding of mental health issues? If so, how?
2. What are two big lies perpetrated by our enemy? How can we keep from falling for the deception?
3. Look at 2 Corinthians 12:9–10. What is the context of this passage that gives Paul contentment in weakness?
4. Were you surprised to learn that it's okay and even helpful to use the word "suicide" in a question when talking to a friend that is struggling? Why or why not?
5. The video encourages us to talk to one another about our struggles. What are some reasons people might find this difficult to do? How can we encourage each other to do this?
6. Role-play: One partner take on the role of an individual struggling with this issue. One partner practice asking questions, listening, and offering truth and help to the other.
7. Jon gave a long list of signs of suicidal contemplation. He then says we should talk to someone if we are concerned that a friend or family member may be considering suicide. Does this seem difficult to you? Why or why not? Consider sharing specifics with the group right now.
8. Remember Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:16–17. Read the passage and discuss.

ACTION POINTS:

- Read "What to Do When You Think a Friend is Considering Suicide" by Jonathan Noyes:
<https://www.str.org/w/what-to-do-when-you-think-a-friend-is-considering-suicide>
- Watch "If Jesus Overcame, Why is There Still Evil and Suffering?" with Greg Koukl and Amy Hall:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQ7KJrLnaqg>
- Watch "Responding to Transgender Suicide" with Alan Shlemon:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_l-gSTp7FA&rc=1