
“LET’S TALK ABOUT SUICIDE”

LESSON 1 ■ For week ending January 1, 2022

The Church of God acknowledges that suicide exists in our world today. Nearly 800,000 people die by suicide in the world each year, which is roughly one death every 40 seconds. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in the world for those aged 15-24 years. Let’s see what God’s Word has to say about the subject.

KEY TEXT: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (I Peter 5:8).*

1. Most people who consider suicide don’t really want to die, they just don’t know how to cope with or eliminate the pain they are going through.

- » The first signs of a suicidal person is depression, followed by isolationism, and eventually suicidal idealization. It’s important to understand that suicide doesn’t end the chances of life getting worse, it eliminates the possibility of it ever getting any better.
- » Suicide is never the answer to the problem. In fact, suicide doesn’t end the pain, it just passes it on to someone else.

2. The Church does not believe that the act of suicide automatically sends a person to Hell.

- » The Church recognizes that the person who committed suicide could have been influenced by mental illness, severe depression, and/or chemical imbalances that adversely affected their behavior.
- » The Church of God believes that God alone is the Judge of mankind in these matters. He is the only One who knows the thoughts and intents of a person’s heart and mind (Hebrews 4:12). That is why He alone is the righteous Judge of all mankind (Psalm 50:6).
- » God knows what was happening in an individual’s mind before they committed suicide (Hebrews 4:13). Again, God makes the judgment concerning the matter.
- » It is not our job to pronounce a judgement upon someone who has committed suicide. Our job is to minister to surviving family members and/or loved ones who are hurting (Psalm 34:18; Psalm 22:24). We should emphasize that Yahweh God is rich in mercy, compassion, and grace (Ephesians 2:4; Psalm 116:5).

3. Suicide may be the result of a number of different afflictions including severe depression and/or other debilitating forms of mental illness.

- » Many forms of mental illness can be effectively managed by medications prescribed by healthcare professionals just as blood pressure and blood sugar levels are managed by medications.
- » If you—or someone you know—are experiencing suicidal thoughts or urges, please talk with a healthcare professional right away.
- » God loves you and He came to this earth so that you can have life abundantly.

4. God’s Word also makes it clear that suicidal thoughts can come from Satan—who is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8).

- » Jesus refused to go against God’s Word when His flesh was tempted by Satan in the wilderness (*“Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down...”* Matthew 4:5-7).
- » Our job as believers is to reach out to those who are contemplating suicide with the message that Jesus Christ is the answer in every area of our lives—even when we are brokenhearted, held captive, mourning, or struggling with a spirit of heaviness (Hebrews 7:25; Isaiah 61:1-3).
- » The Church of God encourages its members to reach out in love to the families of those who have committed suicide with grace and mercy (Galatians 6:2). While the Church does not condone suicide, it acknowledges that its duty is to support/encourage the surviving family members. The Church also acknowledges that surviving family members—who feel trespassed by the act—may need to forgive their loved one who committed suicide (Matthew 6:14, 15).

“SHOULD WE IGNORE OUR FEELINGS?”

LESSON 2 ■ For week ending January 8, 2022

It has been said, “Feelings are just fruit, so ignore them!” While some people are led by their emotions, others just dismiss/repress their feelings altogether. So, how should we respond to our feelings? The truth is that our “feelings” reveal “root issues” (hatred, bitterness, unforgiveness) in our lives. They also play an important role in a person’s motivation and behavior. Feelings should not be ignored or deemed unimportant. They should be examined to understand the root issue that produced the reaction (fruit) and then dealt with accordingly through forgiveness.

KEY TEXT: “*But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man*” (Matthew 15:18).

1. Our feelings come forth from our heart and can accurately identify exactly what is in our hearts—both good and bad.

- » Read Luke 6:45. Should we ignore what comes out of our mouth?
- » Rather than ignore our feelings, we should ask this question: “Why do I feel that way?” Or, “What caused me to react the way I did?” (James 3:14).
- » Discuss the importance of owning your feelings and taking responsibility to investigate what root produced that fruit (Matthew 12:33-35).
- » Once the root issue has been identified, then forgiveness and cutting of the root can take place (Proverbs 4:23).

2. Feelings can motivate us to do good or bad.

- » You must take charge of your feelings and not let your feelings take charge of you.
- » Read Ephesians 4:26,27.
- » Read the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32).
- » Discuss the response and behavior of the wayward son, the older brother, and the father.
- » Discuss the unconditional love of the father. Instead of a lecture, a beating, or even a stern rebuke, the father stood watching for his son and immediately threw a party upon his return.
- » Let’s examine the older brother’s reaction. He chose to stay home and serve his father yet he was resentful of his choice. When we make decisions based on other people’s approval—or even out of guilt—that breeds *resentment*—which is a product of our sinful nature (Romans 8:13).

3. We need to be careful of how we react and/or respond to our feelings.

- » If we act in haste based on our emotions, our behavior not only causes consequences that affects our life, but also the lives of those around us (Proverbs 15:10).
- » Discuss the Law of Reaping and Sowing found in Galatians 6:7,8.
- » We can be forgiven of our sins; however, there are often substantial consequences that have to be dealt with (Hebrews 12:11).

4. We are responsible for what we say, how we act, and the choices that we make.

- » Facing the consequences of our behavior, leads to taking responsibility for our choices. This ultimately leads to self-control by establishing boundaries. We must realize that we are in control of our choices, no matter how we feel at the time (1 Corinthians 9:27).
- » A common boundary problem is to disown our choices and place the blame for them on someone else. This is exactly what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden after eating from the forbidden tree (Genesis 3:12-14).
- » You are the one who must live with the consequences—whether happy or sad—of the choices you have made. Setting boundaries inevitably involves taking responsibility for your behavior and choices.

“LOVE ENDURES THROUGH EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE”

LESSON 3 ■ For week ending January 15, 2022

AGAPE LOVE (God’s love) is a very powerful force. **AGAPE LOVE is a sacrificial love that voluntarily suffers inconvenience, discomfort, and even death for the benefit of another without expecting anything in return.** It flows from the very presence of God. It is by love that we are able to weather the storms of life. Love will not give up even when the odds are stacked up against it. It will continue to believe for the impossible and hope for the future. The Lord has loved us with an everlasting love. No matter what the circumstance, as long as there is hope, He extends His loving grace to us. Through the power of His Holy Spirit we can love as He has loved us.

KEY TEXT: "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance" (I Corinthians 13:4-7 NLT).

1. **AGAPE LOVE never gives up.**

- » This same phrase in the KJV is translated as love “*beareth all things.*” It comes from a Greek word which means “*to roof over*” or “*to cover with silence.*”
- » This is precisely what is being said in I Peter 4:8. Love protects other people.
- » It is not that love doesn’t deal with issues that arise, but it does not go around broadcasting someone else’s failures. It does everything it can to protect their reputation.
- » Love would never criticize someone in public. Love does not write someone off because they have made poor choices. Rather it always strives to keep the door open for their return (Luke 15:20).

2. **AGAPE LOVE never loses faith.**

- » This phrase simply means that love has faith in someone *always*. In other words, love will *always* believe the best about a person. It will *always* give the benefit of the doubt.
- » Remember, this is like in a court of law. An accused person is always “innocent before proven guilty.” Love says, “I am willing to wait for the evidence to come in before making my decision.”
- » In many cases, people become what we believe them to be. Jesus spoke words of faith into many that He came in contact with and their lives were changed. He spoke to Peter (Matthew 16:18). He spoke to a prostitute (Luke 7:48-50). He spoke to a woman caught in adultery (John 8:10,11).

3. **AGAPE LOVE is always hopeful.**

- » What about when you have done everything you know to do? You have protected. You have extended faith and good will, yet the situation seems impossible.
- » This is where you put your hope in God (Psalms 42:5).
- » Love will put trust in God and know that no matter what the present circumstance looks like, it is never too late—for God is able!
- » Consider the story of Abraham. God had promised him a son. Only when this promise became impossible for Abraham and Sarah to accomplish in their human ability did they find out what it means to truly hope in God (Romans 4:17-21).

4. **AGAPE LOVE endures through every circumstance.**

- ▶ The word *endures* is a military word that means *to stand your ground, to remain, to have fortitude.*
- ▶ In essence, love will never stop loving and it will never give up on anyone.
- ▶ May we as God’s people love with the same steadfast love as the Lord (Psalms 118:1; Romans 8:35-39).

"LOVE IS NOT IRRITABLE"

LESSON 4 ■ For week ending January 22, 2022

Do certain situations/people seem to irritate you? If we are honest, we would say that sometimes there seems to be some underlying irritation when we are exposed to circumstances or other individuals. We know that where there is fruit, there is a root. There may be times when we feel generally irritable due to discomfort, pain, tiredness, or some other physical condition. However, when we recognize a pattern of annoyance or frustration, it is time to allow the Holy Spirit to do His work and dig a little deeper.

KEY TEXT: "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. *Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.* It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NLT).

1. This is an attribute related to patience.

- » *Impatience* can be defined as a *strong sense of annoyance at the (usually) unintentional faults and failures of others*. The sin of impatience reveals our desire to be in control by wanting others to conform to our expectations. When they don't, we get irritated. What does 1 Thessalonians 5:14 and Ephesians 4:1-2 say about how we should treat others?
- » Love and patience are members of an important list (Galatians 5:22,23).

2. The person who is not irritable doesn't have a quick temper and doesn't harbor resentments (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

- » Every day we encounter various situations that cause us to have an immediate emotional reaction.
- » Proverbs 29:22 and Proverbs 15:18 caution the trouble that follows a quick temper.
- » What are some reasons that tempers flare so quickly? When we get heated up, it may have to do with the issue of PRIDE.
- » Remember Nebuchadnezzar's heated fiery furnace when he lost his temper (Daniel 3:19)?
- » When we view ourselves as superior to others, we can be easily angered when someone challenges our way of thinking or doing things. Even when provoked, wisdom is demonstrated when we remain calm (Proverbs 14:17,29; 15:1).

3. Irritation is something that builds. Love does not keep a record of being wronged.

- » Just like a grain of sand in an oyster shell, when we hold on to a resentment, something inside begins to grow and develop around the irritant.
- » Unfortunately, instead of growing into a beautiful pearl, bitterness takes root, ruining relationships and coloring our perspective.
- » A quick test: If just being around a specific person or thinking about them makes us feel annoyed, there is a high likelihood that there is an issue that is unresolved or a trespass that has not been completely forgiven.
- » Just the phrase "holding/bearing a grudge" sounds like a burden on the part of the carrier.
- » How should we respond to those who have wronged us (Romans 12:21; Mark 11:25; Hebrews 12:14-15)?
- » When a part of your body is injured or hurt, it is usually more sensitive. When we are overly-sensitive or "touchy" we should recognize that there is something in our spiritual lives that needs to be addressed and healed. Read Proverbs 19:11.
- » When we are easily offended, it leaves an open door for the enemy to come in and wreak havoc.
- » Paul gives us good instruction about how to work together and become fitly framed into one body in Colossians 3:12-15.