

"Suicide"

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Suicide has, I think, rightfully been defined as "the act of willfully causing ones' own death in order to escape a condition of living that one deems intolerable."

The last part of that definition "in order to escape a condition of living that a person deems intolerable" distinguishes suicide from sacrifice.

As human acts suicide and sacrifice could not be further apart even though they may look alike.

Sacrifice is when Jesus gave his own life for us, as when Samson gave his life for the Israelites, when a man or woman in war gives his or her own life to save others.

Suicide is taking one's own life to escape a condition of living that the person deems intolerable." Very different from sacrifice.

Is suicide a sin? Is it forgivable?

The May 31 issue of TIME magazine has another article on the infamous Dr. Kevorkian of Michigan.

Part of the article is about a woman named Sue who used one of Dr Kevorkian's death machines.

Before her death she discussed taking her own life with her sisters.

Kevorkian said that the archbishop of Detroit had pronounced suicide a sin.

One sister said she thought it was the only unforgiveable sin in the bible.

Sue's husband said he didn't think it was a sin.

Another sister asked Sue, "If the Catholic church teaches that you're going to go to hell over this, do you think you're going to hell?"

To that Sue responded, "No, I think I'm going to heaven but I'll never see God."

Is Sue's theology right?

Is Sue's sister right?

What about her husband?

The Bible gives no explicit statement on suicide, no "thou shalt not commit suicide" is found in the 10 commandments.

Why not? Is it because it is simply a choice that each person must make?

No, I don't think so.

I think there is no explicit prohibition of suicide because the whole of Scripture so clearly prohibits it.

Let me give you four reasons from the Bible why suicide is wrong:

1. There are five accounts of suicide in the Bible and in every case the suicide is seen as a sad and inappropriate end to a life.

All are written in the context of being less than what God desired for a person.

2. The commandments are clear that "you shall not kill".

Taking one's own life is every bit as much murder as the taking of someone else's life.

3. God says He alone has the legitimate power of life and death and only as he grants that power can others use it legitimately.

Incidentally, never in Scripture is that power granted to an individual acting on his own behalf but only acting on behalf of legitimate government.

One person does not have the right to take a life, not even his own.

4. Suicide reflects despair not faith.

Steven Schmidt has had Crohn's disease for 12 years.

He writes that for many reasons he cannot commit suicide but most of all because suicide denies the Lordship of Christ.

We usurp God's authority when we take our own life to escape a condition of living we deem intolerable.

Please do not think I'm unaware or insensitive to those who live in unbelievable pain. I have been with families in the anguish of loved ones who are suffering.

These principles do not in any way suggest that we must artificially prolong life.

We are not compelled by these principles to use extraordinary methods to keep ourselves, or others we love, alive.

Now I realize that these principles do not automatically determine every difficult decision that families may face. But they do lay out the foundation upon which prayerful wisdom builds in making those seemingly impossible decisions of life and death.