



The Holiday Blues, Depression & Suicide

By Michael J. Burns

***‘Being alone can be a blessing, but being lonely never is!’
- Dr. Edwin Louis Cole***

My wife and I left our Pastoral ministry in Long Island in September of 2018. We moved to Florida for 2 1/2 years where we made some great friends. Things were not working out for us there and so we were invited by family to move to Tulsa, Oklahoma to reset our next phase of life and ministry. It is also the place where we attended Rhema Bible Training College in 1981.

Getting set up here has it challenges but we are very thankful for family. My 80 year old mother lives in a beautiful area of Tulsa in a cul-de-sac. We have a beautiful black lab named Sebastian. After we arrived here we began our regular routine of walking our dog to meet his needs and as it turned out we got acquainted with some of the neighbors. There was a very nice older gentleman named John who lived about 3 houses down from mom.

Every morning it seemed that John would come out to greet us and our dog. He would pet Sebastian and even give him a dog biscuit. It was so nice to meet this fine gentleman. Mom told us that every week he would bring in the neighbors garbage cans from the street after they were picked up by the sanitation service. Mom, who still sells

real estate, told us that when she had an open house in the area that John would come and make sure the house was empty and that no one was hiding there that might try to take advantage of her. He was concerned for her.

I had the opportunity to share with him about my Christian faith and my healing from 7 strokes in 3 parts of my brain 5 years ago in 2016. John was divorced and lived alone. Mom said that she would bring him Thanksgiving meals because she knew he was alone.

Just a few weeks ago we awoke and noticed that there were several police cars parked outside of John's house. So I got dressed and went over to see if I might be of some assistance as a minister. ***To my utter shock I was told that John had taken his own life with a gun in his backyard!*** Apparently he had called the police minutes before so that no one else would discover his body. He left a rather large note with instructions to his family about many things including what to do with his two cats and other issues. He even paid his property taxes until the end of the year.

John's family was obviously devastated by this news and his youngest brother told my wife and mother that he had been concerned about John for the past several months as John's outlook on life had become more fatalistic. It is interesting to note that even though John was divorced, he still loved his wife and although he didn't want to dissolve the marriage his wife did. This, along with other events, must have caused John to believe that life was not worth living.

In the past 2 years our world has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistically there have been many deaths that some believe never should have happened as a result of this man made virus. Still as we enter the **Thanksgiving Holiday** season there will be some tables of families that will be missing loved ones and as a result people are having to deal with their losses.

If you think about the things that have taken place since Covid-19 began we have had to endure many things. The shut down of our economy, financial hardships, wearing masks, social distancing and really a climate of fear. Both Psychiatrists and Psychologists were concerned by what they saw coming as a result of these types of mandates that were enforced upon our citizens.

In an article by Rebecca Dolgin for www.phycom.net, she writes, ‘The physical symptoms of the novel coronavirus have been well-reported for months, but it’s the handful of psychological and sociological factors that are just starting to ring alarm bells. *The combination of physical distancing, economic stress, barriers to mental health treatment, pervasive national anxiety, and a spike in gun sales are creating what JAMA Psychiatry referred to as “a perfect storm” for suicide mortality.*’

The history of the 1918 flu pandemic and the 2007 SARS outbreak saw suicide rates increase and it is no different today. The Economic factors since Covid began have caused a serious economic issue as unemployment rose to 14.7% as of last April 2021. It’s a higher rate of unemployment than during the Great Depression in 1929. The pressure that people are feeling in their wallets is tremendous, especially when it comes to paying mortgages, car payments or even putting food on the table.

Government has tried to put a bandaid on the situation but sending out stimulus checks and still people are battling a sense of hopelessness. The truth is that many people thought that PTSD only happened to soldiers on the battlefield but it is occurring more and more in our world because of economic stress.

Dr. Thomas Richardson, PhD., agrees that **there is a strong relationship between debt and mental health problems**. He and his research team did a big analysis of existing studies and found **debt** to be significantly correlated to:

- Depression
- Suicide attempt

- Suicide completion
- Problem drinking
- Drug dependence
- Neurotic disorder
- Psychotic disorders

This is where I along with a host of Bible believing and Holy Spirit empowered ministers and pastors have an opportunity to bring hope to the hopeless. It has been often quoted but **Jeremiah 29:11** says,

11 For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome. AMP

God's thoughts and plans for our lives are discovered through a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible. Sadly, many believers in Christ are experiencing the blues and are down in the dumps. It's an oxymoron to say that a Christian is depressed, whether clinically or naturally in their emotions, but the truth is that some are and they don't know how to get out of it!

According to the JAMA report, *"It is possible that the 24/7 news coverage of these unprecedented events could serve as an additional stressor, especially for individuals with preexisting mental health problems."* **Our routines have been completely upended and even things like wearing a mask or waiting in lines at the grocery store can make you feel tense.**

Some common signs of pandemic-induced stress are:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems

- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

The Bible is clear that we should *cast our care upon the Lord because He cares for us in 1 Peter 5:7*. I love the way the Amplified Bible reads, ***‘Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully.’***

Life without Christ is not life at all...it is simply existing. Connecting with the One who created you is the key to having the abundant life Jesus came to give us in **John 10:10**. I like what Andrew Wommack said, *‘You cannot be depressed about something you do not think about!’* ***The truth is that our lives move in the direction of our dominant thoughts whether we believe it or not.***

According to www.psycom.net there are signs to people who might be contemplating taking the final step of ending their life.

Suicide is preventable! One of the most important things anyone can do is easy and that is to recognize the signs of suicide:

Emotional Markers can include:

- Feeling depressed
- Lack of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Irritability
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Shame or humiliation
- Mood swings

Verbal Markers include talking about:

- Killing themselves
- Their life having no purpose

- Feeling like a burden
- Feeling stuck
- Not wanting to exist

There are two types of suicidal statements or thoughts. An active statement might be something like, *“I’m going to kill myself.”* A passive statement might include, *“I wish I could go to sleep and not wake up,”* or, *“I wouldn’t mind if I got hit by a bus.”* **People often ignore passive statements, but they should be taken just as seriously.**

Behavioral Markers can include:

- Isolating from others
- Not communicating with friends or family
- Giving away possessions or writing a will
- Acting recklessly
- Increased aggression
- Increased drug and alcohol use
- Searching about suicide on the Internet
- Gathering materials (pills or a weapon)

If a person is thinking of suicide, it’s also important to ask them if they have a plan. If they say yes, assist them in seeking immediate help. They can walk into an emergency room or urgent care clinic, or they can call 911. ***They should also speak to a Bible Believing Pastor/Minister.*** At any time, they can also call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

There are 2 final things I would like to say:

1. There are no words that can assuage the grief that individuals and families are feeling at this season of thanksgiving over the absence of their loved ones. Whether it is from Covid-19, other forms of sickness, accidents, suicide or even criminal behaviors. It only matters that your loved ones are not here.

For those of you who have a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ along with your departed loved ones I would like to remind you that you will one day have a grand reunion with them in heaven. We are told in **Hebrews 12:1** from the Amplified Bible that even now our departed family members are cheering you and me on from the grandstands of heaven! HALLELUJAH!

This is not a psychological answer but a divine reality that we are told about in the Holy Scriptures! You should take the necessary time to grieve over your loved ones passing but as the Bible says in **1 Thessalonians 4:13**,

13 Now also we would not have you ignorant, brethren, about those who fall asleep [in death], that you may not grieve [for them] as the rest do who have no hope [beyond the grave]. AMP

While it may seem like an impossibility to you, the only reason to grieve as the secular world does is if we are sure that our loved ones went to hell! Dr. Lester Sumrall tells the story of when he was preaching many years ago in the Philippines.

After the worship he was introduced to speak and right in the middle of his message a woman came in late dressed in all black from head to toe. Her hat, gown, gloves, veil and shoes were all black. It seemed that her entrance had poured a cold bucket of water on the service! After the service Dr. Sumrall asked the pastor about that woman. He told him that this lady's husband died over 20 years ago and she has been grieving ever since.

The next night as Dr. Sumrall was speaking the same lady came in all dressed in black again. This time Dr. Sumrall was not going to allow what had happened the night before to happen again. He stopped her and asked her why she was dressed as she was. She responded, *'Oh Pastor, my husband died over 20 years ago and I have been grieving his death ever since.'*

Dr. Sumrall then said, ***“I’m awful sorry to hear that your husband went to HELL!”*** ‘Hell’ she said, ‘my husband didn’t go to hell, he was a true Christian and served the Lord all the days of his life.’ To which Dr. Sumrall replied, ***“Oh I am so sorry, but by the way you were dressing I just assumed he went to HELL.”***

She turned and left the church obviously upset. The 3rd night as Dr. Sumrall was preaching his message the back doors swung open and in walked the same woman. This time though, she was dressed ALL in White! She danced down the aisle saying, ***“Thank you Jesus! My husband didn’t go to hell but he is in heaven dancing on the streets of gold! Hallelujah!”***

She got the message and I hope during this Thanksgiving and Christmas season that many will get the same message as well! Happy Thanksgiving!

2. The last thing I want to say relates to the lack of concern society is showing in our culture today. I recently heard, just the other day, of a woman being raped on a train in Philadelphia with some 30 passengers on board. They all pulled out their cellphones, NOT to call 911, but to film this rape as it happened on that public train!

People around us are hurting in very tangible ways. We cannot stand by and do nothing and act as if nothing is happening. We MUST get involved. We MUST hear the cries for help that are happening all around us. As born again believer’s we MUST be the witnesses that we are called by Jesus to be and reach out with love and compassion.

I truly believe that when we live outside of ourselves we then open ourselves up to allow God to pour in to our lives what we are needing at that particular time. SELAH!

- Michael J. Burns =^)

If this message has helped you in any way please let us know by sending your comments to Rev. Michael J. Burns at mjbcjf@gmail.com. Please also consider supporting MJB Ministries both Prayerfully and Financially by donating on our website: www.mjbministries.org/giving today!