

SUICIDE: WHOSE LIFE IS IT?

THEME: Does my life belong to me, society, God?

OPENERS:

1. "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." - Gen. 2:7
2. Nearly 5,000 Americans under age 24 committed suicide last year;
- an additional 10,000 young people attempted suicide;
- and 200,000 to 300,000 more contemplated suicide.
3. Warning signals: a previous suicide attempt, no close friends, truancy or lack of involvement in school activities outside the classroom, inability to talk to parents, abrupt changes in behavior, alcohol or drug abuse.
4. Among college students, suicide has become the second most frequent cause of death, surpassed only by accident.
5. "The man, who in a fit of melancholy, kills himself, would have wished to live had he waited a week." - Voltaire

DISCUSSION PROBES:

1. What would your attitude be toward a person who has committed suicide?
2. Why do people commit suicide?
3. If someone talked to you about committing suicide, what would you do? Who would you turn to for professional help?
4. To whom does life belong? Who is affected by a suicide? How can we help people appreciate life?
5. Is suicide ever justifiable? Discuss. Should euthanasia requested by a terminally ill person be allowed? Why or why not?
6. What effect do the following have on suicide, and why? Illness, divorce, death of a loved one, failure in school, a bad relationship with parents, etc.? How would you help with these problems?
7. A life style (alcoholic, heavy smoker, over-eater, etc.) can drive a person to self-destruction. Would you consider these to be suicides? Discuss. How about dare-devil acts that cause death?

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Myths about suicide:
 - a. Once a person has decided to commit suicide no one can stop him. It is possible to deter a person. They are often wavering in their decision.
 - b. People who talk about committing suicide are looking for attention -- ignore them. To ignore them is the worst thing one can do - they need attention.
 - c. If a person is suicidal, it's dangerous to talk about suicide. It is dangerous not to talk about it. They need to know someone cares for them.
2. Most suicides take place in the home, usually within earshot of parents, where there is a good chance of discovery and rescue.
3. Studies show that more children will attempt suicide in families where there is an alcoholic parent, a previous suicide in the family, or where divorce has fractured the home.
4. "...you knit me in my mother's womb. I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made: wonderful are your works." - Psalm 139:13-14

5. "Perhaps more than anything else, the shifting state of the American family is a major cause of the growing suicide problem. There's no real sense kids have that they belong anywhere or to anyone..." - NEWSWEEK

6. Surveys show that 85 percent of those who have survived suicide attempts say they are happy to be alive.

7. "Often, the very act of suicide is an expression of sighs too deep for words. - Raymond J. Council

BRINGING IT HOME;

1. Affirm the sacredness of your life and those around you. There is a bond between you and all others. Protect, honor, sustain life.

2. Respond without condemnation to someone who is suicidal.

3. Listen! Talk about it. Be sensitive to another person's cry and need. Give people an opportunity to vent their feelings; that alone may lead to healing.

4. Be familiar with referral resources in your community. We are often not equipped to deal effectively with the suicidal.