



Small Group Discussion Guide – July 9, 2017
“Like a Broken Vessel”

If you or someone you know ever starts questioning if “ending it” is the only answer, it’s not! Get help from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline—(800) 273-8255, the Crisis Text Line (text to 741-741) or [click here](#) for resources from The Church of the Resurrection.

From Pastor Adam Hamilton’s sermon:

I want to give a disclaimer as we begin today’s message about suicide. I hope to address the question from a spiritual perspective that I believe is really important and hope-filled. But if you or someone you know is suicidal, the spiritual is only one component—a very important one. But I believe it will also be important for you to talk to a therapist, and possibly a physician as both therapy and medication can play an important part in helping you when you are feeling lost and hopeless. Part of what I want you to hear today is that there is always hope, and that whatever you are going through today is not permanent, while suicide is permanent. I want you to hear that there is help....

We’ve all been broken at times in our lives by the words and actions of others, or the neglect of others, or by life’s difficulties. Our hearts have been broken, our dreams shattered....

Among the risk factors for suicide commonly noted are a family history of suicide, clinical depression, alcohol and drug abuse, bullying and other forms of social rejection and harassment, feelings of hopelessness. Gay and lesbian young adults attempt suicide at a rate 4 to 6 times greater than straight kids.

I spoke with Rennie McKinney this week. She is the Director of Clinical Services at Shawnee Mission Medical Center, a board member of the Suicide Prevention Coalition in Johnson County, and a Resurrection member. I asked her to describe the signs we might watch for in friends or family, and what we might do if we see someone exhibiting signs that they might be considering suicide. She shared these ideas:

How You Can Help Someone Who is Suicidal:

1. Assure them that you will be there and there is help
2. Go to a walk-in mental health clinic in Kansas City.
3. Get an evaluation at an area hospital
4. Make an emergency call to their therapist (if they've had one)
5. Call the police or ambulance.

- So much publicity and emotion attaches to young people who commit suicide, and it is certainly heartbreaking. But Pastor Hamilton shared this statistic: “The group most likely to take their own lives in America are white men aged 45 to 54, and second are white men 55 to 64.” Can you think of reasons why older men might be the most likely to reach such a dark and desperate place? Would they need any different help than a young person?

From Pastor Adam Hamilton's sermon:

When we feel like broken vessels, we can begin to think that suicide is the only, or at least the best way, to find relief from the pain or despair we're experiencing. When we begin to think that way we're usually not doing our best thinking – in our pain or despair our perspective becomes distorted.

Many of you know my grandmother took her life just after Thanksgiving in 1962, 19 months before I was born. It was two days before her 45th birthday. Her children were 16, 15, 14 and 8. She'd suffered from depression for years and her marriage with my grandfather was failing. She left notes for her children—my mom and her siblings, and one to her parents and one to my grandfather.

She wrote to her children how much she loved them. Then, “Accept what I am doing for you, not against you. I am doing it mostly for you.” She ends stating that “God is love” and that maybe this was “his way of giving me love.” What she could not see in that moment was the pain she was about to cause to her children and the challenges this would present for them. In the process of ending her life she broke four others—her children she dearly loved....

It seems trite and cliché, but I think it is worth remembering: **SUICIDE IS A PERMENANT SOLUTION TO A TEMPORARY PROBLEM.** There is no coming back from it. Its impact on your friends, your family, the people who loved you the most, is profound, painful loss. But if you resist the voice that tells you to take your own life, you will find that there will be joy again in the days ahead.

- Have you or your family been directly or indirectly impacted by a suicide? What were the results of that experience for you, and for other people you care about? Whether it led you to consider suicide or not, have you ever had a thought along the lines of, “Everyone would just be better off if I were not here?” What can lead us to that kind of thinking? If a relative or friend of yours said that to you, what would you tell them about the falsity of the thought?

From Pastor Adam Hamilton's sermon:

Life is difficult at times for all of us. People can be cruel, situations can be terribly hard, we can find ourselves sinking in despair like quicksand. Nearly all of the heroes of the Bible experienced this. I think of Job whose life was so horrible his own wife told him to "Curse God and die!" I think of Moses who became so depressed he prayed to God to kill him. I think of various Psalms, like Psalm 6:6: "I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping." And of course the words of Psalm 31 that we have before us today: "My eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery...I have become like a broken vessel."

But I want you to hear verse 31, where, despite his pain and adversity and feeling like a broken vessel he prays: "But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hand; Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love."

There are two words I'd want to share with you that I think represent God's word to you who survived. While suicide is a sin (in that it is not God's will), yet this is not an unpardonable sin. Consistently the scriptures teach us that Jesus came for the broken vessels, those who are bullied, rejected, or whose hearts are just overwhelmed with pain. He had compassion on these people in particular as he walked on this earth.

Many survivors struggle with guilt. If I'd only picked up the signs, if I'd only been there, if only... You have to forgive yourself, to let go, and to know that it wasn't your fault. If they were determined, even if you stopped them once, they would have found a way.

Kevin Hines was one of those rare guys who succeeded in jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge, and survived his own suicide attempt. I was taken with his story, and thought you might want to hear it: [click here](#) to watch Kevin Hines' video....

Don't choose a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Don't do something that, the moment you've done it, you regret. Ask for help. Ask God. Ask others. There is always hope.

God specializes in healing and making beautiful things out of our brokenness and pain. With God, there is always hope. Join me in this prayer from Psalm 39: "I trust in you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hand; Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love. Amen."

- Were you taught that feeling discouraged or depressed was a sign of a lack of faith? How important is it to be reminded that great Biblical figures like Moses, David or Job struggled with deep discouragement, sadness or depression?
- Hope is easy when things are going well in our lives. It seems, though, that we need hope the most just at the times when it is most difficult to hold onto. What disciplines have you learned that help you to cling to hope in tough times, to believe that "with God, there is always hope"? How can you share that with hurting friends or family members without denying or discounting the pain they are going through?