



WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT SUICIDE

*Comfort for Suicide Loss Survivors and
Individuals with Suicidal Thoughts*

PASTOR TOM HOLLADAY & KAY WARREN

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The suicide of a person we care about leaves a trail of questions behind. One of the haunting questions survivors of suicide loss struggle with is, "Was my loved one's suicide an unforgivable sin?" This question has caused division in the faith community over the centuries. Some faith traditions have taught since you do not have an opportunity to confess and ask for forgiveness after taking your life, the act becomes an unconfessed – and, therefore, unforgiven sin. But it is our understanding that God's Word does not teach that suicide is an unforgivable sin. We believe the Bible does not indicate that the manner in which we die affects our relationship with God.

With that said, it is important to understand suicide is not part of God's plan or his will for an individual; we belong to him and he alone has the right to choose the duration of our lives. At the same time, he sees us through his eyes of mercy as "jars of clay" (2 Cor. 4:7) who are frail and fragile in our humanity, and he does not cast us away. He knows how we are made because he created us! (Psalm 103:14). If a believer takes their life, God is gracious and receives them into his presence. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:8 that to depart from this world is to be present with Christ.

The Bible tells us in John 3:16 that when we become believers in Jesus, he forgives ALL our sin, not only sins in our past, but all the sins we will commit in the future. In John 5:24 he promises us the joy of eternity with him in heaven. Jesus tells us clearly that we are forgiven of all sin that would keep us from God's presence the moment we trust in Christ for salvation.

Jesus also assures us that once we are in his care (his hands) we will always be safe there! Not only can no one remove us from God's hands, we also cannot remove ourselves! We are spiritually secure.

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one." John 10:27-30 (NLT)

The Apostle Paul adds an incredibly comforting reassurance about our eternal connection to God through Jesus Christ in Romans 8:35-39 (NIV):

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There are Christians who believe that a genuine Christian would never even contemplate taking their life, but they do not understand the complexity behind suicidal thoughts, the nature of depression or mental illness. Great saints in Christian history have struggled with "dark nights of the soul" and suicidal thoughts. Even the Apostle Paul had moments of deep pain where he despaired of life (2 Corinthians 1:8,9).

It is common to refer to suicide as a "choice." Whether a person made a rational "choice" to take their lives or not is a complicated question. There's uncertainty whether a person is completely in their right mind at the time of their death; did they even have the emotional capacity to "decide" in those moments? Furthermore, research indicates that people who attempted to die but lived talk about the chaos of their thoughts at the time, the level of emotional and psychic or physical pain they were experiencing, the belief that this pain would never go away, their lives would never change, they would be alone trying to carry this terrible pain, and the ONLY option open to them was to die.^[1] Mental health experts tell us most people who think about suicide do not really want to die; they just want the terrible pain to stop.^[2]

If you find yourself in this place of pain, please hold on; there are caring people who will walk with you on this path. Please call or text the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988, talk with your family, friends, or your pastor, call your doctor, or go to the nearest emergency room. If you would like to pray with a Minister of the Day, call Saddleback Church at 949-609-8000.

Friend, God's love for you is deeply personal, even if it feels like he is a million miles away right now. He will never leave you alone to face your circumstances by yourself.

Jesus said, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you... Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:18, 27 (NIV)

Please remember you are loved by the God who made you. He has a purpose for your life. You belong. You are desperately needed in this world. There is always hope!

Pastor Tom Holladay, MDiv, was a Teaching Pastor and elder at Saddleback Church for 30 years. He graduated with honors from California Baptist College and received a master's in theology from Golden Gate Baptist Seminary. Tom co-authored Foundations with Kay Warren and is the author of The Relationship Principles of Jesus, Love-Powered Parenting, and creator of DriveTime Devotions, an app designed to help you know God's Word and apply it.

Kay Warren cofounded Saddleback Church with her husband, Rick in 1980, where they served until his retirement in 2022. She founded Hope for Brighter Tomorrows, a ministry that supports parents of children with mental illness. She co-authored Foundations with Pastor Tom Holladay, and is the author of Say Yes to God, Choose Joy, and Sacred Privilege.

REFERENCES

[1] Tian, F., Zhou, L., Wang, X., Roberts, N., & Pang, H. (2025). *Neural correlates of decision making and executive function in suicidal thoughts and behaviors*. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 16, 1676986. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2025.1676986>

NOTE: This 2025 meta-analysis from *Frontiers in Psychiatry* provides cutting-edge neuroimaging research showing that individuals with suicidal ideation exhibit significant impairments in decision-making and executive function directly supporting the point that the cognitive capacity to rationally assess consequences may be compromised.

[2] Liang, M., Xu, H., Jiang, Q., & Liu, T. (2025). *Psychological pain tolerance mediates the association between physical pain sensitivity and suicidal ideation: A cross-sectional study*. *BMC Psychiatry*, 25, 692. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-025-07130-6>

NOTE: This 2025 cross-sectional study published in *BMC Psychiatry* demonstrates that psychological pain tolerance is associated with both suicidal ideation and suicide attempts providing empirical support for this paper's statement about mental health experts' understanding of pain and suicide.