

16:18-19; and Matthew 27:5. In each passage, who was the person who committed suicide? What was the reason? Could you have prevented these suicides?

Read through and discuss the intervention handout. Give one to each person.

Intervention—What Can We Do to Help?

- Make the environment safe.
- Be willing to listen. A suicidal person needs to feel friendship, love, acceptance and a sense that somebody cares. Try to get the person to talk and express his or her feelings.
- Evaluate the seriousness of the situation. If the situation is too serious for you, consult community resources such as a suicide crisis telephone line, friends or your family. You also can turn to your church and its staff, youth leader or congregation for help. If the situation seems less serious, lend a listening ear and share scriptures dealing with hope such as: Psalms 23; 51; 55:22; 71:5; John 3:16; 15:9; Romans 5:8; Philipians 4:13; and 1 Peter 5:7.

Distribute and discuss the following handout:

Care and Prevention of Suicide

- A few facts and statistics can help you deal with people who are suicidal. For example, did you know females attempt suicide three times as often as males, although males are three times as likely to actually commit suicide. Furthermore, suicide is the second leading

cause of death for adolescents.

- Suicides are more prevalent at the beginning and end of school semesters, on Mondays and Saturdays, during spring and Christmas, and during the late afternoon or early evening.

- Those who attempt suicide can be categorized into two groups, those who don't want to die and those who do want to die.

- Typical of those who don't want to die are statements used to manipulate others, such as, "If you don't marry me, I'll kill myself."

- Also, those who really don't want to die use the threat of suicide as a distress signal. These people often have drug-or alcohol-related problems.

- Those who really do want to commit suicide often want to punish someone. Other common factors among those seriously suicidal are the desire to join a loved one already dead, mental disorders, a seemingly unsolvable problem, or stress and depression.

- Of the people who are seriously suicidal, 71 percent are from broken homes.

- By intervening, you can save a life. To do so, look for warning signs and don't ignore any threats. Be willing to listen to the troubled person and then evaluate the seriousness of the situation. Certainly, don't be fooled if he or she says the crisis is over. Remember the parable of the good Samaritan who went "the extra mile," and do so, too. Refer the person to professional help as soon as possible.

- It's useful to know and re-

member these suicidal "cues" or "hints": verbally direct cue, verbally indirect cue, sudden emotional change, severe behavioral alteration, and changes in appearance.

RESPONSE (OR CLOSING)

To close, answer any questions the youth may have. Be certain

they have the resource list for suicide prevention in your area. Make yourself open for counseling in case of a suicide crisis.

¹Helen Hosier, **Suicide, A Call for Help** (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1978), p. 36.

²Frank B. Minirth and Paul Meier, **Happiness Is a Choice** (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1978), p. 31.

Your father takes tranquilizers.
You drank beer on the last youth retreat.

The minister of education went to a friend's party and had a couple of drinks.

After a recent illness, you find that you are addicted to the medication.

The chairman of your church board smokes cigarettes.

You are having a chocolate attack.

A counselor ordered beer at a youth party at a pizza parlor.

A youth counselor ordered a round of beers for youth while at a luncheon.

You had a glass of champagne at your sister's wedding.

After each group has created its ranking, have the members decide which of the behaviors are abuses. Why?

If time permits, have each group share the responses with the rest of the group.

As a total group, create a program on substance abuse for peo-

ple at least three years younger than the members of your group. Decide what goals, methods and audio-visuals will be used.

After the group has had time to plan its program, arrange to present it to a Sunday school class or service club. Plan the presentation within two weeks of the session. Delegate responsibilities and assist in organization where necessary, but leave most of the work to the young people.

Note: If your group is fairly large, you may want to divide into smaller groups of eight to 15. Close in prayer asking that the youth depend only on God using his promises as strengths during times of need.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Did I Have a Good Time?, by Marion Howard, Continuum, 815 Second Ave., New York, NY 10017.

"The Drinking Game," GROUP Magazine, Dec. 1978, Box 481, Loveland, CO 80539.

THE CARE AND PREVENTION OF SUICIDE

by Ben Lane

PURPOSE

To give youth practical guidelines on suicide prevention based upon biblical principles.

PREPARATION

Gather and print information about suicide prevention programs in your area. Make copies of these resources for each youth.

Prepare five skits based upon a suicide crisis as outlined in the Opening.

Make copies of the following which are listed in the "Meat" of the Meeting: biblical references to suicide, the Intervention—What Can We Do to Help guide, and the Care and Prevention of Suicide¹ handout.

OPENING

Divide the participants into five small groups. Assign each group one of the following "hints" or "cues" that people give when considering suicide.² Each group prepares a short skit using all its members.

In the verbally direct hint, one actor makes a blatant statement, "I want to kill myself."

In the verbally indirect cue, an actor says, "I don't care what happens to me."

In the sudden emotional change, the actor changes character—from an extrovert to an introvert.

In the severe behavioral change

hint, the actor does something atypical, such as gives away a treasured collection.

The last one involves changes in appearance. The actor (usually neatly dressed) gives hints of suicidal thoughts by dressing slovenly.

The hints can be given in any order or melded. The dialogue needs to be terse and realistic. Each small group takes its turn performing for the large group.

Following the skits, lead a discussion using these questions:

- What were the five suicidal hints given in the skits?
- What would you do in these situations?
- How would you determine the seriousness of the hints? (Factors that affect suicidal risk include age, sex, race, marital status, employment situation, mental illness, previous suicide attempts and psychiatric disorders.)
- Why would someone want to commit suicide? (Causes of suicide include depression, loss of a relationship, guilt, hopelessness, sin, disappointment, low self-esteem, perceived or real failure, or unrealistic expectations.)

THE "MEAT" OF THE MEETING

Have the youth read the following biblical references regarding suicide: Judges 16:29-30; 1 Samuel 31:4-5; 2 Samuel 17:23; 1 Kings