

Question: Is suicide a sin that will condemn a person to hell?

I believe Jesus would tell us that it is not God's will that anyone should take his own life. God himself created us in his own image, and he gave us the breath of life that we might be living beings (Genesis 1:27; 2:7). Through the seduction of Satan, sin entered our world; and the original image of God in humanity was marred. Even then, God refused to give up on humanity. God's Son, Jesus Christ, came into our world and paid the price of his blood to make us his own and to renew the image of God in us (John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Colossians 3:10). God has continued to love and value each life, and he has a plan for each of us to live and not to die. He knows everything there is to know about us, and still he refuses to give up on us (Psalm 139).

However, the Bible does reveal that even God's greatest servants sometimes found life so overwhelming that they felt they could not go on. The prophet Elijah prayed that the Lord would take his life (1 Kings 19:1-9). Job faced so much suffering that he despised his life and said that he preferred strangling and death (Job 7:15-16). King David, the prophet Jeremiah and others faced similar despair (Psalm 13:2-4; Jeremiah 20:14-18). But each one of these people found that God had not abandoned them even if he did not keep them from life's difficulties. The Bible also tells of others who did take their own lives: King Saul and his armour bearer (1 Samuel 31:1-6), a man named Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17:23) and Judas who betrayed Jesus (Matthew 27:5). These men had abandoned faith in God and the help that God had for them.

Nothing good has ever come from someone taking his own life. To defiantly disobey God could place one in a far worse condition with final and absolute hopelessness. Family and friends who are left behind may suffer with feelings of shame over what has happened or even guilt for failing to do something for the loved one who took her life. Their grief is even greater. They were not considered in this decision. Please know that none of this is necessary if we will trust Jesus and allow him to help with our problems. If you are feeling such despair of your life, help is as near as a prayer, the person next to you and/or a phone call. You may be struggling with a medical condition which you consider hopeless but for which help is possible. Or you may

have a need for reassurance of love and mercy in a time of discouragement. Don't let Satan win by taking away God's gift of life.

Please know that God's sovereignty reigns over all creation. Only he is in position to know what the future holds for any of us, and only he has the right to determine when our lives should end. That is why he said, "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13). The Lord did not mean it is all right to murder someone who wants to die, including oneself. He also taught Christians that their bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit that is in us; thus, we must not destroy that temple (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19). Jesus came to offer life and not death (John 10:10).

Does all of this mean that a person who commits suicide will go to hell? No one but God can answer that question because only God can fully know the hearts and lives of each one who will stand before him. Only he knows if a person has sinned defiantly or in weakness. Only the Lord is capable of knowing whether a person should be held accountable for his actions at any given moment. Let's leave the determination of who will or will not be in heaven or hell to the only wise and good God.

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