

BIBLICALLY PARENTING THE MATURING CHILD
Part XI: Discipling Our Maturing Children To Overcome Suicidal Tendencies
(Matthew 11:28-30 et al.)

I. Introduction

- A. William Cole's article, "Early Warning Signals of Teenage Suicide" in the October 1985 issue of Better Homes and Gardens, p. 22, shows that, due to physical changes in the growing child coupled with social and societal pressures, suicide is the third leading cause of adolescent death after accidents and homicide.
- B. In view of that article's revelations on the cause and signals of suicidal tendencies along with Scripture's insight, we discern the spiritual help we can provide our children to offset temptations to commit suicide:

II. Discipling Our Maturing Children To Overcome Suicidal Tendencies, Matthew 11:28-30 et al.

- A. William Cole's article itemizes various pressures that can lead an adolescent to be tempted to take his own life, and it lists specific signs that can indicate suicidal tendencies (as follows):
1. Various **burdens** that can lead an adolescent toward suicide include (a) the loss of a loved one or good friend; (b) a key disappointment or humiliation, be it real or imaginary; (c) failure to communicate well over feelings or unhappiness, loneliness, isolation, failure and frustration; (d) the inability to compete well somewhere or (e) the lack of a stable family life due to tension, discord or alcohol or drug abuse.
 2. [Scripture reveals that suicidal tendencies can also be caused by pressure from evil spirits, Mark 5:2-5.]
 3. Certain **behaviors** mental health experts finger may **indicate suicidal tendencies** are: (a) a radical change in personality, such as persistent sadness, a loss of interest in usual activities, feelings of great guilt, worthlessness or helplessness; (b) a radical withdrawal from family, friends and regular activities; (c) key changes in eating or sleeping habits or in one's level of energy; (d) the neglect of one's personal appearance; (e) difficulty in concentrating; (f) sudden violent or rebellious behavior; (g) substance abuse; (h) physical symptoms associated with distress like a stomachache, headache or fatigue; (i) thoughts of despair, death or suicide; (j) suicide attempts even if they are meant to fail; (k) verbal hints, like, "I won't be a problem for you much longer"; (l) the putting of one's affairs in order like giving away favorite possessions, throwing out things, cleaning up a room or (m) sudden cheerfulness after a prolonged depression -- this change may indicate a final decision has been made to take one's life which is a form of emotional relief for the afflicted.
- B. Scripture offers the solution in Matthew 11:28-30 (et al.) as follows:
1. The **pressures** itemized by Cole that tempt a teen to **suicide each include some burden** the afflicted is **NOT ABLE to bear DUE EITHER to (a) relying on fallible people that failed them in some way OR (b) failing one's self to meet an expectation of himself or another, and (c) as SCRIPTURE indicates demonic forces can influence one toward suicide**, Matthew 11:28-30 offers the solution:
 - a. Jesus called for those who (a) were "weary" (NIV) ["labour" KJV], "those tired from hard toil" [*hoi kopiontes*] and (b) "those loaded down" (NIV) ["heavy laden" KJV] [*pephortismenoi*] by **OTHER beings** or by their own false guilt or unrealistic expectations [or afflicted by demonic pressure, cf. Mk. 5:6-15] **to come unto Him for rest**, Matthew 11:28 (Bib. Kn. Com., N. T., p. 45).
 - b. This call refers initially to receiving Christ by faith for salvation of the soul from sin, cf. John 3:16.
 - c. However, by way of Christ's words in Matthew 11:29a where He speaks of taking His yoke of discipleship upon one's self, the concept broadens to the Christian life as well, cf. Philippians 4:6-9; 4:12-13, 19. As one learns from Christ as a disciple, he finds (a) Christ's sure help is **not** a fallible crutch and (b) His expectations are not harsh like what others give or the afflicted give themselves; rather, the meek and lowly Christ has an "easy" and "light" yoke: His sure power and help equip one to handle all of life and the angelic conflict, and that with rest to the soul! (Matthew 11:29b-30)
 2. Other edifying passages include: Ps. 23:1-6; Jos. 1:8-9; Deut. 31:8; Ps. 37:3-9, 25, 35-37; Is. 40:28-31.

Lesson: ***BEFORE our children might show signs of being suicidal, we must live upright lives in the Holy Spirit's power to provide them stable homes, and point them to our All-sufficient Lord for help.***

Application: ***(1) May we keep fervent in our OWN walk with God to provide our children stable homes. (2) May we teach our children the All-Sufficiency of Christ (a) Who gives rest from false expectations, (b) rest from devastation from leaning on fallible parties (c) and rest from evil spirit pressures!***