

# **HOPE BEYOND SUICIDE**

## **AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST**

ser5024 The Boundless Breadth of Atonement, Pt 1

March 6, 2022 E & L

### **I. (HOOK) POINT OF INTRIGUE**

#### **A. Strange, is it not, what you can and cannot remember?**

Drawing on my own experiences and conversations with others, what people are most likely not to forget are the traumatizing moments in their lives.

For me, one of those moments happened as recently as last Sunday in the church parking lot.

There's a lovely lady of senior years who has been attending this church over a decade. After the 11:15 service, she came up to Sheryl and me; she must have chatted with Sheryl for 10 minutes or more. When I got into my car, coincidentally (I know, there are no coincidences in God's journal. Right?), there was the same lady. I rolled down my window to say goodbye, using the name Maureen. Now understand, as I said, she has been attending GCCC for over a decade and I've called her Maureen for most of those years...I think. LOL! Whatever the case, she kindly said, with a laugh, "It's Marlene." I was traumatized. From that moment on I may never call anyone Maureen again. It is indelibly inscribed in my brain, "Marlene."

Another one of my moments is relational to today's subject, "suicide."



The first time it struck a nerve was when Sheryl and I were at Mt Pleasant Methodist Church where I was serving as youth pastor. ([show photo](#))

I met a fourteen-year-old girl at our large midweek youth gathering. The next week, Pastor Gene Huber called me into his study, apprised me that a teen had taken her life and I was doing the funeral. ([show photo](#)) I remember it distinctly not only because of the nature of her death, but because of what took place during the funeral.

I was following the Methodist Manual for the service and came to the place where there was to be a eulogy. None of the family members wanted to say something, I didn't know her, so I felt it would not be my place to say anything, so I prayed. (That's usually what we do when we don't know what to do. Right?) The Holy Spirit said, "Open the floor; those present know her." That's what I did. For about 10 minutes people



stood and shared word gifts; what a beautiful teen; so sad that she snuffed out her promise and potential at such a young age.

When the funeral was over, I thought, “Way to go Sofia! Brilliant idea,” only to find out that pastors had been doing that for years. As Solomon profoundly said,

“What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.”

***Ecclesiastes 1:9***

Ah! But there is one thing that is new EVERY MORNING—the mercies of the LORD. “The Weeping Prophet,” in the midst of his lamination, encourages us with these words,”

*Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.* ***Lamentations 3:22***

## **B. The origin of my book, *Hope Beyond Suicide*.**

The origin of my book, *Hope Beyond Suicide*, came as a result of that first funeral I officiated, and one year when it seemed like EVERY Sunday someone would approach me at the Chapel entrance and say, “*My uncle/aunt/nephew/niece/brother/sister/father/mother took their life (committed suicide). Will they go to heaven?*”

During that year I felt strongly impressed by the Holy Spirit to write a book on the subject of suicide. When the book was done, we used it as a text in our Circle of Friends, the Youth and Single Adult groups, and from the pulpit.

**SIDE NOTE!** We tried placing it in churches that we knew had libraries but had little to no success. Most churches responded saying it was a subject that was taboo, and no one wanted to touch it. Yet, it is a world-wide pandemic. (Bear with me.)

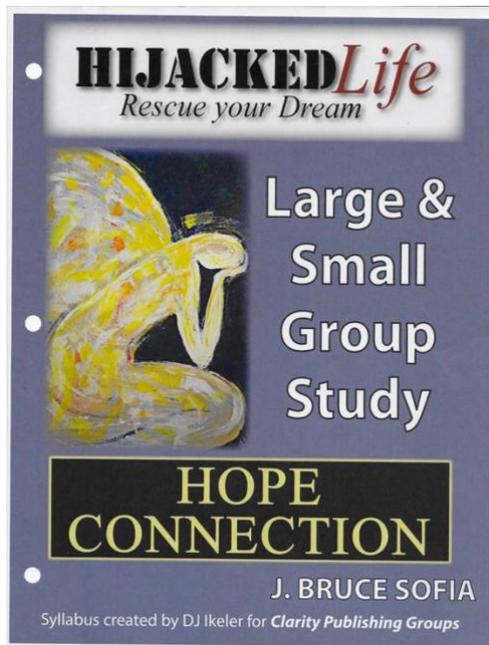
- 1) 800,000 people die of suicide every year
- 2) For every recorded suicide there are multiple attempts that are not successful—thank the Lord
- 3) Men are 4 times more likely to die by suicide than are women
- 4) Women, however, will attempt suicide three times more often than men
- 5) Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15–19-year-olds, the second largest cause of death among Americans 10-34 years of age
- 6) The largest number of suicides take place among adults 40-59
- 7) Over 77% of global suicides occur in low to middle income countries
- 8) Suicide rates are highest among refugees, migrants, the LGBTQ community, and the incarcerated.
- 9) The two countries with the highest suicide rate per 100,000 people are Lesotho (72.4%) and Guyana (40.3).
- 10) America's suicide rate is 13.42% per 100,000 individuals.
- 11) Every 14.2 minutes someone in the USA dies by suicide
- 12) Twenty veterans a day died by suicide in 2021

Pretty ugly, right?

Back to our Circle of Friends. We read the book line by line, chapter by chapter. At the close of the first chapter, one of the questions in the Study Guide is: *Do you know someone who has committed suicide or has been affected by it?*

([show photo, p4](#))

We went around the room and each person said yes or no, sharing their story, if they had one. One member in the group said, “Yes, my father committed suicide.” The room got deathly silent. None of us knew that and we had been meeting as a group for over five years. Suicide is something that isn’t talked about. It was taboo, unless addressing, “Will a person who commits suicide go to Heaven?”



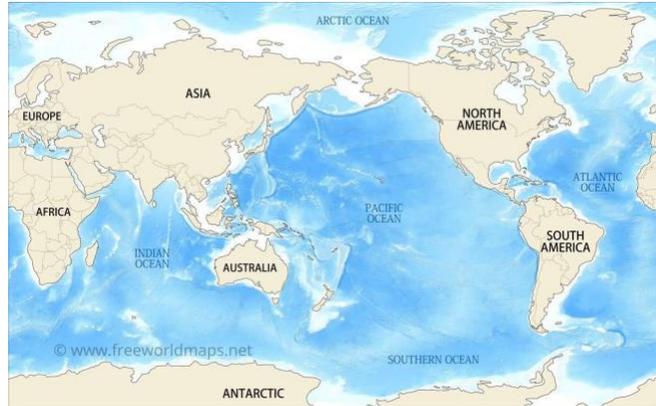
**C. Let us pray!**

## II. (**BOOK**) A NEW SERMON SERIES—*THE BOUNDLESS BREADTH OF ATONEMENT*

**A. Let’s break it down.**

1. **Boundless** means unlimited, immense, inexhaustible, immeasurable. It would be like trying to count the stars in the universe or fathom the 343 quintillion gallons of water in the Pacific Ocean.

**NOTE!** The Pacific Ocean covers 63.8 million square miles. (show photo)



2. **Breadth** means the distance or measurement from side to side.

3. **Atonement** means the reparation (act of repairing) or reconciliation (making right) of an offense, injury or wrong.

**B. (LOOK) Christianity teaches that Jesus was God's atonement (reparation/reconciliation) for our sin against Him.**

The Bible teaches that there is nothing sinful man can do to atone for his sin, that all our efforts are as filthy rags in the sight of God. The lesson was first introduced in **Genesis 3** when God slew an animal, or animals, and covered Adam's and Eve's nakedness (sin). Their efforts were futile, just as ours are futile.

***Isaiah 64:6 (HCSB)***

All of us have become like something unclean,  
and all our righteous acts are like a polluted<sup>[a]</sup> garment  
(literally—menstrual cloth);  
all of us wither like a leaf,  
and our iniquities carry us away like the wind.

**WHY IS THAT?** Because even our righteous deeds are often done with impure motives:

- 1) Recognition
- 2) Competition
- 3) Fame
- 4) Envy
- 5) Financial gain
- 6) Emotional self-worth (makes us feel good about ourselves)

You say, “What’s wrong with that?” Nothing! But is what we do purely for Christ and for Him alone or is it for us. Can we truly decode our motives? I can’t. Bottom line: I need a Savior, capital “S” (not just any savior).

David cried out, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: See if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.” *Psalm 139: 23-24*

Hence, God offers a perfect, sinless, and holy sacrifice to repair, make right, reconcile our offense before Him. That’s atonement.

### **C. How good is that atonement?**

#### ***Isaiah 1:18***

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

#### ***Psalm 51 (selected)***

Blot out my transgressions.

**2** Wash me **thoroughly** from my iniquity

(implies immorality),

And cleanse me from my sin.

**7** Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

**9** Hide Your face from my sins,

And blot out **all** my iniquities.

*\*emphasis mine*

### **1 John 1:9**

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness.

### **Psalm 103: 11-12**

**11** For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;

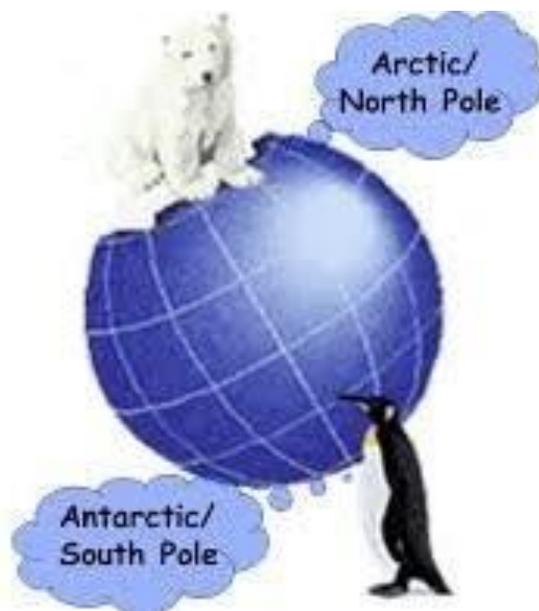
**12** As far as the east is from the west,  
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

**NOTE!** God does not say as far as the North is from the South, because North and South run into one another. Courses.lumenlearning.com, Chapter 22-1 Magnets says, “Magnetic poles always occur in pairs of north and south—it is impossible to isolate north and south poles. The magnetic fields are attracted to one another. (**show photo, p9**)

**DEMONSTRATE** using two magnets.

On the other hand, East and West cannot meet. Gary Wilton, Ph. D., University of Life, puts it this way:

“East and West have no specific location on the Earth’s *land or sea*, so going either East or West in compass direction is in fact *infinite* and *continuous* while going ... North or South from anywhere on the *land or sea* will eventually end in reaching [the North Pole or the South Pole].

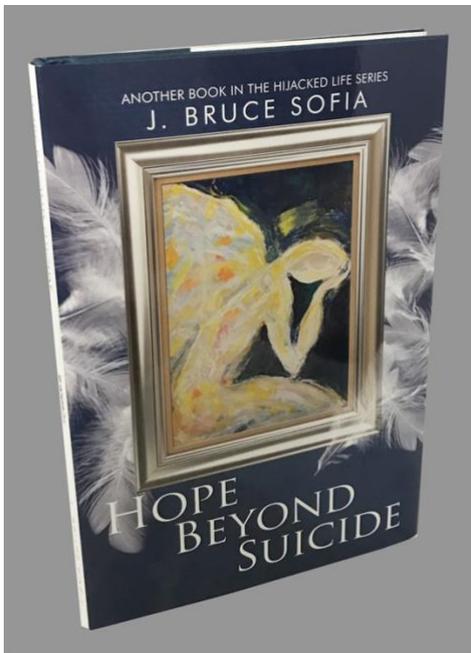


### III. (TOOK) TIME TO WRAP IT UP

**A. Back to our original question, “Will a person who commits suicide go to Heaven?”** The answer to that question, proposed in the context of one being a believer, that is, having trusted Christ for the remission of sins is found in *chapter three* of my book. *Hope Beyond Suicide*. ([show photo, 10](#))

**B. The bottom line.** Here’s the bottom line. Here’s the answer to “Suicide — Heaven or Hell?” If taking one’s own life can send a person to hell, then Christ’s death is insufficient to cover *all* sin. If Christ’s death does not cover *all* sin then no one is guaranteed eternal life, because salvation would then rest on us (man and/or the Church) and not in Him. It would be earned by us and not be a “free

gift.” (Romans 6:23; Romans 11:6) **The only unpardonable sin is rejecting Christ.**”



*Hebrews chapters 9 and 10* clearly state that, **"Jesus died once for all sin."** That includes suicide. Again, think it through! If suicide is all it takes to nullify the work of Christ on Calvary, then *no one* is guaranteed salvation and eternal life. Salvation would rest in us and not in Him.

Andre` Crouch wrote, "The blood that Jesus shed for me will never lose its power." How true! For all

who have trusted Christ, there is no stain of sin so deep that the blood of Jesus is not greater still.

When we Sit at Table in remembrance of our Lord’s death, just before we drink from the cup, I’ll often say: “We hold in our hands that which represents a detergent that knows no stain it can’t remove.” When it comes to salvation, *the way* in which a person dies is not the issue.

As mentioned previously — to me, the shame and tragedy of suicide in the life of the believer is threefold:

- 1) the failure to see God as bigger than his/her circumstances,
- 2) the confusion and pain it leaves for loved ones, and
- 3) the hijacking of the dream blueprinted upon their lives

by their Creator at conception. I suspect that the latter is the greatest tragedy.

## V. INVITATION

**Let's ask the real question: *Have you received Christ for the forgiveness of sins?***

It's as easy as ABC:

**Admitt**– your sins have separated you from God.  
(Psa 14:1-3; Rom 3: 23);

**Believe** – that God did something about your sins through Jesus Christ. (The final Pascal Lamb/Messiah.)  
(Lev 17:10; Heb 9: 19-22);

**Commit** – yourself to His righteousness by confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior. (Isa 53:5; Col 1:22);

**Do it today!** (Isa 49:8; 2 Cor 6:2).

Father in Heaven, I'm sorry for the things I've done that are wrong: I am a sinner; forgive me. Thank You for loving me and sending your Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for my sin. Holy Spirit come into my heart; Jesus be my Lord and Savior. I give You my life. Amen.