

Suicide. What's Missing?

By Dr. Don Bierle, *FaithSearch* President

Suicide. It's something most of us would rather not talk about. For some, it is too personal and painful to discuss.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, in the U.S. alone, there were **45,000 suicides in 2016 compared to 17,000 murders and 38,000 automobile deaths**. In addition, there were *25 suicide attempts* for every completed one. It is astounding to realize that **someone attempts to end their life every 28 seconds in the U.S.!** What is going on?

Suicide is not new. What appears to be new in the last couple of decades is the **growth in feelings of despair, anger, loneliness, anxiety, lack of purpose, sadness, and fatigue as the causes of suicide**. It appears to be getting worse with each generation: among those 15–34 years old, suicide is the *second-leading cause of death*.

Puzzling to researchers is that **more than half of those who now commit suicide had no known mental disorder**. This probably means that more people are suffering from *situational depression* (life circumstances) rather than *clinical depression* (including bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, etc.). Those most at risk are young people aged 15–24; females; men over 65; indigenous people; and those whose sexuality and gender identity differs from their biological expression.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn's address at Harvard in 1978 now seems prescient: *"We have placed too much hope in political and social reforms, only to find out that we were being deprived of our most precious possession; our spiritual life."*



Photo credit: ©2006, David Corby, from Wikipedia

King David identified the same truth: *"Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance, and my God"* (Psalm 42:11, NASB).

The night before His crucifixion, **Jesus said He would be the source of comfort and peace for us** in times of anxiety: *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful"* (John 14:27, NASB). If we confess our sin and yield our life to Jesus, He will show compassion, offer mercy, bring hope, and instill purpose within us.

It is not this author's intent to suggest there is nothing wrong with anyone except the spiritual—as if to say, "trust Jesus and all will be well!" There certainly are clinical disorders which require medication; substance abuse that requires psychotherapy; and trauma which counseling can help. In all my research for this article, not once did I find the secular counseling profession, departments of health, nor the media to acknowledge a spiritual antidote to thoughts of suicide. This is a tragedy within the tragedy of increasing suicide.

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IN THE NEWS

Glimpses of Redemption in God's Creation Design

One result of the advent of sin into the world was a curse upon the creation, including humans (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12). By His grace and wisdom, God placed within created organisms designs for humans to discover which can reduce the effects of the curse. Such is the case with the **Morpho butterfly**, native to the rain forests of Central America.

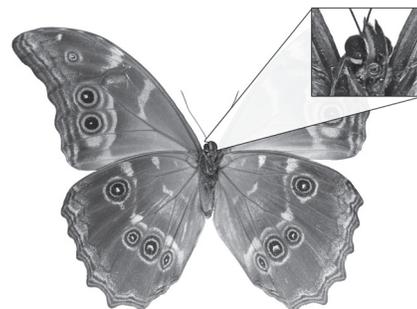


Photo credit: ©2011, Didier Descouens, from Wikipedia

The eyes of the Morpho butterfly gave rise to the design of a new way to detect cancer cells.

Scientific studies of this butterfly's eyes have inspired a new camera. When incorporated into special goggles worn by a surgeon, s/he is able to detect imbedded and dyed cancer cells (by infrared fluorescence) and tumors directly *through the overlying skin*. This minimizes the number of incisions needed and assures that cancer cells are not left behind in the body.

Previously, the least expensive instrument for detecting cancer cells cost about \$20,000. **The butterfly-inspired cancer camera/goggles will cost about \$200.**

God loves us and demonstrates His love through the design and grace found even in the fallen creation.

“Steve’s Dead!” Or is He? The Hope of Resurrection

By Dr. Don Bierle, *FaithSearch* President

I was returning to the Seattle airport from a weekend of ministry when the pastor of the church I had just left called and said my wife was desperately trying to get in touch with me. I called and heard her sobbing. “What’s wrong?” I asked. “Steve’s dead!” was her heartbreaking response.

It was a message no parent ever wants to hear. I was speechless in disbelief. Steve is the younger of our two sons: he was forty-four years old, with a wife, Sandy, and three sons of his own. Longer story short, Steve drowned while successfully rescuing his middle son, Benjamin, from certain death in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of northern California.

I couldn’t stop the devastating thought that Vernee and I had just “lost” half of our family. **Our grief temporarily blinded us to what we know in our hearts to be true: We still have two sons!**

The resurrection of Christian believers to eternal life is assured by many N.T. passages, including the teaching of Jesus: “*For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son, and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day*” (John 6:40). Jesus’ own bodily resurrection is testified by eyewitnesses and recorded in all four of the proven-to-be-historically-reliable Gospel records. To remove all doubt, Jesus provided the ultimate apologetic evidence:

See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have...And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it in their sight (Luke 24:39-43).

Steve first prayed to trust Jesus as his Savior on my lap at four years of age. He reaffirmed that commitment as a teen-ager. He lived out that testimony right up to his death. Our memories of those events and the testimony of his life gave Vernee and me comfort that He is now in the presence of the Lord.

It is interesting to observe that after Job’s horrific testing (compare Job 1:3 with 42:12) God “*increased all that Job had twofold*” (Job 42:10). Yet God only gave



The Steve Bierle family in 2014: (left to right) Shane, Steve, Sandy, Drew, and Ben.

Did You Know?

Three dimensional (3D) printing, or additive manufacturing, is a process of making solid, three-dimensional objects from a digital file. Using metals, plastics, acrylic, sandstone, etc., an object is created by laying down successive micrometer layers of materials until the object is complete.

Hailed by some as the advent of the third industrial revolution, 3D printers may eventually be standard household equipment to manufacture your own shoes, dresses, glasses frames, doorknobs, functional clocks—the list is seemingly endless.

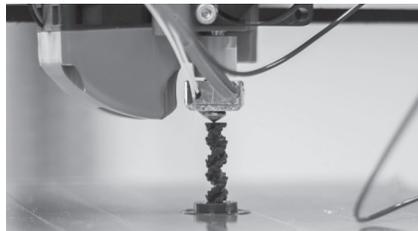


Photo credit: ©2014, Jonathan Juursema, from Wikipedia
A 3D printer in action.

But SKIN?! Apparently so. Scientists at Wake Forest University’s Military Research Center have developed a 3D method to “print” new skin cells onto a patient’s burn wounds. The wound is laser scanned and translated into a patient-specific design to lay down one layer of living cells at a time until the entire wound is precisely covered. Experimental trials with mice show that 3D printed skin cells heal, on average, two weeks faster than previous skin grafting techniques. Are 3D printed organs and vascular systems next? Bionics anyone?

AMAC Advantage Magazine, Vol. 12, No. 3, Summer 2018.
Page 8.
Wikipedia, “3D Printing”

Job the same number of children he had before (cf 42:13 and 1:2). No need for God to double the children because the first ten children were still alive!

It will never be the same without Steve here. Yet, as the Holy Spirit revealed through the apostle Paul:

[W]e do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

We are looking forward to a glorious reunion! For others who have also experienced such a loss, may this fulfill in your heart what God intended: “*Therefore comfort one another with these words*” (v. 18).

Suicide

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The Holy Spirit revealed God’s promise through the apostle Paul (Philippians 4:6-7, NIV): “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*” Numerous people who failed in their suicide attempt and through it turned in faith to Jesus Christ, testify from their newly-healed life to this truth and that of the Psalmist (Psalm 34:18, NASB): “*The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*”

Surely, this should count for something even in the secular world—if they truly care about those who are hurting!

World Magazine, Vol. 33, No. 12. “People in Pain.” Pages 8-9.
Wikipedia, “Suicide”

NOTE: If you or someone you know is experiencing thoughts of suicide, talk to someone. Call 911. Call the suicide prevention lifeline 24-hours a day at 1.800.273-TALK (www.suicidepreventionlifeline.com).

The **FaithSearch** Paraclete is published by **FaithSearch** International, an interdenominational, donor-supported, 501(c)(3) organization, based in Edina, MN, USA.

FaithSearch is a member in good standing of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

