



QUIET DESPERATION

Strength for Our Daily Need

August 26, 2023

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

The Bible lists seven people who chose to terminate their lives:

Judges 9:50-54 (NIV) • “Next Abimelek went to Thebez and besieged it and captured it. Inside the city, however, was a strong tower, to which all the men and women—all the people of the city—had fled. They had locked themselves in and climbed up on the tower roof. Abimelek went to the tower and attacked it. But as he approached the entrance to the tower to set it on fire, a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head and cracked his skull. Hurriedly he called to his armor-bearer, ‘Draw your sword and kill me, so that they can’t say, “A woman killed him.”’ So his servant ran him through, and he died.”

Judges 16:26-30 (NIV) • “Samson said to the servant who held his hand, ‘Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.’ Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. Then Samson prayed to the LORD, ‘Sovereign LORD, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.’ Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood.

Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, ‘Let me die with the Philistines!’ Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.”

1 Samuel 31:2-5 (NIV) • “The Philistines were in hot pursuit of Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically. Saul said to his armor-bearer, ‘Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me.’ But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him.”

2 Samuel 17:23 (NIV) • “When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father’s tomb.”

1 Kings 16:18, 19 (NIV) • “When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the royal palace and set the palace on fire around him. So he died, because of the sins he had committed, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD and following the ways of Jeroboam and

committing the same sin Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit.”

Matthew 27:3-5 (NIV) • “When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. ‘I have sinned,’ he said, ‘for I have betrayed innocent blood.’ ‘What is that to us?’ they replied. ‘That’s your responsibility.’ So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.”

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “QUIET DESPERATION”

If there are three rules for discussing suicide with teens they are: (1) be careful, (2) be careful, and most all, (3) be careful. Today suicide is the third-leading cause of death among young people ages 15-24—behind accidents and homicide. Surprisingly, suicide is the fourth-leading cause of death among children ages 10-14. The reason this subject is rarely discussed/taught has to do with the fact that we can and know so little about the motives of people who commit suicide. We assume and infer cause and motive, but we can’t be certain as to the reasons some choose to take their own life. Furthermore, the Bible alludes to the act of taking one’s own life but does not discuss its nature, which leaves some feeling uncomfortable with the ambiguity. Sadly, there is a tendency to stretch Scripture to try to explain a “biblical position” on the subject. Added to that, a wide range of emotions are present in those who engage in the topic.

Many young people are wrestling with depression, anxiety, and fear. The teen world is connected to a digital world through social networks that present ample opportunities for uncontrolled bullying and intimidation. There are teens that end their lives because of pictures, words, and even innuendos displayed online about them for all to see.

This lesson will survey the landscape of suicide in the Bible and gently apply some principles that will help teachers and parents deal with the subject carefully and with humility.

We will also seek to be proactive and practical as to prevent or avoid tragedies and restore those who are desperate for a change. The key theme should be to avoid the subject of passing judgment as to whether someone who commits suicide will or will not go to heaven. That kind of discussion is neither Christian nor helpful. We must focus on how to help people through the darkness that can overshadow them.

C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “QUIET DESPERATION”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Deepen their sense of sensitivity to the complexity of suicide.
2. Acknowledge their role as agents of change and hope to people in despair.
3. Choose to think carefully about the source of suicide and resolve to combat destructive patterns and hateful communication with goodness, honesty, and biblical “one anothering.”

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) backpacks, heavy rocks, newspaper, or other materials that can fit into the backpacks; (Activity B) 3" x 5" cards, pens or pencils.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons, paper, pens or pencils.

Applying • Bibles, white/chalkboard, markers/ chalk.

2 BRIDGING

A. THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of

the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.

3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service projects reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • You will need two backpacks and anything that can make one heavy and the other light, but both look the same. You might put heavy rocks in one and stuff it with newspaper to make it look full and just fill the other with newspaper so that it is light.

Get set • This exercise will involve two students of a similar size, each wearing a backpack. Have the students put the packs on out of sight of the class. Then have them come to the front and face the class.

Go • As the two students with the backpacks move around in front of the class, **Ask: Which pack is heavier?** The students with the backpacks start with simple actions, then gradually move to more complicated movements. We want the students to be able to identify which is the heavier pack by paying attention to the details and small signs displayed by the volun-

teers wearing them. The two should try to keep from giving any information that would indicate the weight of the backpacks. Then have the two carriers walk around the class, stepping over an occasional obstacle, then return to the front, where the teacher again **asks: Which pack do you think is heavier? Why? What specific signs did you notice?** Have the students vote. As it becomes more noticeable which pack is heavier, and it should be more obvious, think of someone you know who carries a heavy burden but tries to let others think they are fine. Don't shout out their name! But can you imagine how exhausting that would be? What about those who are obviously shouldering the weight of the world? How do they exhibit or show the signs of their weariness?

Debriefing • **Say:** Today's lesson discusses a difficult topic about which various opinions exist, but very few solutions. **Ask:** How well do you think you can know what someone is feeling or struggling with? Is it easier with some than with others? How well do you think we pay attention to the weight we are all carrying? How might that be different?

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • This game is a simple exercise to get students aware of how little we know of people, their history, their likes and dislikes, as well their habits, skills, and accomplishments. You will need a 3" x 5" card for each student and a pen or pencil.

Get set • Invite the students to write three things that they think most people in the room would not know about them. Describe a few categories they can choose from, such as: likes and dislikes, special traits or skills, appropriate stories and events (broken leg or a scar on the foot, etc.), fears and idiosyncrasies that are unknown. Caution them that this is not the time to share truly personal material. It is to be a safe, anxiety-free exercise that calls them to share information that would not be obvious.

Go • Ask the students to break into groups of two or three. But before you say anything, write three things that the others don't know about you. (Use the criteria mentioned in the Get Set section). Invite the students to take turns sharing items on the list. It should be fun and enlightening and in a relaxed format. The goal of the exercise is to become aware that humans are difficult to know, and even the incidental information can be hidden. How much more so can some of the personal struggles people worry about be either disguised or revealed in the normal course of life.

Debriefing • Ask: Do you think it is easier for some people to hide their feelings than it is for others? Describe your experience with people who hide their feelings successfully from others. For those who have a difficult time hiding their emotions, how do they reveal them? Is it possible that even the apparent emotions people demonstrate can masquerade more severe emotions? Can you think of an example?

Where would you rank your ability to keep your emotions hidden?

Like a Rock **Like an Open Book**
1 2 3 4 5

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

Life on a college campus can be exciting and busy. Students get caught up in activities and in their studies. Some students take on so much that they may get overwhelmed at times.

This happened to Mary. She was taking a full load of classes, playing on the college soccer team, and auditioning to be in drama club. She had her schedule full to overflowing, leaving little time for personal devotions.

As often happens, multiple events and projects came due at the same time. Mary found herself skipping meals and staying up many nights to the early hours of the morning trying to stay on top of all her requirements.

After a few weeks Mike noticed that Mary seemed preoccupied and noncommunicative.

When someone would ask her a question, she would reply with short quick answers. It seemed as if she was neglecting taking care of herself—her clothing appeared wrinkled and her hair uncombed. He was worried about her and asked her, “Mary, are you OK? Can I help you with anything?” But Mary replied, “I’m fine. Just a lot going on, so I’m a little more tired. Once this semester is over, I’ll get more rest.”

One evening Mike saw a social media post from Mary, and it worried him. The post wasn’t urgent or negative, but the words “Good night, I’m going to sleep now” seemed to him to be more than just a simple “Good night.” They had a final sound to them.

Later, when Mike tried to sleep, he just kept tossing and turning. What if Mary’s words were more than a good-night message? What if it was a final message? What if?

Mike decided to let someone else know how he was feeling, and called the girls’ dean, Mrs. Parker. Mrs. Parker took his call seriously and went to Mary’s room to check on her.

Mary opened her door, and Mrs. Parker noted that Mary’s hair was dirty, her clothes wrinkled and smelly, and her room packed. Mrs. Parker asked to come in and talk. As Mary talked, Mrs. Parker sensed that everything wasn’t OK. As they talked through the night, Mary confessed that she felt that life wasn’t worth living—that things were too difficult and there seemed to be no hope in her future. In the morning Mrs. Parker called Mary’s parents. Mary’s mom and dad came to get her and took Mary to see a counselor. He prescribed some medicine, told her to get lots of rest, and suggested that when Mary returned to school, she not become over-involved in school activities and schoolwork. All the while Mary’s parents and others prayed with and for her. Mary recommitted her life to God and once again made her devotions and prayer life a priority. Her time with God become the most important part of her day.

Mary is grateful to Mike for caring enough to reach out and to Mrs. Parker for taking the time to assist her in getting the help she needed. She realizes that although she went through a time of darkness that left her feeling hopeless, she

wasn't alone. God was working in her life. She knows that it was God keeping Mike awake and that it was God who helped her find her way again.

Today Mary is a well-adjusted young woman with a beautiful family of her own and an amazing career helping other young people to keep their lives in balance.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

While today's lesson features a serious conversation about depression and suicide, we need to spend our time doing what we can to restore people who get to the point where they no longer see hope for the future. Perhaps the most important truth we can learn today is that it is not our place to judge whether a person will be in heaven or not. Until you and I are endowed with infinite wisdom and can see into the motives of each person, it is really not our place—nor is it right to tread where no answer or explanation is going to be given on this side of the judgment. Remember the prophet was told that God rejected Eliab, Jesse's oldest son: "But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart'" (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV). If this is a principle of Scripture, we should apply its truth, because by all practical appearances, Eliab was the right choice. Nevertheless, God saw differently.

The Bible gives several examples of people who felt their future was bleak and hopeless.

- Abimelech: Judges 9:54
- Samson: Judges 16:28-31
- Saul: 1 Samuel 31:1-6
- Saul's armor-bearer: 1 Chronicles 10
- Ahithophel: 2 Samuel 17:23
- Zimri: 1 Kings 16:18; 2 Kings 9:31

- Judas Iscariot: Matthew 27:3-10

Pass out paper and pens or pencils, then, depending on the size of your class, divide the stories up so that each group or pair will focus on one story and then report. Ask the following questions of each story:

- What were the circumstances that caused the individual to end their own life?
- What other way might they have chosen? In your opinion, what would have been the better choice? Why?
- How does the Bible describe the way their deaths were perceived? Does the Bible condemn or condone their actions?
- In the end, were they alone, or did they have a community or team/partner by their side?

Have you noticed that those who seem to struggle are often people who operate alone? Cain had his own way. Samson took on the world by himself. Judas acted alone. Think of some dynamic pairs of people in the Bible who, although they were not perfect, seemed to be able to help each other along the way. (Some examples I would use are: David and Jonathan; Moses and Aaron; Ruth and Naomi; Caleb and Joshua; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; Paul and Silas; Peter and John.)

As we look at situations in which darkness overshadows people, enemies seek to harm and do evil, or even when people are isolated in their trouble, a friend would have helped. In Ecclesiastes 4:8-10 (NIV), the wise man Solomon once claimed:

There was a man all alone;
he had neither son nor brother.
There was no end to his toil,
yet his eyes were not content with his
wealth.

"For whom am I toiling," he asked,
"and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?"

This too is meaningless—
a miserable business!

Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their
labor:
If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up.

When you consider the scriptural situations that ended in people taking their lives, which stories might have turned out differently by having a friend or a community of friends for encouragement? Which stories might have ended the same?

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath's section of the lesson.

Ask: Is it possible that there are some situations in which people end their own lives because they are incapable of seeing other alternatives? Perhaps they are struggling with a mental illness and they are not making rational decisions. Is it possible that some just can't see beyond their pain and feel forced by their circumstances to simply give up? Again, we don't know the mind or the motives of the individuals. However, as you read the story in this week's illustration of Pastor Mikhail Kulakov, what enabled him to negotiate through those dark times? The love and faithfulness of his wife, knowing people were praying for him, and that single page of scripture kept hope alive in those gloomy, miserable days. Pastor Kulakov believed God's promises. He knew God had a plan for his life—even if he couldn't, at the time, see it. How does believing God has a plan for your life shape your view of the future and even the hard times of the present?

Read the verses in this week's lesson and identify which verses seem to convey God's promise of hope, help, and a way through to a better day tomorrow. Which verses seem to focus on God's ability to bring mercy and

peace in the present? Which verse or verses address the way God helps us with our past?

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

By this time in your life you have probably witnessed stories of people who get stuck in the dark.

Perhaps you know people like Jamie, who never felt like she could measure up to the expectations others had for her. Daily she struggled with feelings of self-hatred. She always worked hard never to let anyone else down. With everything she accomplished Jamie's anger boiled inside her. Every day she looked for a way to escape the pressure or give in to the hate she felt.

Damon has a different story, but the darkness is just as real. In grade school the older boys got him involved in drugs. Driven by cravings, he crawls deeper into the darkness. He knows that alone he can never walk away from this life. He has burned all his bridges, stolen from his friends and their family members. He would feel shame if he didn't feel so desperate to get high to deaden the pain in his body.

William is extremely talented at many things but feels underappreciated. Everyone else seems to get the spotlight. He tries in class to be funny. The smart kids go out to lunch to eat while he is stuck in detention. It doesn't matter how hard he tries—everyone else gets a break, and he always finds trouble or failure. William spends his time on the Web writing sarcastic jibes at people on Facebook. Most of the things he says are funny but no one seems to notice, so he starts making up stories, doctoring photos of other people and posting them on the Web. His attacks grow intensely as people start to pay attention. Somehow it feels a little better when people are afraid of him.

All of the above are candidates for depression, suicide, or bullying someone else into feeling as if there is no way out. The spectrum of why people might be motivated to lay their lives down varies. As you read through some of the underlying causes of suicide, note where some of the Bible stories mentioned might fit.

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Say: Below are some descriptions of the underlying causes of suicide. As you go through them, ask yourself, “What could my church do to offer hope and help?” “Is there something I could do to be an encouragement to someone who feels hopeless?”

- Fear—I am afraid of what might happen to me and the future. (For example, Saul was afraid he would be captured and tortured by the enemy.)
- Shame—I have disgraced myself and embarrassed others so much that I cannot face the shame I feel.
- Pain—I feel such intense physical and/or emotional pain that I can no longer manage it.
- Isolation—I feel so alone and I can’t deal with the sadness and stress of rejection.
- Despair—I can see no way out of the circumstances I am currently in.
- Mental illness—This could include bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and various forms of depression.

Debriefing • Ask: How do these samples make you feel? Can you think of other underlying causes?

How important is it to know what to do when you believe someone is depressed? Who would you turn to for help for either yourself or someone you know?

On a white/chalkboard, list the above situations. Have the students, in groups of two or three, look up the following Bible verses and share which verse(s) they believe would be most helpful to each of the above situations. Psalm 23:4; Psalm 27:3; Psalm 46:2; Psalm 50:15; Psalm 56:4; Psalm 59:16; Psalm 86:7; Psalm 102:2, 3; Psalm 106:1; Psalm 118:6; Isaiah 1:18; Isaiah 41:10, 13; Isaiah 51:7; Jeremiah 32:17; Luke 1:37; 5:20; Luke 7:48; Luke 12:7; Romans 8:38, 39;

Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13-15; 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 13:6, James 5:15; 1 Peter 5:7.

Ask them to share any other Bible verses they may know that would be helpful.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. As you read the above passages that describe the suicidal events in Scripture, which scriptures might have applied to their situations? Share your answers with the class.
2. How do the passages in this week’s lesson speak to the need we have today for clarity and support on the issue of suicide?
3. How prominent is bullying in schools and on social networks? Have you or someone you know been the subject of social bullying? What did you do to handle the situation? What do you think is the best, safest way to handle people who are being intimidated and threatened as well as those who are doing the bullying?
4. How do you think the message about suicide and emotional violence that occurs on social networks should be handled? Publicly—honest and out in the open? Or quietly—in person as needed? Explain your answer.
5. Who can you name in the Gospels that Christ engaged and who might have experienced extreme darkness and despair? How does Christ help them?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

As children of God we need to be paying careful attention to each other. We need to be watching for the signs of a struggle or even the gradual slipping into depression. After all, we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers.

Suicide is always an act of desperation by

a person who feels completely hopeless. They are lost and are not able to find their way. They are unable to find hope for the day or future. It is not for us to judge them or their actions. Only God knows their hearts and the situation that has lead them to this place of darkness. However, we can do as God has asked and “love one another” (John 13:34, NIV) and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39, NIV).

In Galatians 6:9, 10, Paul charges: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give

up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (NIV).

As Christians we are obligated to get involved in bringing people hope, love, and the unmistakable truth that they are a child of God and He cares for them. Let’s do our part to make a difference in the lives of those experiencing quiet desperation. (Encourage students to check out Friday’s section of the lesson for guidance on how to help someone who is displaying suicidal signs.)



STUDENT LESSON

QUIET DESPERATION

Strength for Our Daily Need

August 26, 2023

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “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, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 11, Growing in Christ:** “By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. . . . Jesus’ victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 84

STRENGTH FOR OUR DAILY NEED

“God’s Word is powerful. It gives us hope in times of discouragement. It brings comfort in times of affliction. It imparts life in times of despair. It brings guidance in time of confusion and peace of mind in times of doubt. It encourages our hearts in life’s darkest moments.

“Recently I interviewed Pastor Mikhail Kulakov, once the leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the former Soviet Union.

“Pastor Kulakov’s testimony had a profound effect on my own life.

“This godly, deeply spiritual giant of the Word has now devoted his life to overseeing the

translation of the Bible into modern Russian.

“During the oppressive Communist regime, Pastor Kulakov was sentenced to prison, labor camps, and eternal banishment by the Soviet government. Sometimes he went weeks with no contact with his family.

“At the time he was a young man in his 20s. He wondered if he had any future at all.

“One day a parcel arrived at his labor camp addressed to him. His mother had sent him some simple foodstuffs. Hidden within the parcel was a New Testament. When the censor opened the package and rummaged through it, he discovered the old Bible. When he yanked it out, the cover fell off, and the pages flew in every direction. Of course the censor denied Pastor Kulakov the privilege of keeping the Bible. In the confusion of picking up the scattered pages, though, he failed to see Pastor Kulakov quickly slip one page into his pants pocket.

“Back at the barracks, Pastor Kulakov eagerly read the sacred page of Scripture. His eyes fell on John 17:24: ‘Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am’ (NKJV). His heart leaped for joy. This single passage of Scripture encouraged him for weeks.

“Jesus, his loving Savior, didn’t want him to be in that filthy, rat-infested barracks. Jesus longed for him to be in heaven. One verse made a difference.

“One verse will make a difference for you. Let God’s promises encourage your heart and lift your spirits today” (Mark Finley, *Solid Ground* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2003], pp. 92, 93).

No matter what our circumstances, God has a plan for you—here on earth as well as when He comes to take you home with Him to heaven. The Bible is filled with His promises of hope for the future. Turn to Him in your moments of discouragement or sadness. He’s there, waiting to help and comfort you.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read John 13:35.
- » Susanne and Alexandra are partners for their science project in school. Susanne feels frustrated because Alexandra has been absent from class a lot during the past week. “Where have you been? I heard you were sick,” Susanne inquires.
- » Alexandra replies, “I haven’t been feeling well. My parents think I’m depressed. I don’t know what is wrong with me.”
- » Susanne gently answers, “I’m sorry. Is there anything I can do to help?”
- » Alexandra looks off into space and states, “I don’t think there is anything you can do to help. I understand if you want to get a new partner for the project. I’m sure I won’t be able to do much.” What should a person say and do? What can you do to help?

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON GROWING IN CHRIST

- » Read Romans 8:38, 39; Ephesians 6:12-18; 1 John 4:4.
- » God knows we will face troubles, problems, and difficulties. Everyone does. The good news is that none of these things can separate us from God’s love. We may have struggles here on earth, but God has promised to be with us. His Word is full of promises that will uplift us and bring encouragement and

inspiration. When you feel life is overwhelming you, fall to your knees (you are never stronger than when you are on your knees) and hold on to Him—for He will never let you go.

- » How do the difficult things in your life lead you to trust God more and renew your relationship with Him?
-
-

- » Unscramble the following verse, taken from the New King James Version.

Christ you always 1 for thanks is Jesus rejoice
will in without 5: in pray this everything ceasing
16-18 God of give the Thessalonians for

- » “Let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, and He will preserve us. Looking unto Jesus, we are safe. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand” (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 72).

Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read 1 Thessalonians 5:15.
- » Have you seen hurtful comments and posts on social media that were addressed to someone you knew or to you personally? What if the person who received the cruel remarks felt as if there was nowhere he or she could turn? How often do you see similar situations? How should those of us in the church respond to those who are attacked?
- » What do you think you should say or do? How would Christ expect His disciples to answer this problem? Here are a few suggestions from the Bible:
- » Read and choose the three you think apply to the situation above.

Romans 15:7 Galatians 5:15
Galatians 6:1, 2 Philippians 2:3
1 Thessalonians 5:15 Hebrews 3:13
James 5:16

Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

» Fill in the missing words to complete the verses.

1. "Peace I _____ with you; My peace I _____ to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not let your heart be _____, neither let it be _____" (John 14:27, NKJV).
2. "By this _____ will know that you are my disciples, if you _____ one _____" (John 13:35, NIV).
3. "The _____ God is your _____, and _____ are the _____" (Deuteronomy 33:27, NIV).
4. "I _____ the LORD, and he _____ me; he _____ me from _____ my _____" (Psalm 34:4, NIV).
5. "In my _____ I _____ upon the LORD, and cried out to my God; He _____ my voice from His temple, and my _____ came before Him, even to His ears" (Psalm 18:6, NKJV).
6. "The LORD himself goes _____ you and will be with you; he will _____ leave you nor _____ you. Do not be _____; do not be _____" (Deuteronomy 31:8, NIV).
7. "The LORD is a _____ for the oppressed, a _____ in times of trouble" (Psalm 9:9, NIV).
8. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have _____ that they may _____, and have it to the

_____ " (John 10:10, NIV).

9. "It shall come to pass that _____ they _____, I will _____; and while they are _____, I will _____" (Isaiah 65:24, NKJV).
10. "He shall _____ upon Me, and I will _____ him; I will be with him in _____; I will _____ him and _____ him" (Psalm 91:15, NKJV).

Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read John 14:1-4.
- » Review the memory text.
- » As you go through the day, begin making a list of people you can begin praying for and reaching out to. Choose the ones that seem to be more alone than others, and extend a message of friendship to them. You may simply ask them how they are doing, or perhaps you could make a positive comment and bring some affirmation to their lives.
- » Think of another group of people to add to your prayer list. Sometimes even the ones who seem to have it all together and are well connected, successful people need the kind of Christian friendship that comes without expectations. Begin praying for opportunities to reach out and give encouragement to those who don't seem to need it.
- » Finally, stand up for someone who is bearing the brunt of slurs and sarcastic remarks. Gather a group of friends who can agree to the importance of coming to a victim's defense. Be willing to be a positive role model to those who antagonize others. And finally, always inform an adult or a teacher/leader of your commitments that they might be a source of wisdom and support for you.

Friday APPLYING

- » Read Deuteronomy 33:27.

- » Dan noticed that his friend Mike seemed to be acting different. He asked Mike if he felt OK. Mike tried to change the subject, but Dan put his arm across his shoulders and said, “Hey, Mike, I’ve been your friend a long time. I know you. Something is up. Let’s talk about it.”

Mike told Dan, “Listen, don’t say anything to anyone else, but I just don’t feel like myself. All the things I used to enjoy, just seem like a waste of time. I just want to close my bedroom door and sleep.”

“Mike,” Dan said, “let’s go see Pastor Steve and tell him what’s going on. I think he’ll know how to help.” And that is exactly what Dan did. He took Mike to see the pastor, and Mike got the help he needed. He is doing much better today and is excited to get up in the morning and is planning on joining Dan on his next camping trip.

- » If you think a friend or family member is deeply depressed, talk openly with them about their thoughts and feelings. You can make a positive difference in their life. People who are depressed and hopeless often display the following signs:
 - Talking as though things in life are “hopeless” or about “unbearable” feelings.
 - Demonstrate dramatic mood swings.
 - Displaying a loss of interest in day-to-day activities.
 - Showing an abnormal neglect of his or her appearance.
 - Revealing noticeable changes in eating or sleeping habits.

You can show that you care by:

1. Listening: Let them know that he or she is not alone and that you care. Don’t promise that things will improve, and don’t promise that you will not tell anyone about their depression. Sometimes you need to seek help from specialists, such as medical professionals, pastors, and counselors.

2. Responding quickly: Don’t ignore the signs of depression or hopelessness. Talk to them. Let them know there are people who can help. Tell them it’s OK to seek help from a professional.

3. Offering help: Offer to go with them and take them to a professional to keep them safe.

- » If you are feeling hopeless and are depressed, seek help immediately. Talk and confide in your parents, your pastor, a teacher, or a counselor, but talk to someone right away.

- » “Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. ‘The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.’ James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice” (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 100).

