

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

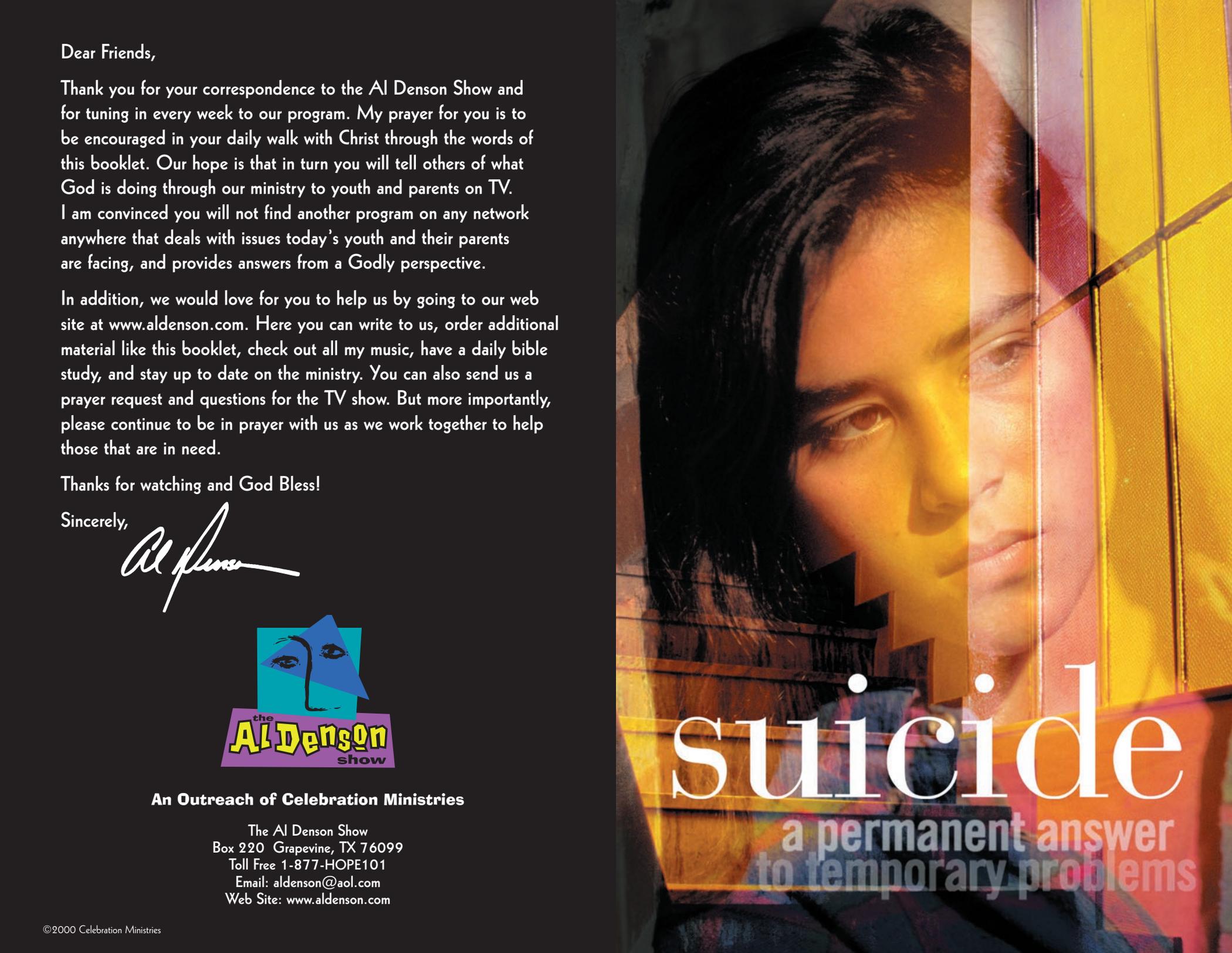
Thanks for watching and God Bless!

Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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suicide
a permanent answer
to temporary problems



Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as “15 minutes of fame”. Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, “The Al Denson Show.” “You’ve got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport,” says Al. “This has all been so amazing. I can’t imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don’t have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, ‘I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.’ You can’t ask for anything more or better than that.”

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There is no other time of life where you’ll be going through so many changes and have to make so many decisions as during your teenage years. At no other point in life will you experience such exhilarating highs and such devastating lows. You have to make major choices about who you are, what you believe, how you are going to live, what your standards will be, and what you will do with your life. You have pressure from school, friends, and parents. You struggle with sex, loneliness, self-acceptance, insecurities, and emotional highs and lows.

As you get older, these mountains and valleys in life start to level out because you have other experiences to compare them to, but right now they are tough. When you are older and you hit a rough stretch of life, you’ll know from experience that it won’t last forever. But when you are young and you don’t have that past experience to call on, it is easy to feel hopeless and falsely believe that things will never get better. Deep, long-term heartache or depression can cause you to look for an escape. It is during these times the enemy will tempt you to kill yourself.

If you were to choose suicide, the tragedy would be that if you had just waited and if you had gotten help, the pain and the hopelessness would have eventually disappeared. Emotional wounds are just like physical wounds. It takes

time, but they do heal. With time and with the right care, they do heal. Suicide is a permanent solution to temporary problems. The temptation is to believe that suicide will make the situation better, but that is never, never true.

Do you feel all alone in your struggles and in your pain? Do you feel like no one could possibly understand what you are facing or how you are feeling? You probably believe that if just one

When you are older and you hit a rough stretch of life, you’ll know from experience that it won’t last forever.

person really understood what you are going through that they would not blame you for wanting to give up on living. If the truth were known, probably everyone has, at one time or the other, felt like dying. Even great men in the Bible like Moses, Jonah, and Elijah were no exception. Each came to a place in his life where he experienced a suicide mentality. You need to know that thousands and thousands of people have

been through exactly what you are going through and what you are facing at this moment. There are those who didn’t value their lives enough to ask for help and took what they thought to be the easy way out. But, most of them sought help and made it. They came out on top.

In Ephesians 1:18 the apostle Paul prayed a prayer for each of his readers: “I pray that the eyes of your hearts would be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you...” If you are struggling with thoughts of suicide, that is our prayer for you, as well, as you read this booklet.

If others have made it, so can you.

Before you begin, would you also be willing to breathe that same, simple prayer to God? “Open the eyes of my heart, Lord and give me hope”. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose, so please do it. It is our prayer that somehow the Lord would use this little booklet to help you begin to move from hopelessness to hope, from questions to understanding, and from lost dreams to building new ones. We pray that Jesus would be made real to you and that His love would be revealed to you through the pages of this booklet.

The choice is up to you. You are the only one responsible for who you are and what you do. If others have made it, so can you. Whether you are experiencing the death of someone you love, the pain of divorce, a broken relationship, loneliness, the loss of a dream, or multiple failures or rejections, you need to know that you are not the only person who has faced or is facing these problems. You can make it. If you will look to Christ for strength,

and if you are willing to do whatever it takes to get help, you can make it.

The Bible says in I Corinthians 10:13, “Many others have faced exactly the same problems before you. And no temptation (or problem) is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation (or problem) from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it, for He has promised this and will do what He says. He will show you how to escape temptation’s (and problem’s) power so that you can bear up patiently against it.”

You may be facing the greatest temptation of all right now. The temptation to give up. God wants to give you the power to overcome this temptation, but you must turn to Him for help. God can supernaturally deliver you from the hurt, depression, and hopelessness that you feel. God has confidence in you even if you have none in yourself. He says in this verse that NOTHING will come your way that is so strong that you cannot stand up against it. God believes in your ability to fight, to cope, and to win. If you don’t believe in God as confidently as He believes in you, then simply ask Him for the courage and the faith you need to trust Him.

Jesus is inviting you to come to Him for rest. You are tired and weary of the struggle and there is nothing you need more right now than inner rest. When you come to Jesus, He’ll bring calmness and peace to your troubled heart and mind. You may believe that peace, joy and contentment are out of reach and not

in your future because of the things you feel you lack in life — money, education, friends, someone to love you. If that were true there would be no divorces in Hollywood, no alcoholic professors, and no rich or famous people who are drug-addicted. There certainly would be no poor, single, uneducated people who are happy and contented if you are right. The truth is that happiness is a choice.

Your problems are not past solving and your life is not without hope. Things can be different — you must believe that, and you must give yourself a chance. When you are being torn apart by a deep inner struggle you often don’t want to hear, “time heals all wounds”. But it can. With the right care, and enough time, all your hurts will heal. The pain will subside and the memories will fade, and you will recover. There is no replacement for the passage of time. You must find other things to occupy your thoughts. Don’t spend endless hours dwelling on your pain and problems. Of course you may need the help of a Christian counselor to help you work through the issues that brought you to despair in the first place. But don’t rehearse your problems over and over again with anyone who will listen. You must find something constructive to do with your time and when you do, you will find that a miracle of healing is taking place in your life.

Time is a healer and it can be your friend. Start working toward a solution for whatever concerns you today. The first step is to find a prayer partner and a Christian counselor. Remember the words of I Corinthians 10:13, “...You can trust God to keep the temptation (or problem) from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it, for he has promised this and He will do what He says.” Jesus said that heaven and earth will pass away but God’s words will stand forever. We just read God’s words and they will stand forever as the solid, unmovable truth. God says that you can make it, so you can.

When people get to the place of desperation and want to give up on life, it is often because they feel that God can’t be trusted and that He is to blame for all the misery in their life. That is not true. Jesus tells us who is responsible in John 10:10. He says, “The thief’s purpose is to steal, kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.” The thief that Jesus is talking about is Satan. Anything that steals from you, kills or destroys you is caused and influenced by Satan.



Jesus said that He is the One responsible for “life in all its fullness.” In other words, a life that is filled with peace, joy, love and fulfillment. God is a good and loving Father who wants the best for His children, but somehow we have decided to place the responsibility and the blame on God for all the bad things that happen in life. Many people have the idea that life is a game God is playing with the human race, like a divine practical joke. “Why is life so hard and so full of problems and pain?” “Why do I have to suffer this way?” People have been asking these same questions for generations. In order to understand you have to go back to the beginning.

When God first created man and woman, He gave them, and all of us who have been born since, a wonderful gift. That gift is a free will. God could have made us like robots or puppets who have no choice other than to do what their Creator directs them to do. But God’s love for us is so great that He made us with a free will and He never, under any circumstance, will take that away from us. God wants us to be free to choose to love Him, or not to love Him.

God also created man and woman to live forever in a perfect place. Adam and Eve were never to have grown old and never to have died. He gave them a world that was perfect. No pain, sorrow, suffering, hate, war, violence,

sickness or death. All of these tragedies came into the world, not because they were God’s idea, but as a result of sin. When Adam and Eve, in spite of God’s warning, chose to rebel against Him, sin and all its evil entered the world. As long as there are people who are choosing to sin, there will always be all kinds of suffering in this world. God HATES sin and all the suffering that comes with it. All that is evil and bad in the world is NOT God’s fault. It is ours.

God warned the man and woman not to sin, and He told them that there would be terrible consequences to pay if they did. When Adam and Eve chose to ignore God’s warning about sin, God could have washed His hands of the whole human race at that point, but He didn’t. He LOVES us and He CARES about our suffering. The cross of Jesus Christ is historical evidence of God’s very real involvement in our pain. God tells us not to sin, gives us the gift of a free will to choose, then when we make the wrong choice, God comes down to earth in the form of a man and dies in our place to pay for those wrong choices!

God is a good and loving Father who wants to be involved in our lives. He knows and He understands our hurt and He cares. God will welcome us into His loving arms and comfort us if we will only let Him. Why are you struggling and in pain? Because you live in a sin-filled

world where people rebel and sin against a holy and loving God a million times every day. Sin always brings horrible consequences for everyone. But God will never take the gift of your free will away. If He took it from one of us, He would have to take it from all of us.

In Proverbs 3:5 God warns us not to “lean on our own understanding.” It doesn’t say that we shouldn’t try to understand, just that we shouldn’t “lean”. The word “lean” here refers to a “panicky demand for answers.” It is demanding that God explain Himself. Dr. James Dobson said, “It is O.K. to ask ‘why’ and to try to understand, but the fact is that our minds are too small and we have been given too few facts to explain all the heartache in an imperfect, fallen world. That understanding will have to await the coming of the sovereign Lord who promises to set straight all accounts and end all injustice.” We don’t understand it all, we can’t understand it all. A God who is small enough for us to understand completely, isn’t big enough to be our God!

In Proverbs 29:18, the Living Bible says, “Where there is ignorance of God, the people run wild...” People are running wild and some are out of control because they do not know God. Because they don’t know Him, they have no hope in this world, or for the world to come. But for those who know Him, there is much for which to look forward. The Bible

says in Revelations 21:4 that there is coming a day when God will “wipe every tear from our eyes.” There will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain.

Is life fair? No. Do bad things happen to good people? Yes. Does this mean that God isn’t good? No. The goodness of God is not proved by an absence of problems or pain. Those are just part of the package, and come with the territory for all of us who live in this world of sin. The goodness of God is proven by the nearness of God — that He will never leave or forsake those who come to Him in repentance and faith.

The goodness of God is not proved by an absence of problems or pain.

The goodness of God means that whatever you go through,

Where is God when it hurts? Right where He has always been, closer than your heartbeat. Watching and waiting for you to run to Him with your problems and with your pain. Probably the greatest need anyone has is to know that somebody understands what they are going through. Jesus Christ left all the splendor and glory of heaven to come to this earth as a baby. For 33 years Jesus walked and lived among us. He faced every temptation, every problem, every heartache of life to earn the right to say to us, “I understand.”

Where is God when you are hurting? Right there with you. Psalms 73:28 has been translated, “But as for me, it is good to be near to God.” This is an inadequate translation of the Hebrew in which the verse was originally written. This verse literally says, “This is my good that God is near me,” or “the goodness of God is the nearness of God.” The fact that God is good doesn’t mean that you will never have a problem or that you will never hurt. The goodness of God means that whatever you go through, God will be right there to go through it with you, understanding your confusion and sharing your pain. Joshua 1:9 says, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

The Bible says in Genesis 2:7 that God breathed into man “the breath of life, and man became a living being.” God is the giver of life and to every human being He gives the privilege of living. When God gave you your life, He did not give you the right to end it. Your life is a gift from God. Even when life hurts, it is still a gift to be treasured whether in pleasure or pain. But in order to appreciate and value life, you must be willing to go to the source of life, God, Himself.

The strongest motivation to live for every human being is the assurance that somebody loves them. Many people lose hope and give up because they feel that no one loves them. Even if it is true that no one on this earth loves you, there is somebody who loves you and that somebody is God. In a fast-paced, impersonal society like ours, at times it seems we have all become nothing more than a statistic or a number. It is easy to feel like just another face in the crowd. You may assume that because no one else in the world seems to care about you, that God doesn’t care either. That isn’t true. He cares for you more than you could ever imagine.

The Bible says in Isaiah 49:14, “Yet they say, My Lord deserted us; He has forgotten us.” Then God responds in verse 15 by saying, “Never! Can a mother forget her little child and not have love for her own son? Yet even if that should be, I will not forget you.” God has never forgotten you. These verses say that He loves you even more than a mother loves her little baby. God sees you as a helpless child calling out for someone to care. God is your Heavenly Daddy, and he wants to hold you in His lap and comfort you.



God loves you tenderly and affectionately. He knows you better than anyone, even better than you know yourself, yet He loves you the most. God knows everything you have ever said, done or thought. He even knows the things that you have forgotten. But in spite of it all, He loves and accepts you unconditionally the way you are. Our great and awesome God is thinking of you this very moment and His thoughts toward you are caring and loving. He expresses His love for you in the Book that contains His love letters to you, the Bible.

“I have loved you, O my people, with an everlasting love; with loving-kindness I have drawn you to Me.” — Jeremiah 31:3

“Come to me, all you that are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart: and you will find rest for your souls.” — Matthew 11:28-29

If you are brokenhearted, Jesus wants to heal you. He loves you and He feels the hurt you feel. If you are being buried beneath the weight of worry, sorrow, guilt, pain, or pressure, Jesus will lift you up and set you free. He wants you to trust Him, and give Him your cares and your life.

God will be right there to go through it with you...

Perhaps you have grown up with the idea that God was angry with you and that's why you are reluctant to turn to Him now. This simply is not true. The Bible says that God is a Father

- who grieves over and with His children;
- who receives us just as we are;
- who doesn't rebuke us;
- who doesn't say I told you so;
- who doesn't put us on probation;
- who isn't disappointed or angry with us;
- who will always treat us as if we've never been away when we come home;
- whose attitude of love, mercy and grace toward us is fixed and established.

In Matthew 6:26 Jesus said, "Look at the birds! They don't worry about what to eat — they don't need to sow or reap or store up food — for your Heavenly Father feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than they are." Can you imagine? Not even one little bird can fall to the ground without our Heavenly Father being aware of it. How much more is He aware of you when you hurt and when you fall?

You may believe that God couldn't love you because you have been too bad for too long. But if that were true, then God couldn't love anyone because the Bible says that "ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). But in Romans 5:6 it says, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." And in verse 8 it says, "But God demonstrated His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This is the incredible, awesome love of God for you, right now, where you are. Life is worth living when you know that someone truly loves you. And He does.

Are there answers to the problems that you are facing? Yes, God has an answer for each of your problems. Here are just a few:

If you are depressed:

"The Lord is close to those whose hearts are breaking... The good man does not escape troubles — he has them, too. But, the Lord helps him in each and every one." — Psalm 34:18-19

Jesus said, "I came to heal the broken-hearted." — Luke 4:18

"I waited patiently for God to help me; then He listened and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out from the bog and the mire, and set my feet on a hard, firm path and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, of praises to our God..." — Psalm 40:1-2

If you are feeling guilty:

"If we confess our sins to Him, He can be depended on to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong." — I John 1:9

"Come, let's talk this over! says the Lord; no matter how deep the stain your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you white as wool!" — Isaiah 1:18

"So overflowing is His kindness towards us that He took away all our sins through the blood of His Son, by Whom we are saved." — Ephesians 1:7

If you are feeling insecure:

"What can we ever say to such wonderful things as these? If God is on our side, who can ever be against us? Since He did not spare even His only Son for us but gave Him up for us all, won't He surely give us everything else?" — Romans 8:31-32

"I am holding you by your right hand — I, the Lord your God — and I say to you, don't be afraid; I am here to help you." — Isaiah 41:13

"That is why we can say without any doubt or fear, The Lord is my Helper and I am not afraid of anything that mere man can do to me." — Hebrews 13:6

If you are feeling tired:

"...but those who hope in the Lord will have their strength renewed. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." — Isaiah 41:31

"Come to Me and I will give you rest — all of you who work so hard beneath a heavy yoke. Wear my yoke — for it fits perfectly — and let me teach you; for I am gentle and humble, and you shall find rest for your souls; for I give you only light burdens." — Matthew 11:28-30

If you are worried:

"Let Him have all your worries and cares, for He is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you." — I Peter 5:7

"He will keep in perfect peace all those who trust in Him, whose thoughts turn to the Lord! Trust in the Lord God always, for in the Lord is your everlasting strength." — Isaiah 26:3-4

"...So don't be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow, too. Live one day at a time." — Matthew 6:34

"And it is he who will supply all your needs from His riches in glory, because of what Christ Jesus has done for us." — Philippians 4:19

Suicide is not the answer. Jesus is your answer and your reason to live.

If you are lonely:

"I will lie down in peace and sleep, for though I am alone, O Lord, you will keep me safe." — Psalm 4:8

"No, I will not abandon you or leave you as orphans in the storm — I will come to you." — John 14:18

"...I will be with you always, even to the end of the world." — Matthew 28:20

If you are feeling hopeless:

"I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future." — Jeremiah 29:11

"God who began the good work within you will keep right on helping you grow in His grace until His task within you is finally finished..." — Philippians 1:6

"Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope." — Romans 15:4

"...Christ in you, the hope of glory." — Colossians 1:27

You see, God truly does have an answer for all your problems. Loving God doesn't mean that you won't ever know pain or disappointment, but it does give you the assurance that He will always be there to go through all of your problems with you. He can give you the courage to live. You have probably heard it a thousand times before, but God does have a plan for your life. A detailed plan for each sunrise — a plan that will surprise and delight you. However, cooperating with that plan is a day-by-day choice that you, and you alone, must make.

Your life is a gift from God. If you have been saved, then He allowed His own Son, Jesus Christ, to exchange His life for yours. The life that you are living now, even with all the problems and pain, belongs to Him. Suicide is not the answer. Jesus is your answer and your reason to live. God will carry you through every disappointment, every mistake, every tear.

There are solutions to every problem. Giving up isn't a solution. You may be so lost inside that you have no idea where you are or how you got there. You may be so tired that you have lost all desire to go on. Usually by the time that you get to this stage, you are so busy thinking about yourself that you have walled yourself up in your own small world. As a result, you have lost your perspective about your problems. You can take an object as small as a quarter and hold it up to your

nose and it will appear so large that you can see nothing else. But, when you hold it at arm's length, you have a proper perspective about its real size. Your problems are the same way. When your world becomes small because you are focused on yourself, you lose your perspective about the size of your problems. At that point, life will begin to feel overwhelming and hopeless.

The scary part of all this is that many people make decisions about the future based on a faulty perspective. Have you ever been in a House of Mirrors? You know how distorted those mirrors make you look. Would you ever leave that place and make a decision to alter your appearance based on what one of those silly mirrors showed you? Of course not, because you know that what you are seeing is not accurate. Yet, too many times a person, whose perspective about their problems is temporarily distorted by pain or depression, will make a permanent decision like suicide.

If you have lost your perspective, please do three things:

1. **PRAY** that God will give you the ability to see your life past where you are right now.
2. **WAIT** and give yourself a chance to get through your feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and hurt.
3. **LISTEN** for God to speak to you. He has a perfect plan that will bring hope, life, and joy back again.

The plan that God has for you is always found in the lives of others. He doesn't want you to carry your feelings all by yourself. Others care about you and so does God. It is only when you are willing to reach out to God and to others that you are going to find His plan for your life. When you make the decision to crawl out from behind that wall you have built, you will find that there are others who need help and comfort, too. What do you need today? Give that thing away and you will find that in helping you will be helped. In loving you will be loved. In caring, you will be cared for.

If you will look beyond your pain and trust God, in time He will show you how much you have to live for. His love will carry you through, because Jesus did not just come to be your Savior, He came to be your life. No matter how many times you have failed or how defective you may feel, you are precious and special to God. You were purchased with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that makes you valuable indeed. You are the only one who can carry out the specific plan that God has for your life.

When you feel like you just can't measure up, remember that the only thing God wants is for you to love Him and rest in His unconditional love for you. When you can't find a reason to go on, just love God, and rest in His great love for you. When you feel that you have disappointed everyone in your life, just love Him, and rest in His everlasting love for you. When you fail and fail, just love God, and rest in His unfailing love for you. As you do, He'll give you a reason to live and the strength to go on.

Here is an E-mail that we received recently from a young man who understands where you are because he has been there:

"Al... I remember seeing you at a concert at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, Idaho in October 1991. I was a Senior in high school back then. I'm now 26 years old and a college graduate. I attempted suicide 4 times when I attended college. I even had suicidal thoughts when I was in high school. A friend of mine committed suicide during my junior year in high school. He was 15 years old. Fortunately for me, God has been taking me through a slow and loving healing process. I am attending church again, and I'm currently taking anti-depressant medication. Please tell teenagers that suicide is a permanent solution to temporary problems. As long as Jesus lives, there is hope. He is my reason to live!

If there is a teen in your life you are concerned about, here are some things you need to know...

Being a teenager today isn't easy. Young people, as well as adults, have to deal with difficult decisions and unbelievable pressures every day. Many teens feel that they are not able to cope, and that there is no one who either cares enough or is able to help them. The pain of failure, rejection or loss becomes so great that they begin to think about taking their own lives. Suicide is always a tragedy, but it is especially devastating for families and friends of young people. It can be prevented.

There are no real definitive reasons "why" a teenager takes his or her own life. Many times, it seems like an attempt to resolve a conflict that has made them feel entrapped. This conflict may involve friends, parents, a boyfriend or girlfriend, or school. Any personal loss, such as the death of someone close, a divorce, a major move, or failure may come into play. Guilt or fear of legal consequences or pregnancy may create an overwhelming situation for a teenager. Teens can be very impulsive and may take their lives in a moment of pain, without realizing the finality of their decision.

As adolescents grow into adults, it is a time of enormous change and stress for them. They are losing their childhood ties to their parents, and finding a new sense of independence and individuality. They are discovering their identity and their sexuality. New experiences and all the changes that are happening can make them feel very insecure. At the same time, they are being pulled in so many directions at once that this can cause great frustration and impulsive behavior as they try to resolve all these demands.

All the uncertainty can bring feelings of self-doubt, inferiority, and depression. Temporary periods of depression are normal at any age, but teenagers have less experience with suffering than do adults, and the new overwhelming feelings that they are experiencing may be too much for them to handle. Family problems can make them doubt their self-worth and make them feel unwanted, misunderstood and unloved. If they come from a family where guilt is used to control behavior and where the child, not his performance, is criticized, then this will also contribute to the risk of suicide. Loss of love from a death, divorce, or the emotional withdrawal of a parent or significant other, can also be a contributing factor.

Teenagers who are depressed and suicidal often hide those feelings at home and at school, although they will sometimes confide in their friends. They may not be aware that what they are feeling is depression. Depressed teens may fall off dramatically in their school performance and have difficulty concentrating. They may daydream a lot or act like class clowns. They may become extremely uncommunicative and bored. Hyperactivity can mask depression, just like extreme hostility, aggressiveness, risk-taking and promiscuous sexual behavior. Young people who are depressed have more physical complaints and are more accident-prone.

When you
fail and fail,
just love God,
and rest in His
unfailing love
for you.

The most important things that you can do for a depressed or a suicidal teen are to

- pay attention,
- encourage them to talk,
- listen and be on their side,
- reassure them without dismissing them.

Don't panic. No one is suicidal all the time. Thoughts of self-destruction arise at times of crisis, but lives can be saved with understanding and support.

Learn to recognize the signs of serious depression and suicide risk. Although five to eight times as many females as males attempt suicide, four times as many males actually commit suicide. Eight out of ten suicides give definite warnings, either verbal or behavioral, of their intentions. For every five who complete suicide, four of those have made one or more attempts. These attempts are often cries for help and attention by people who feel so isolated they know of no other way to express their pain.

Signs of Suicidal Tendency:

- great change in eating or sleeping patterns
- hyperactivity or prolonged listlessness
- being accident-prone
- physical complaints
- aggressiveness
- withdrawal
- sudden loss of interest in prized possessions
- apathy, anxiety
- overwhelming guilt or self-hate
- alcohol or drug abuse
- deep or prolonged grief over any loss
- apparent improvement after a long period of depression. The person is seriously vulnerable to reversal now, and has more energy to act on suicidal thoughts.

Between 50 to 75 percent of all adolescents who attempt suicide suffer from depression.

These signs of depression do not mean that the young person is contemplating suicide, but they should alert you to the need to find out more about their state of mind. Don't ever be afraid to ask, Do you sometimes feel so bad that you think of suicide? Raising the question neither puts the idea in their mind or encourages it. You are simply giving them the freedom to talk about it. Discussing suicide openly is one of the most helpful things you can do. It shows that you are taking the person seriously, and that you care. If the answer is "yes," then ask, "Have you thought about how you might do it?" If they have a definite plan, if the means are easily available, the method lethal, and if the time is set, the risk of suicide is very high. It is very important not to underestimate the danger by NOT asking for details.

If the danger is immediate, DO NOT LEAVE THE PERSON ALONE. Stay with them until the crisis passes, or until help arrives. It is possible to talk a person down from a crisis, or to help them talk themselves out of it. There is almost always ambivalence — part of them wants to die, but part wants to live. Contact 911, the police, the emergency room of a local hospital, a counselor, or a trusted adult to help. Do not try to handle the situation alone.

Myths and Facts About Suicide

Myth: People who talk about suicide don't kill themselves.

Fact: Eight out of ten suicides have spoken about their intent before killing themselves.

Myth: People who kill themselves really want to die.

Fact: Most people who commit suicide are confused about whether or not they want to live or die. Suicide is often a cry for help that ends in tragedy.

Myth: Once the depression seems to be lifting, would-be suicides are out of danger.

Fact: At such times, they are the most vulnerable to a reversal. Something can go wrong to make the person even worse than before. The person's apparent calm may be due to having already decided on suicide.

Myth: When people talk about suicide, you should get their minds off it, and change the subject.

Fact: Take them seriously; listen with care; give them the chance to express themselves, offer whatever help you can.

Remember that people who are thinking about suicide have a mental scale in their mind. In the thinking stage this scale is usually balanced and they don't care if they live or die. So, they need someone to help tip the scale on the side of life. They need hope, understanding, and the acceptance and support of someone who will not "preach" to them, but will point out reasons to live.

When Jesus enters a life, He enters to stay!

One last word...

Perhaps the most tragic myth of all is this: The vast majority of people in our world today believe the victim of suicide to have committed the "unpardonable sin." Of course it is the family of the victim that bears the guilt and the stigma of the myth surrounding suicide. This is a cruel lie of Satan and there is not a verse anywhere in scripture that will substantiate this line of thinking.

The word "suicide" does not appear in the Bible. It comes from the Latin combination of SUI, meaning "oneself," and CIDA, meaning "to kill." The misconceptions that suicide will send a person to hell go back as far as Augustine (350-430 A.D.) Augustine read the sixth commandment, "thou shall not kill," and decided that self-murder was condemned by God. Later Thomas Aquinas went much further. Aquinas has been called the "common doctor" of the Catholic Church. Believing that confession of sin must be made prior to leaving

this world for the next, he taught that suicide was the most fatal of all sins because the victim couldn't repent of it. The impact of the teachings of Sir Thomas Aquinas has lasted throughout the ages. But his thinking concerning suicide is not found anywhere in the Bible.

Anyone who believes that suicide is an unpardonable sin does not understand what it means to be "in Christ." The Bible teaches that there is only one thing that will send a person to hell and that is rejecting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. If a person has accepted the death of Jesus on the cross as payment for their sin, has asked Jesus to forgive them of all of their sin and given their heart and life to Him, then that person has been saved, or "born again."

The Bible teaches that when a person is saved, that person is saved once and for all by the grace of God and not by works of goodness. When Jesus enters a life, He enters to stay! Eternal life is ours and NOTHING can

separate us from Christ. We are "in Christ." For every one verse of scripture in the Bible that talks about Christ in us, there are ten verses that talk about being "in Christ." This is a permanent relationship, that isn't dependent on what we do or don't do. It is permanent because of the incredible, awesome power of the blood of Jesus that seals us for eternity "in Christ." If there were any sin, including suicide, that was more powerful than the blood of Jesus, then none of us would have any hope! Is suicide a sin? Yes. Is it the "unpardonable sin?" No.

What a pity that so many people have based their theology not on the Word of God, but on the opinions of mere men. In doing so, they have made Jesus to look weak and wanting, and have added false guilt and despair to the pain of those already hurting from the aftermath of suicide.