

THE BIG IDEA: Instead of looking for a way out, look for the ways that God is coming in.

The Take-Off

If you were with us for the start of our Asking For a Friend series last week, then you've already heard this.

It's worth repeating: we didn't start this series because we have all the answers.

We simply believe that the answer is Jesus and that we want to walk WITH each other toward him.

Sometimes the answers you'll hear in this series will surprise you, because there's almost always a greater question behind the question and that's what we are trying to tackle.

Think about last week's question: Is freedom from addiction really possible?

Great question, but if you were here, you may have been surprised that our guest - Larry Wilkins - actually addressed a greater question: Why do we get trapped in addiction in the first place?

The answer, of course, is that it's all about our relationship with the Father. If that isn't fulfilling us, then we'll search for something that can. Hello, addiction.

That's how the question behind the question works, and this morning will be no different.

1. The question

- a. When we first started receiving questions for this series, this was one of the first ones to come in.
- b. "Do people who commit suicide go to heaven?"
- c. The answer to THIS question is clear: if they believe in Jesus, yes.
- d. **Romans 8:35-39** / Nothing.
- e. **Ephesians 2:8-9** / If we didn't earn it because of good works, we don't lose it because of bad works
- f. But what's the real question behind the question?

2. The questions behind the question

- a. I believe a bigger question is "Why would someone who loves and is loved by Jesus commit suicide?"
- b. The answer (that will take longer than today to unpack) is hopelessness.
- c. An even bigger question is "How does someone end up hopeless?"
- d. While I recognize there are some here who have been affected by suicide, that's all the way over on the far end of a dark spectrum that most of us won't get to
- e. So let's talk about the end of the spectrum where most of us are and some hope killers found there
- f. Two that all of us experience would be anxiety and fear
- g. Fear is an immediate response to a threat; anxiety is a more sustained response to a potential threat
- h. Hiking in the woods may produce anxiety about possible snakes; seeing an actual snake would produce fear
- i. Most of the time most of us can talk ourselves out of anxiety - the mind is VERY powerful - and that's exactly what God designed it to do
- j. Neuroscience suggests 2 parts to the brain: cognitive brain and the emotional brain.
- k. When we feel anxiety, we can rationalize it if we can take it captive with truth (easier for some!)
- l. **Ex. Me climbing at Inner Peaks**
- m. If we aren't diligent in our minds, we can begin to lose the fight against our emotions and the chatter in the fear network of our brains can become more than we can handle
- n. Travel down that road far enough and despair sets in, then depression, then hopelessness
- o. What can we do to keep ourselves from traveling that road?
- p. Here are 3 things:
- q. PRAY about everything
 - **Philippians 4:6-7** / be anxious for nothing, pray about everything
 - Anxiety is based in the unknown
 - Prayer invites in the God who knows everything
 - "Peace will guard our hearts and minds" - from what? The continuing battle
 - We don't pray so we can END the battle; we pray because we're IN the battle
- r. PAY attention
 - We've all got triggers
 - Being triggered isn't an explanation; it's an indication that we need the Spirit to launch an investigation into our current situation!

- Psalm 42 / David says more than once “Why so downcast, oh my soul?”
- In other words, what triggered me and why?
- s. SAY something
 - To yourself - “Put your hope in God”
 - To others - ask if things are ok - remind them of God’s goodness

3. Never forget that God has the final word

- a. The reason we feel hopeless in dark seasons of the soul is because the enemy wants us to believe that our story ends there; but it doesn’t.
- b. Think of Jonah, or David, or Jesus in those dark places - what if they had chosen to end their story?
- c. Ninevah isn’t saved, David’s line ends, no cross, no resurrection, we aren’t saved
- d. But all of these recognized that dark seasons of the soul are just that - SEASONS - they will come AND GO

The Landing

Let me try to bring this to a close by sharing with you a word that God gave me about hope in hard places
As I thought about hopelessness, it occurred to me that we’re only hopeless if we don’t recognize that God is with us
His presence changes everything, and the Lord brought [Genesis 28:16](#) to my mind.

Context:

- Jacob has left what he knows to pursue an unknown
- Along the way, he sleeps, has a vision, and wakes up realizing God is there

[Genesis 28:19](#) says that he named that place Bethel, which means “house of God” - it used to be called Luz

I looked up what Luz meant expecting something amazing - it means “almond tree” - not what I expected

But that reminded me of [Jeremiah 1:11-12](#) - another reference to an almond tree (branch)

- tied to God watching over his word to perform it
- Hebrew word for almond is almost identical to the word for watching (means “to be on the lookout for”)
- The almond tree is the first to awake from the sleep of winter

This is when I came out of my skin

We need more Bethel moments - times when we we’re in Luz wondering if we’ll ever see the promises of God but when we realize that God has been with us the whole time and he is watching over his word to perform it FOR US

You may be going through a dark season of the soul - a winter season - but God’s brought you to this place so that, like the almond tree, you will be the first to awaken from this season

When Luz becomes Bethel, **we stop looking for a way out and start looking for the ways that God is coming in!!**

Genesis 28:22 / Bethel became a place of worship and generosity / 2 actions that break the cloud of anxiety

Let’s pray.