

In Aftermath of Jarrid Wilson's Suicide, Church Must Combat Satan's Tactic to Stigmatize Depression

If you are in crisis, please call 800-273-8255 or visit . You are not alone.

No words seem sufficient to describe the depth of grief felt for those who have taken their lives in recent days, including pastor and mental health advocate Jarrid Wilson. Ironically, the news of his death became public on Sept. 10, National Suicide Prevention Day. This shock should serve as a reminder to all that nobody is immune from mental health battles and Satan's lies. As a once deeply depressed and suicidal Christian who has centered my life around destigmatizing mental health struggles in the church, I can tell you that the devil's No. 1 tactic for driving Christians to suicide is one we often help to promote: Satan loves to tell depressed believers that they are not good Christians for having dark thoughts, so they had better just shut up.

So many Christian circles have normalized medication unless it is to treat a mental illness like depression or anxiety. We act as if those who have been "driven to the point" of taking medication have in tandem relinquished their trust or hope in God. However, we would never accuse a diabetic patient of not trusting God's healing powers because they take insulin.

Likewise, when we hear about someone's honest confession of feeling hopeless to the point of desiring death, we later gaggle together to lament how that person "simply doesn't know who they are in Christ." However, when a pastor confesses to a porn addiction, we don't question his standing with God but

are quick to hand him solutions like image-blocking software and an accountability partner.

For too long, the church has viewed mental-health struggles as dirty or “worse-than” sins. We have support groups for couples in failing marriages and those seeking to be better financial stewards. Where are the groups for those with suicidal thoughts? How about an accountability partner to make sure you aren’t thinking about ending your life today? Shouldn’t curtailing the response to ultimate hopelessness be at the forefront of our ministry?

Satan is the father of lies. It is part of his plan to make society, including Christians, believe that depression should be kept quiet, that suicidal thoughts are not be shared and that we are bad people for having these struggles. The truth of Christ, on the other hand, tells us that we are under no condemnation no matter our thoughts. He reminds us that His grace is never-ending, even when our shame feels constant. He came to the earth in the form of a man so that He would know exactly how hard it is to be us. And in dying on the cross, He gave us full and abundant life because He knows how badly we need it.

Obviously, I did not successfully commit suicide when I was 21. That’s because my roommate came home five hours early from work.

It is never a good time to commit suicide. But is always a good time to talk about it.

Our actions or thoughts cannot make us worthy or righteous because only Christ within us can do that, just as our dark thoughts or erratic actions not make us any less worthy. Jarrod Wilson is not any less of a Christian for having taken his own life.

But if Satan can make us not believe those things, if he can keep the church in the mindset that some struggles are

conquerable and others need to be kept private, he can advance his plan of killing, stealing and destroying.

What would happen if we made mental health checkups a regular part of prayer time? How much safer would people feel to share their struggles with depression if we preached about it from the pulpit? I suspect we would squelch Satan's plan to have us keep quiet and silence his favorite weapon of shame.

There is no shame in depression because you are righteous in Christ.

There is no shame in suicidal thoughts because there is nothing God can't help us conquer.

There is, however, shame in silencing hurting individuals and looking the other way when helping is hard. {eoa}

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