

Ron Luce Addresses Depression, Suicide in the Church

My heart goes out to Rick and Kay Warren over the death of their son, Matthew. Their grief has to be beyond what words can describe. Knowing how close my own daughter came to losing her life last May and having suffered the loss of several close friends and staff members, this tragedy hits close to home.

It seems that precious Matthew had been struggling with depression for a number of years, even dating back to his teenage years, as I've read in some accounts. The Warrens say he had been receiving treatment for his depression for years and that this disease unfortunately did not respond to counseling, medication or a host of treatments Matthew underwent.

I know the Warrens loved their son, prayed for him and did everything within their power to help him overcome his depression. There is no understanding why, at 27 years old, Matthew felt he could not go on living.

Now a debate has sprung up, centering on how depression is treated by the church. Depression is very real issue, and it affects 1 out of 8 teens. We need to remember that the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. As the church, what are we doing to love those who are in the grip of depression?

It seems that more and more teens see the taking of one's life as the only viable answer to cease pain. Take, for example, young Amanda Todd, who took her own life last fall after suffering bullying both in school and over social networks that was so bad she had to change schools several times and

even move to a new town. And just this past week, 17-year-old Rehtaeh Parsons ended her life after she was allegedly raped and photos of the incident were spread around at her school, and police chose not to file any charges in the case. Although these stories are significantly different from Matthew's, all of them were dealing with the same level of pain, and now all three families are suffering from incredible loss.

When the news of Matthew Warren's passing away became evident, it felt as though we all lost a son, because Pastor Rick has endeared himself to so many of our hearts. The fact is, when we hear any of these stories of young people in so much pain, we all grieve. We are seeing a generation suffering and hurting, and they can't make sense out of life.

In some situations, it appears that there's no answer available. With many parents, as I'm sure it was with Rick and Kay Warren, there's a sense that they have done everything they can do. Scripture says "and having done all, to stand firm" (Eph. 6:13, ESV).

Instead of being those who've never been touched by tragedy judging people like the Warrens, the Todds or the Parsons, it's up to us to find the Amandas and Matthews and Rehtaehs be a source of life and hope for them. It's up to us to be aware of what's going on in our own kids' lives and in their social network lives so we can be sure they're not being targeted emotionally beyond their ability to deal.

While for some families it may be impossible to know, many times (as with Todd and Parsons), the reason why is obvious. We can be the source of solace to a generation whose hurt is so deep, no words can describe it, and only the love of God through a human being can bring healing.

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