

Baptist Leader Takes His Own Life, Ending Battle With Depression

The pastor and former president of a state Baptist convention committed suicide after battling with depression for months.

Phil Lineberger, who took a medical leave of absence from Sugar Land Baptist Church, was 69 when he died on May 31, according to the *Baptist Standard*.

Son-in-law and family spokesman Brian Seay tells the *Baptist Standard* that Lineberger had “lost a battle with depression” when he took his own life.

Lineberger had previously preached the eulogy at the funeral of another pastor friend who committed suicide four years ago.

“Depression speaks a language of its own,” he said then. “A persistent and anxious emptiness. A feeling of hopelessness and pessimism. A sense of guilt and worthlessness and helplessness.”

He also spoke about the biblical precedent of depression:

“The Scriptures refer to depression as ‘the plague that destroys at midday’ Psalm 91:6,” Lineberger said. “Even in those days, in the days of the Old Testament, people would be observed at the height of their career or the greatest time in their life being extremely sad or confused or disengaged. And so the writers would say it is a plague or demon that destroys when the sun is highest at the midday.”

Christians are not immune to depression, as is evidenced by an uptick in pastor suicides.

“There is no lack of statistics about pastors and depression,

burnout, health, low pay, spirituality, relationships and longevity—and none of them are good,” writes Jennifer LeClaire in an article previously posted on *Charisma News*. “According to the Schaeffer Institute, 70 percent of pastors constantly fight depression, and 71 percent are burned out. Meanwhile, 72 percent of pastors say they only study the Bible when they are preparing for sermons; 80 percent believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families; and 70 percent say they don’t have a close friend.”

As Christians face growing persecution both on the home-front and worldwide, it’s vital now, more than ever, that we war on behalf of our pastors.

Please lift the Lineberger family up in prayer.