**How do we talk about suicide? By Thailer Jimerson**

Anthony Bourdain. Kate Spade. Chester Bennington. Chris Cornell. Robin Williams. The list goes on.

You see their names in the news. Another person has licked their fingers and squelched the wick of their lives. I’m not entirely sure if the rate for suicide has increased among the middle aged, but their deaths are all the more ubiquitous with the fingers of media multiplying. You can’t help but hear. However, as I was researching on my laptop the other day, in the upper right-hand corner of the display, a typical notification from CNN notified me that the suicide rate among today’s youth has dramatically increased since 1999 – by over 25%. If it’s not statistics, then it’s the 13 Reasons phenomenon on Netflix, the school shootings, or bullying induced tragedies of yesteryear.

This has stirred me to take it seriously. We need to be talking about this. We need to be better informed about the reasons behind suicide and we need to get better about having conversations with our youth, to say nothing of every member since, regardless of age, people struggle with depression and despair all around. What would happen if we were to hear each other’s stories and struggles and actually made the church a safe place to seek fellow burden bearers?

In my preparation for lesson or two on this topic, I seek your help. If you or someone you know would like to share their story with me, reach out. Let me know. You can write in email, or we can meet up. If you’ve not been personally touched by suicide in some way (and I know it’s rare to be completely unscathed), then pray about this with me. Let’s seek the Lord’s counsel in all these things for the service of our members here.

Here’s a few things to keep in mind as we journey towards this goal:

1. Suicide is not simple. We must avoid oversimplifying the issue or speaking in brusque ways that betray a lack of love and union for our fellow brothers and sisters.
2. Suicide should always be approached with compassion. This is another form suffering and as such we should seek understanding in all things.
3. Suicide happens for different reasons. There is no one-size-fits-all explanation or solution. The best thing to do is to take people at their own words and study into the issue.
4. Suicide is in the bible. One might be tempted to veer away from the topic for the assumption that God hasn’t spoken on the matter. But there are actually five counts of suicide in the Scriptures. Take a moment to read through and pray about them. Here they are: Judges 9.52-54; 1 Samuel 31.3-5; 2 Samuel 17.23; 1 Kings 16.18-19; Matthew 27.3-5.