



Recipients with Suicidal Thoughts: Brief Comments

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I have gotten quite a few questions along the lines of, “Many of the people who come to our healing ministry have thoughts about committing suicide. Can we use the Immanuel Approach with these people, and will it help with respect to their suicidal ideation?” This essay summarizes my brief, practical thoughts in response to this question. For a much more thorough (54 pages) discussion of suicide-related phenomena, see “Suicide Related Phenomena: Suicide Risk, Suicidal Behavior, ‘Mimic’ Suicidal Behavior.”¹

I. Different possible sources: There are a number of different factors that can contribute to a person having thoughts of suicide. In my experience, the most common source of suicidal ideation is something along the lines of, "I am really, really miserable (for any of a hundred possible reasons), and I wish I could just quit this miserable life to stop the pain." But almost none of these people actually intend to hurt themselves, and almost none of them ever make a real suicide attempt. Another common source of suicidal ideation is something along the lines of, "I'm in a lot of pain and need help, but I haven't been able to get the help I need by just asking. If I talk about suicide, or even make a suicide "attempt," then I get help." Most of these people talk about suicide, but never actually make a suicide attempt. And almost all of those who do make a “suicide attempt” never seriously hurt themselves. For example, they take a small overdose and then immediately call someone and tell them that they have just taken an overdose. They get taken to the nearest ER, the ER doc gives them medication that makes them vomit up the overdose, and they have no lasting injury.

Finally, there is a very small percentage of people with suicidal ideation who are truly in despair. They are deeply, profoundly hopeless, and are seriously thinking about taking their lives.

II. Big-picture perspective: The point of #1 is to give the big-picture perspective. There are many, many people with suicidal ideation who are not in any immediate danger, who do not need immediate mental health care, and who would greatly benefit from Immanuel Approach work.

III. Very simple plan for lay-counselors/lay-ministers: In light of the above, lay-counselors and lay-ministers can use the following very simple approach with respect to suicidal ideations. If a person you are working with mentions thinking about suicide, simply ask them to clarify. If they clarify that they are *currently* truly, seriously thinking about killing themselves, then explain that you are not a mental health professional, and tell them to call their mental health professional therapist and/or have someone take them to the psych ER immediately. On the other hand, if they clarify that they have seriously considered suicide *in the past*, but are **not** currently considering suicide right now, or if they clarify that they are just extremely miserable and/or making a cry for help, then Immanuel Approach work would be a very good intervention.

Help them get a good connection with Jesus, and then coach them to talk directly to Jesus about why they have considered suicide in the past and/or why they are so miserable and/or why they are making a cry for help. As they work with Jesus to find and resolve the roots of their pain

¹Available as a free download from the Special Subjects/Advanced Topics section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

and problems, their suicidal ideation will steadily, progressively resolve.

And again, see “Suicide Related Phenomena: Suicide Risk, Suicidal Behavior, Mimic Suicidal Behavior” for a *much* more detailed discussion of suicidal ideation and suicidal risk,