

Last Call: Addressing the Problem of Suicide

(September 11, 2020)

Ladies and gentlemen, this will be a difficult program. It's a topic no one feels comfortable talking about and very few people talk about it. It's rarely spoken about in public. It's whispered. But it needs to be discussed because lives are literally at stake. And very few people want to talk about it in the church, because this is not supposed to happen to church people, allegedly, but it does.

And my guest today is going to help us talk about this difficult issue. His name is Dr. John Mark Caton. He is the pastor of Cottonwood Creek Church in Allen, Texas. In fact, we just had the CrossExamined Instructor Academy down at that fine church. John Mark has been so gracious to host us there. He's also hosted several reThink conferences that our friends at Stand to Reason have put on. We've done our Fearless Faith program down there at Cottonwood Creek Church, Allen, Texas, just right outside of Dallas. And Dr. John Mark has a PhD in Ethics. And he's been the senior pastor there for over 25 years now and he's seen a lot.

In fact, back in 2007, he got a phone call from his brother, and we're going to pick up what happened with that phone call here in just a second. But John Mark, it's great having you on the program. How are you today?

John Mark:

I am doing well, Frank. Thanks for having me. Looking forward to it.

Frank:

Well, this topic, you've just written a new book on, and we're going to tell our listeners here in just a few minutes how they can get this book for free. And trust me, everybody should get this book. In fact, I just read it in the past couple of days. It's a great book. It's a short book, and it will help you deal with one of the most difficult topics anybody could deal with. And that topic is suicide. And the title of the book is, *Last Call: Suicide: An Unfinished Life*.

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

John Mark, let's go back to August 1, 2007. You were just, as I remember, dealing with a brand new sanctuary that you were building down there at Cottonwood Creek. God saw it fit through your leadership to expand the church dramatically and several thousand people are now members of Cottonwood Creek. But what happened that August 1, 2007 while you were discussing the expansion of the church?

John Mark:

Yeah, Frank it was, you know, for me personally as a pastor it was it was the best week I could have ever imagined. When I'd come to Cottonwood Creek 25 years ago, we were really small, just 100 folks, or so. And this was the moment we had relocated the church. We had been worshipping in a gym, we had built the worship center. And I was actually, on a Wednesday, night in my office with a group of our church leadership, preparing for our first Sunday in the new Worship Center. And to make that transition of walking from the gym into the new Worship Center, you know, every pastor's dream. You know, it was it was a mountaintop experience, not just for me, but it was a mountaintop experience for our congregation.

And so, we met till late into the evening. And then when I walk out to get into my vehicle, I noticed I missed a number of phone calls from my brother. And that was highly unusual for my brother to call me, you know. seven or eight or nine times, and just see on your phone missed call, missed call, missed call, missed call. And what took place in in the following hours literally changed my life and I still struggle today.

Frank:

You called him back that night and did get him and spoke to him at length. What did you say? Or what did he say first to you and then how did you respond?

John Mark:

Yeah. Frank, I did. So, I immediately picked a phone and called, him even though it was late. He answered the phone. And his first statement to me, Frank, was "just calling to tell you goodbye". And, you know, I was like, "what do you mean calling to tell me goodbye"? And he was just very honest. He says, "I'm done. I'm done. And I just wanted to call you and tell you, I love you and wanted to say goodbye." And I go, "as in, you're thinking about suicide"? And he goes, "no, I'm going to commit suicide".

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

And, you know, and it would have been one thing for me to reflect back on that phone call and think that I didn't think he was serious. The sad thing is, and this is something that's, you know, tortured me for years. I knew he was serious. Absolutely knew he was serious. And so, he just said, "I want you to know I love you. I want to ask for you to forgive me for all the things that I've done to hurt you and the family".

And then he went on and began to ask some questions that I still get asked today when I meet with a family who's lost a loved one to suicide. He said, "can I still go to heaven after I commit suicide"? He said, "can I be a Christian and even think about committing suicide"? And you know, honestly, the pastoral questions, the theological questions, the biblical questions, were easy to answer. That, yes, Christians all the time get depressed and they can feel hopeless and Satan lies to them and tells them, you know, that things are never going to change. Those are all things that any Christian can feel at any moment.

Can a Christian who commits suicide go to heaven? That's an easy one. The manner of our death does not determine our destiny. It's the decision that we make before we die, whether we're going to accept or reject Christ. Those pastoral questions, Frank, for me were easy to answer although I knew my brother was very serious. The personal questions were the ones that were hard to answer. You know, could I forgive him? You know, I preach on forgiveness all the time, but I struggled with those things.

And, you know, that night, I probably spent more time on the phone in a single phone conversation with him than I had for a long time. And when I hung the phone up, I thought I'd talked him out of it. I went back in my house. My wife was still awake; she knew I was on the phone. We prayed for my brother. And I put my head on the pillow and I thought, I should drive to Houston. I can be there in four hours. From Dallas to where he lived was four hours. And I didn't. I didn't, Frank, and that still haunts me today, and it hurts me today. Because I still to this day think somehow things would have turned out differently had I made that had made that drive to Houston and been there for my brother. But I didn't.

But instead, you know what I did? I said, man there's a lot going on in the church, I've talked him out of it, we've developed a plan. And my brother dealt with what many deal with when

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

they're struggling with suicidal thoughts. He had addiction problems. He struggled with alcohol. And he had beat it, and then he would lapse, and he would beat it, and he would lapse and fall back into it. So, he had fallen back into it. He had been through divorce and lived a lonely isolated life and away from people. And you know, God created us as relational beings. And so, he had those two things working against him. And he also struggled with depression. And so, you take those three and add them up and it was too much for him to take.

But I absolutely, Frank, thought I had talked him out of it. We had developed the plan that he was going to move to the city. He lived out in the country by himself. That's where he and his wife, before they divorced, lived. But everything was set up for him to fail. And the next morning, I drove into the office. The next phone call I received was from the sheriff's office that he had taken his life and, literally, my life was changed forever.

Frank:

Well, you put that experience and some wise counsel in your book, *Last Call: Suicide: An Unfinished Life*. My guest today is Dr. John Mark Caton and he is the pastor of Cottonwood Creek Church just outside of Dallas in Allen, Texas. And we're going to answer some questions today. What does the Bible say about suicide? Did people in the Bible actually commit suicide? What about them? Can a Christian who commits suicide still go to heaven? Why is the suicide rate going up? What can we do about it? How can parents talk to their kids about suicide? We need to prevent it. What can we do to prevent it?

You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek. We're back in two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

Ad:

Friends, can you help me with something? Can you go up to iTunes or wherever you listen to this podcast and give us a five-star review Why? It will help more people see this podcast and therefore then hear it. So, if you could help us out there, I'd greatly appreciate it.

Frank:

Suicide. The topic very few want to discuss but we are going to discuss it today with my friend, Dr. John Mark Caton, pastor of Cottonwood Creek Church, who had his own brother commit

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

suicide back in 2007. As you know, my friend, Dr. Mike Adams, who John Mark knew well, because Mike had spoken at the church several times. Our friend committed suicide just a couple of months ago, a month and a half ago. And everyone struggles when that happens, especially when we know that the people that did this are Christians. How could they do this and why would they do this and what happens to them when they do this?

I know that this current season, John Mark, has been very difficult for people. The COVID lockdown has created a lot of anxiety. I can tell you for sure that Dr. Mike Adams would be alive today if the COVID lockdown had not occurred. Not that he didn't have any say in this. He did, with regard to the decision he made. But what ultimately led him to the decision began with the COVID lockdown. He was isolated, he wasn't teaching anymore, he was speaking out against the lock down and people came down on him for that, and one thing led to another. And isolation is one of the worst things that can happen.

In fact, you talk about that a lot in the book, *Last Call*. That isolation is one of the biggest problems that people have prior to committing suicide, or the people that survive suicide; the people in the family, or the friends that survive that have somebody they know commit suicide. When they get isolated that can be a problem, as well. Why is that such a problem, isolation?

John Mark:

Well, you know, I think what happens in isolation is, first of all, it's not the way God created us. You know, God created us as relational beings. If you go all the way back to the creation story, everything that God created was good, good, good, good. And the first time you hear, this is not good, it was not good for man to be alone. And God created us as relational beings. God's in an eternal relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And so, we are created in God's image. So, we are created to be in relationships with others and connection and friendship and conversation with others to worship with God's people.

And the facts are, when we withdraw from others, when we lose our relationships, and it is replaced with isolation, it just compounds anybody's problem that they already have. If someone is already struggling with, perhaps an addiction, or perhaps depression, or perhaps some sort of hopelessness, or they have circumstances in their lives that are difficult for them to bear when things are good, you take that same individual and isolate them and it just

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

compounds the problems. And we see this all the time really today with young adults. You know, the sad reality, Frank, is with young adults right now in our country, that suicide is the second leading cause of death. The second leading cause of death. Youth and young adults.

Frank:

You just had someone in your congregation with a situation of suicide. Do you want to relate that to us?

John Mark:

Yeah, a 15 year old boy. We're talking about a sharp student, within a couple of miles from our church. We're in a wonderful area, a great city, that really, when you go back to the lockdown back in March, prior to the lockdown, regardless of what was going on in his life, he got up every day, got ready, went to school, spent time with his friends, saw his friends, came home, then he interacted with his friends, and on Sunday he came to church, and then on Wednesday night went to youth group.

Now, there's no doubt that probably he was struggling with some things. We're talking about a 15 year old boy. When you're 15 years old, and you're a teenage boy, you're struggling, right? You don't know where you are half the time and you've got hormones and thoughts and people and relationship issues.

But then you take that same individual and you isolate that individual, and all of the problems get magnified, and there's nothing there to distract you. There's no one there to help you level set what's going on in your life and the hopelessness and despair just continues to go up. And if you look within the teens and young adult category, right now we're seeing already the connection between, the more time spent on social media and apart from actual and real relationships, the more depressed the child will get.

Frank:

Well, I think social media just creates jealousy and isolation in many regards. And people tend to get their identity, unfortunately, now from social media. Why aren't my friends liking my post? Do people not like me anymore? Why did my friend get better likes than mine? And how come my friends always seem like they're having a great time? They've got all these great

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

pictures on Instagram and Facebook or wherever they're putting them up and going wow, they're always having a good time. And that's just not true. People are always putting their best foot forward on social media and nobody ever puts up on social media, or very rarely do they say, I'm having a tough day today. Gee, can you help me? It's completely the opposite.

And so, people get this false idea, like what's wrong with me? All my friends look good. Look at all the good things that are happening to them. And so, it gives people a completely false view of reality. And I think as parents, we need to really watch our kids on social media, because if we're not there to counterweight the kind of negativity and false expectations that social media sets up for them, they can fall into this, John Mark.

John Mark:

That's exactly right. And, you know, the truth is, the more people you follow, the more people are having a better time than you are that night, or that day. It's that way with us, as adults, but we understand as we post on social media...I typically don't post my worst day as a pastor. I don't post those days. And I just shared in the first segment that, you know, hey, the loss of my brother still causes me sometimes to weep and cry today. Those are not the days that I post on social media, right? It's not that I want to be a liar. I just want to encourage people. But as young adults, when they look around and they see someone else is always having a better time, and follow more people and guess what? More people are going to have a better time. And people post lies, right.

Frank:

Right.

John Mark:

My life is better. And as a result, they can begin to believe the lies of Satan. Scripture tells us Satan's a liar, and boy, you take social media, or you isolate someone, they'll begin to believe that no one cares and that is a lie. God cares about people. I care, you care, others care, but you begin to believe the lie when all you're looking at is social media. Beyond that, sometimes we can think, well, my pain, or my hopelessness, my depression will never end. But it really will. There'll be a time when you are back with your friends and encouraging one another.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

I think, honestly, sometimes people believe when they're in a lot of pain, they believe a lie that Satan says, you know, if you will just take your life, it will end all the pain. Well, I can tell you this, Frank, from personal experience, the pain of my brother's life didn't end when he took his life. It was just transferred. And if nothing else, it was multiplied to me and my family.

Now looking back on my brother, that was not my brother's thought process. He didn't want to hurt me. He didn't want to hurt our family more. But he believed the lie that Satan told him, that that will end the pain, and it didn't end the pain at all. It just transferred it from him to us and it multiplied and magnified it in such a way.

And so, the more we can get out of social media, and in real relationships, and in relationships with others, the better off we're going to be. And the more we can read in Scripture, and hear scripture talk, we can hear the truth that God created us in His image. And he blessed us. And we can also be reminded that, hey, our feelings are real, but they're often unreliable. You know, my feelings are real. The way I feel, the way you feel, they are real, but they're often unreliable.

Frank:

And you write in the book that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. I want people to think about that for a minute. It's a permanent solution. It's not really a solution, but people think it is for them, to a temporary problem. Things will get better. And God loves you, people love you. More people out there care about you than you know. And so, it's never the right call. Because as you just said, John Mark, this just transfers pain to everybody else.

We had the same situation here, as I said, with my friend, Mike Adams. His fiancé still can't get out of bed sometimes in the morning, you know, and that's going to continue for a while. And you always think that there was something you could have said that could have could have changed his mind. And probably the answer to that is no, you couldn't have. And I've heard that from professionals who say, once someone decides to commit suicide, they may be delayed in doing it, but unless there's some sort of huge intervention, they're going to do it at some point. Maybe if you had driven to Houston you might have delayed it, John Mark, but chances are you wouldn't have prevented it.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

John Mark:

Yeah, and that's exactly right. But even going back to my brother's life, he had been through deep valleys before and never to the place of wanting to commit suicide. He had he had lost his battle with addiction before on multiple occasions, he had been alone before, but he always rallied back. And as you said, just a few minutes ago, he chose a permanent solution to a temporary problem that really cut off all opportunity for God to do an amazing work in his life and miss out on the opportunity not to see another mountaintop, which I absolutely believe that my brother would have seen another mountaintop. He would have seen another season of God's blessing and sunshine in his life had he not chosen that permanent end to a very temporary, but real problem. A difficult problem, a difficult season in his life.

Frank:

Well, there are things we can do now to help other people, and to answer some questions, and we're going to do that as this show unfolds. So, don't go anywhere. We've got just about a minute before the break. But I just want to reiterate one thing, Pastor John Mark, that you had mentioned earlier, that people who are Christians who commit suicide. The thought is, oh, they can't go to heaven. That's not true. Just give us 30 seconds on why that's not true.

John Mark:

Well, really, the manner of one's death has nothing to do with our destiny. How we die doesn't determine our destiny. It's what we do with Jesus Christ before we die. If an unbeliever dies from suicide, they don't spend eternity apart from God because of the suicide. They spend eternity apart from God because they rejected Christ. If a believer would also commit suicide, they are going to heaven because they've accepted Christ.

Frank:

What can we do as Christians to help people who have these thoughts? Maybe we have them ourselves? What can we do about that? How can we help those struggling? And how can we help the survivors of suicide? We're going to talk about all of that right after the break. You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek. My guest is Pastor John Mark Caton and we'll be back in two.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Ad:

If you find value in the content that is podcast, don't forget to follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Join our online community to have great conversations, grow in your knowledge of God, and become a better defender of the Christian faith. Also, don't forget to subscribe to our YouTube channel, where we have hundreds of videos and over 100,000 subscribers that are part of our online family. Find those by searching for Frank Turek or CrossExamined in the search bar. You can find many more resources like articles, online courses, free downloadable materials, event calendars, and more at crossexamined.org.

Frank:

The book is called, *Last Call: Suicide: An Unfinished Life*. And for this month Pastor John Mark is going to give this book to you for free. All you need to do is text the word BOOK to 77978. We'll either send you a hardcopy, or you can download the PDF. For those of you that hear this after this month, and you want to get the book, it is on Amazon. You can get it there. Again, the book is called, *Last Call: Suicide: An Unfinished Life*, by John Mark Caton. He's my guest. PhD in Ethics and pastor of Cottonwood Creek Church in Allen, Texas.

You know, John Mark, just before the break, we were talking about the fact that just because someone commits suicide, that doesn't mean they're going to hell if they've already accepted Jesus as their Savior. But I've had people ask me, if someone commits suicide, will they go to hell? And I always want to stop and ask, why are you asking that question? You know, because it's almost like you're giving them permission to take their own life because they're not going to experience a consequence of going to hell because of doing such a thing. But they will experience the consequences of lost rewards and the fact that the future here on Earth has now been cut short where they could have done some more work for Christ. Correct?

John Mark:

Absolutely. And, and I will tell you, going back to my brother's case, that he asked me for himself, and that immediately put me in a difficult situation. Because as I shared earlier, I knew he was serious. And my fear was that if I told him, oh yes, you'll still go to heaven, that that was giving him permission to take his life. And in that moment, and in that season, I certainly wasn't thinking clear because it caught me off guard.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

But you touched on it exactly correctly. You, as a Christian who commits suicide, can go to heaven. But they absolutely are breaking one of God's commandments, thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not kill, which ultimately, is exactly what suicide is. It is murder. It just happens to be self-murder. And then to think about the lost rewards, the lost opportunity, the missed opportunity to see God's blessings and impact other people's lives. Those are real losses.

Yes, I believe my brother's in heaven, because he had trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. But I also believe that my brother, James, he missed a lot of blessings and rewards that God still had planned for him.

Frank:

Now, this is not something uncommon in the scriptures. There are suicides in the scriptures. You mentioned some of them in the book. Saul is one primary example. Judas, of course, is another, John Mark. But you also talk about people in the scriptures who wanted to commit suicide and didn't. Speak about that a little bit.

John Mark:

You know, that's the beauty of God's word is it tells the truth. I mean, some people that we consider heroes of the faith came to points and places in their life where they preferred death over life because of what they were going through. Take Elijah. Just one chapter. Go look at First Kings chapter 19, one chapter after the amazing success on Mount Carmel. Elijah has hidden in a cave. Now notice he's isolated himself. He's not where God wants him to be. He's alone and he's throwing a pity party. And he prays and in 1 Kings 19:4 he prayed that he wouldn't die. Then if you go into the very next verse, he says, Lord, I have had enough. God take my life.

Now think about it. Elijah the Prophet came to a place because he was alone. He was isolated. He's in a cave of his own depression and hopelessness and misery. And he prayed that God would take his life. He was despairing. Now, let me tell you what, Elijah was a massive and major prophet in the Old Testament. If he can struggle with that, so can I.

Jonah the Prophet, he wanted to die. Oh, look at Jonah chapter four.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

What about the Apostle Paul in the New Testament? Man, if any of us together could ever scratch the surface on all the amazing things that the Apostle Paul did in his life, I think we would all cherish that. But if you go look at Second Corinthians chapter one, Paul in talking about all of his troubles that he experienced, he said, we were under pressure, far beyond our own ability to endure it. And listen to the words he said, so that we even despaired of life itself.

But in each one of those cases, and also Solomon, by the way. Man, you go look Ecclesiastes, Solomon, all of life is meaningless. But if you think about Solomon and Elijah and Jonah and Paul and others in Scripture, they came to seasons and moments in their life where they preferred death over life. But here's the beauty. They chose to trust God and every one of those individuals, you can track to a different time in their life, where they saw God's blessings, as well.

Jesus, even in the Garden of Gethsemane, boy, he despaired of what he was going through and he longed not to go through what he was going through. And so, if Jesus can feel what we feel and goes through and experiences what we go through, man, it is not uncommon for a believer to really struggle and even despair of life. But the key is, as those in Scripture, we have to make the right choice to press on and to live for God's glory.

Frank:

There are so many examples in Scripture, as you just pointed out, Pastor John Mark, that I think we forget about that. And the Bible, as you mentioned, is real. It includes all the warts, difficulties, and struggles of its heroes because it's telling the truth. A made up story probably wouldn't have included those things, especially if you're trying to say that you want to be a Christian because your life is going to be better. No, it's probably not going to be better. You're going to be persecuted, you're going to be beat down, you're going to experience trouble. But Jesus said, take heart, I've overcome the world.

And you know, Pastor John Mark, I have a friend who I hadn't been in touch with for about eight years, but years ago, her husband committed suicide practically in front of her. Her name is Renee Coates Scheidt, and she had a TV show here in Charlotte area for many years. And she happened to email me for another reason about two months ago, and we got talking via email.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

And then when Mike Adams committed suicide, and his fiancé was struggling so, I connected Renee and Mike's fiancé. And Renee has been a complete godsend to Mike's fiancé.

In fact, at the memorial service, I was talking to Renee and I said, thank you so much for helping out Mike's fiancé, Marquietta. And she said, "it makes what I went through actually meaningful". In other words, that I can take my experience, as Paul talks about in Second Corinthians one, and use it to bless somebody else. That the God who comforts us can then enable me to comfort somebody else. And so, Renee is now comforting Marquietta with the difficulty that she went through to help Marquietta through this difficulty now.

And so, that's why, friends, we can't be isolated when we go through difficulty. We have to reach out to other people. I just thought it was so providential that a woman I hadn't heard for many years emails me just a couple of weeks before Mike dies. And she's the perfect person to help Marquietta through the difficulty that she's going through now.

John Mark:

And God does use it that way. As much as I can just tell you, Frank, I wish my brother's suicide was not part of my story. But I will also tell you that there have been times that that I've walked into a house, just as I did with the mom with a 15 year old boy the other day. I sat across the table in my office as she spent the first 15 minutes trying to talk and just weeping. And I was just there, and I understood it.

And you know, we have a lot of care ministries at the church, and you know, Grief Share and different things. But I will tell you when it comes to suicide, Grief Share typically doesn't do it. It requires someone that's been there. And we've connected with a few ministries here locally. One of the ministries is just called SOS...Survivors of Suicide. The only people that go in there are parents, or fiancé's, who have lost loved ones. And the care and compassion and love and support they get from others who have been through it is just a complete godsend.

And I can tell you, it wasn't that long ago that I sat on a kitchen floor with a mom and her two daughters on a kitchen floor with them. And all did was sat down and cried with them for 30 minutes because the husband had taken his life upstairs, and the father. And once you've been down there, and sadly, I've becoming known in our area as the pastor who went through

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

suicide. And so, anytime the police department has something going on, I'm a chaplain for the police department. If it's a suicide, they pick up the phone and call me.

And let me tell you what, I don't usually show up and speak the first few minutes. I have to cry with them because I've been there. And that's why it's so important that if someone has been through the loss of a loved one, just as you did, to connect them with someone that's also been down that path. It's painful. I will tell you, for me, every time I sit in an office or go to a home and try to minister and share the compassion of God with them that I've received myself, it's a painful experience. But also know that it's a powerful one, because I've been through it. And now that I've looked back, that I can provide some answers and strength and hope to those who are struggling.

Frank:

How often does this happen, John Mark? How often do you get a call from the police department?

John Mark:

Probably at least once a month. It's that often.

Frank:

You guys that are listening right now, we can't cover everything in the book. But you need to get the book, especially if you have young people in the home. I mean it's the second largest cause of death among young people 10 to 24. So, we want you to do right now is we want you to text...and this is a free book, okay...just text the word BOOK to 77978 and John Mark will either get you a hardcopy, or a PDF, of the book he just wrote. Just came out in March called, *Last Call: Suicide: An Unfinished Life*. And there's a lot of good advice in here, some of which we'll get to right after the break.

But John Mark, this COVID situation has been very difficult on people. And I'm sure you've probably seen maybe an uptick in this kind of thing in recent months, correct?

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

John Mark:

Absolutely. Absolutely. The thing that concerns me as a pastor is, here's what I know, you take even adult individuals, not just the young teens who are more isolated than we need them to be, but you take adults and cause them to lose a job because the economy, you take men; addiction, depression, and ultimately suicide is going to be a result of what we're going through right now. Guarantee it.

Frank:

Sorry for the somber topic, ladies and gentlemen, but we need to speak about this issue, because it's taking lives and we need to do what we can to prevent it and help those who are survivors of it; relatives and friends. We're back in two minutes. Don't go away.

Ad:

Friends, Frank Turek here. I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, is a listener supported radio program and podcast. So, if you like what you hear would you consider donating to CrossExamined.org? 100% of your donations go to ministry, zero percent to buildings. We're completely virtual. So, if you can help us out, we'd greatly appreciate it. Thank you so much.

Frank:

If you're just tuning in, we're talking to my friend, Dr. John Mark Caton, Pastor of Cottonwood Creek Church. We're talking about this difficult issue of suicide. And the book that he just wrote recently is called, *Last Call: Suicide: An Unfinished Life*. You can get it for free. He's going to send it to you because this is a ministry and he wants to help people about this issue, preventing suicide or helping those who are surviving; friends and relatives that survived a suicide. Just text the word BOOK to 77978.

Now, Pastor John Mark, why is suicide just so much more difficult to get over than just, say, a normal death when somebody dies from an accident, or old age, or a disease, or something like that? Why is this more difficult?

John Mark:

Yeah, that's a great question. And I will submit to you it is more difficult. Well one, because at the end of the day, we can never get to the question of why. As I shared earlier in the

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

broadcast, one of the first questions people ask after they've lost a loved one is, can they still go to heaven? The second question that they may or may not ask me, but they're certainly asking them, is the question of, why would they choose that path over another path? And the truth is, you'll never get that answer. And then finally, I think one of the reasons suicide is so hard to get over is because you really have no one to be angry at. Because the person you are mourning is also the one you're angry at.

Take, for example, another tragic example that, should someone lose a son or a daughter, that they're going through an intersection and a drunk driver runs a red light and causes an accident and you lose your son or daughter, you are mourning the loss of your child, or even your husband, or even your wife. You are mourning that person. But you can then direct, a natural thing is we're going to be angry at someone, right? We want to be angry at the responsible person who caused my son, or my daughter, or my husband, or my wife, or my mom or dad's death. We want to be angry. We have a typical reaction of wanting to be angry. But the problem with suicide, Frank, is that the person we are mourning is also the person we're mad at.

Frank:

Right. Yeah.

John Mark:

And that compounds the issues because then you are even more conflicted. You don't just have the loss. Now you multiply the loss with the anger that you have no place to redirect it towards. And it's like the 900 pound gorilla that just lands on your shoulders.

Frank:

Well, a lot of time there is no "why" because it's not a rational event. In fact, with Mike's case, Mike Adam's case, as I spoke about on a previous program, there wasn't a note. But we recognized in the last few days of his life, he wasn't thinking clearly at all. He wasn't acknowledging clear facts. And it just spiraled out of control.

And as you point out in the book, a lot of times you believe the lies of Satan, because you're isolated and you've closed yourself off. So, that's one thing that you can't do. If you know

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

somebody that's isolated or you're isolating yourself, you have to reach out to other people. And so, the next question I do want to ask you, John Mark is, what can we do to help someone who is struggling with suicidal thoughts right now? What can we do?

John Mark: Well, ultimately, it's a complex issue. But the first thing you have to do is, if you find out they are struggling with suicidal thoughts, you need to immediately broaden the circle. If they are a young adult, whether male or female, you need to contact the parents. If it is a school friend, you need to communicate with the professionals at the school. This is not something that that you take upon yourself. You broaden the circle.

Even as a pastor, who's been a pastor now here at Cottonwood Creek over 25 years, and been through suicide myself, I don't feel equipped alone to walk someone through suicidal thoughts apart from a team, if that makes sense. So, I would encourage if you've got a young adult who is listening in, or a teenager, and they are they struggling with suicidal thoughts, first thing you need to do is tell your parents, tell their parents, tell people at the school. If they are very serious, then you call 911 and report it, and then do everything you can to help that individual.

After you've contacted the authorities and you broaden the circle, help that individual to get some pastoral help, to get in relationship with others, and demonstrate that the lie that Satan is telling them that no one cares is simply not true. It's just not true. People do care, and you do matter, regardless of how you feel. So, that'd be my first thought is, broaden the circle; is do everything you can to just be in relationship with them. There's not one perfect thing you can say but the more people who can speak into a life, and to the life of a person who is struggling with suicidal thoughts, the better off they are going to be.

Frank:

What should parents do, right now, with regard to their teenagers? Now the teenagers may have not expressed anything about suicide, yet this needs to be discussed. I think every parent needs to discuss this with their child, just like they should discuss every other major issue with their child. How should a parent speak to their children about suicide, John Mark?

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

John Mark:

That's a great question. And, just as you said, every parent needs to, in this day and age, speak to their children about the issue of suicide. And I would encourage you, first of all, that as a parent, when you speak with your child about suicide, you need to use some shock value terminology. Call it what it is. Call it murder. Call it self-murder. A lot of times we want to soften things up and refer to it as suicide, but the sad thing is, Frank, what we see a lot on social media, if a teenager takes a life, we see all the beautiful images of a candlelight vigil, that all the students are up at the school, and what can happen is Satan, in a person that is already not thinking clearly, Satan can think won't that be beautiful. Won't that be beautiful. And we can kind of idolize this idea of suicide as if there is some sort of beauty in it, when the reality of it is, it's not beautiful at all. It is painful.

And so, the parents need to go and speak to their kids. I can tell you that after my brother's death, that we sat down with our kids and looked them in the eye and said, I want you to know that the decision that my brother made was the wrong decision. He cost himself a lot of God's blessings and future days. If you ever have thoughts, that you come talk to us. There is no problem we can't and won't solve together.

Now, I will tell you that was a conversation we have. But Frank, we've had those same conversations with our kids again, when someone around them has committed suicide. We go back to them and have those conversations again and we say, we want to remind you that there is no trouble you go through that you have to make the decision of suicide. That is always the wrong decision.

And like I said, again, parents need to call it what it is; murder. We need to have some shock value involved, that don't let your kids think that suicide is just something that is followed by a sweet candlelight vigil, because it's not. It is murder and it's self-murder.

Frank:

It needs to be discussed, ladies and gentlemen. Again, if you want to get the book...we can only cover a small portion of the book here on this program...just text the word BOOK to 77978. And Pastor John Mark will get you, either a hard copy, or the PDF of the book. It's worth reading. It's a short book, just a little over 100 pages. And there's so much in here, as I say, that we couldn't

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

cover. But John Mark, what would you like to leave with our audience as we kind of wrap up our thoughts here?

John Mark:

Sure, I would just love to say, first of all, if there's someone who's listening to this, that you are struggling with suicidal thoughts, reach out for help. There are lots of places you can go professionally, to the church for pastoral help. Don't ever stay isolated. Go get involved in a group. Surround yourself with people. And that's, first and foremost, to those who are struggling. If you are trying to help someone who is struggling with suicide, immediately broaden the circle. Don't feel like you have to take this on your own but then also help that individual get involved in groups, be the way God created them, which is for relationships.

And then finally, for those who've lost a loved one, just like me, I want to encourage you. Be open and honest about it. Be willing to share with others. This is not a topic that we need to be embarrassed about, that someone we love took their life. We need to be open and honest about it, and be willing to talk about it, and also be willing to talk about the simple fact, as I do with my brother. I love my brother dearly but the reality of it is that the decision that he made cost him the opportunity to see God's blessings in this world. Now, he knows God in heaven, but the reality that he missed an opportunity also cost my children the opportunity of growing up with their uncle. And so those are those are somber thoughts, but they're real thoughts and we can all get through this together.

Frank:

And there is a purpose to life, ladies and gentlemen. That's one of the reasons people commit suicide, is they think there's no purpose. There is a purpose. The purpose is to know God and to make Him known. And there's nothing more beautiful than knowing God, which means that your future is secure. You don't achieve your identity in Christianity, you receive your identity. There's no pressure on you to do anything but just to accept the free gift that Christ has given you. So, there's no pressure. Jesus has taken all the difficulty on himself. Yes, we'll have difficulty here on Earth, but he will help us get through it and ultimately, we're going to be with him in eternity and every tear will be wiped away. There'll be no more crying, no more pain. But that crying and pain right now can actually help us become more like Jesus and enhance our

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

capacity to enjoy God forever. So, suicide is not the answer. Getting closer to other people and closer to Jesus is the answer.

So, John Mark, thanks for writing this book. Took a lot of guts to write this and to make it available for free to everyone.

John Mark:

Well, happy to do it. And it's just an opportunity to remind people that, in the sinful culture and world that we live in, you know, as scripture said, Jesus said the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But Jesus said, I have come that you would have life and life to the fullest.

Frank:

Amen brother. Thank you so much. Friends, that's Pastor John Mark Caton. His book *Last Call*. Get it for free by texting BOOK to 77978. Lord willing, I'll see you here next week. God bless you all.

Ad:

If you benefit from this podcast, help others find it. Just go to iTunes or any other podcast service you might be using to listen and leave us a five-star rating on the, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, podcast with Dr. Frank Turek. It will take you less than five seconds. You can also help a lot by leaving us a positive review for others to see. This podcast is available on iTunes, Spotify, Google Play, Stitcher, TuneIn, and many other audio content delivery apps. Thank you and God bless.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THIS PODCAST](#)