

Robin Williams' death leaves one unanswerable question

By the time you read this post, you will have heard, from various traditional and social media sources, about the death of actor Robin Williams. At the age of 63, his death is suspected to be a suicide.



Suicide? Well, that leaves one question we will never be able to answer when something like this happens: Why?

A couple of days ago, my neighbor's daughter was shot in the side with her two young kids nearby (also covered on the news). The shot caused her to lose a kidney, but, thankfully, not her life. I saw her five-year-old son last night and his face and demeanor told me that he was starting to understand the gravity of the situation. I asked if he wanted a hug, he said yes, and that was the best I could do for him at the time. This is the same little boy who has seen his uncle arrested and hear about his father being shot in the arm. He's a tough little kid; too tough for only five.

Just as we can't say for sure why his mother was shot, we can't say why Robin Williams decided to take his own life.

I know Mr. Williams has had some trouble in life and he had been diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder (a treatable mental illness) as these facts have been discussed in the media. But, with suicide, we who are left behind never really know why such a horrible thing happens.

I don't want to write this off as an insignificant question of life, but, at some point, we have to stop asking why and start living again. I know. I lost my father to suicide in 1998. There is anger, frustration, guilt, and, of course, sadness and regret for those left behind and I went through all of those emotions. Not every family member comes out on the other side with their faith intact, like I did.

I had to make a conscious effort to eliminate the question of motive and ask God what I could learn and take from this. I already knew God would take care of my family and me; I wasn't worried about that. I was concerned that others would miss the signs and be too afraid to ask such a very personal and hard question: "Are you thinking of harming yourself?"

If you've read my posts before, you know I am a firm believer of ingraining in people a respect for life. I believe this respect for life, which comes from loving others and seeing them as God sees them, is key to resolving many human issues. But it is also

an important key to understanding how we see ourselves. In the song "Seasons Change" by Christian artist Crystal Lewis, she sings, "Are you going through a dry spell? I was there a while ago. Now I've come to a place where the rain falls, where the trees bear fruit and grow. Where I find a refuge in my God, it's a place of surrender I know. I look at God and see what I want to be, He looks at me and sees His own."

Lyrics like this remind me that no matter how awful I think of myself that is not the person God sees when He looks at me. It is the same for all of us. Give yourselves a break and look at yourself the way God does.

When God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint a new king (whose identity was unknown to Samuel), the prophet looked on Eli'ab and thought God chose this man. "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'" (1 Samuel 16:7, RSV) We must always remember God knows our hearts and loves us all. God doesn't make mistakes, which means he didn't make a mistake creating any one of us. Anyone suffering from depression, as I do, needs to remember that daily. But it is a truth we should all keep in mind.

So, while we will never really know why Robin Williams died, we can take this time to reach out and help others who may be facing a similar situation. Remind them of the love that is there for them every single day. And if you or someone you know is in emotional crisis, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). You can also chat online via their website at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

One final set of lyrics to meditate on, also from Crystal Lewis. These are from her song "Beauty for Ashes:"

"When sorrow seems to surround you. When suffering hangs heavy o'er your head. Know that tomorrow brings wholeness and healing. God knows your name, just believe what He said: He gives beauty for ashes, strength for fear, gladness for mourning, peace for despair."