

The Suicide of Roh Moo-Hyun

Audio Blog by Gregg Harris, President – FEBC

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The recent suicide of former South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun is a tragedy for the people of South Korea. President Roh, who served as President between 2003 and 2008, took his own life amid an ongoing corruption investigation. Although he denied the allegations against him, he apologized to his fellow citizens saying he felt "ashamed and sorry" for disappointing them.

Suicide is always a tragedy. The pain, despair and hopelessness that lead someone to take their own life is something we as Christians should be deeply concerned about. It's my hope that the global attention President Roh's story has received will highlight the massive problem of suicide around the world.

Several years ago, the World Health Organization warned that suicide kills more people each year than road traffic accidents in most European countries. The WHO went on to say that globally, suicide takes more lives than murder and war put together. In 2004, the death toll from suicide was placed at almost one million people per year, and it accounted for half of all violent deaths worldwide. The agency estimated that the number of suicide fatalities could rise to 1.5 million by the year 2020.

Is there anything we as Christians can do to bring hope into the lives of those who are so hopeless? I believe there is. For the past twenty years that I have been involved in international missionary radio, and during that time I have heard dozens of amazing stories God's miraculous intervention in preventing suicides through radio broadcasts.

Years ago, I heard the following story from Latin America. A man had grown so discouraged that he decided to throw himself into a raging river that was so fierce, it was known as "el Tigre" or the Tiger. As he was walking to the edge of the river, intent on ending his life, he was listening to the radio. By God's grace, he randomly turned the dial to a Christian station, where the announcer said "what are you doing with your life, are you throwing it away?" The man was stunned by these words. He felt that God himself was speaking to him through the radio. He continued listening, turned his back on the river, went home, and eventually found Christ as his Lord and Savior.

One day I was sitting at lunch with one of my Japanese colleagues named Keiko, and she told me a very encouraging story. She said in the midst of a very busy day, she received an unexpected visitor. While her first inclination was to say that she was too busy, she felt like God wanted her to see this person. The woman was ushered into her office, they spent a few minutes chatting, and the woman left. Only later, did Keiko learn what God had done. The woman later wrote to Keiko and said that she had resolved that day to kill herself. But before she died she wanted to hear the warm and comforting voice that she so often listened to on the radio. Because she was able to talk to Keiko, God used that meeting to prevent her from committing suicide. She subsequently received counseling and is now moving on with her life.

Suicide is tragic, but God's power knows no limits. Even today, I believe that he is reaching out to the hurting and the hopeless through radio waves around the world, to whisper words of hope and life into those who feel that life is not worth living.

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