

## Pa232 Counseling

### *Lesson Pa232-11 Personal Growth: Overcoming Greed*

In this section of lessons, we have discussed issues of personal growth. These issues have included overcoming sin, seeking God first, and the striving for status. God gives us purpose as pastors, counselors, and Christian men and women. We are to give rest to the weary. We offer hope for the future to those who are discouraged. We speak comfort during the struggles of life. We encourage people to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps 34:8). We ask them to place all their cares on him.

This lesson teaches about another issue of personal growth in some people’s lives—greed. A person may come to believe they have the right to what others have. They become depressed, sorrowful, discouraged, and often enraged when they have been rejected. They may complain to you about how unfair someone is for not letting them have what they want. This is common in children. They think they should have whatever they want. This attitude may have worked for some when they were children. It becomes more difficult as a person interacts with others as an adult.

Sometimes an adult who comes to you may act like a disappointed child. He or she wants someone to help them get something they want. Always pay attention to the questions that come to your mind as they share their story. The questions are often the Spirit of God directing your thinking. He will guide you in responding to this person’s complaint. These questions will help you understand the person’s situation. As they tell their story they may really be saying “Will you help me get what I want?” Listen to the following story from Jewish history. We will pause the story a few times so you can reflect on questions that come to your mind.

There was a vineyard that belonged to a man named Naboth. He lived in the city of Jezreel, close to the local palace of Ahab, king of Samaria. The king asked Naboth for his vineyard so he could use it as a vegetable garden. To the king it was only logical, because the vineyard was close to the palace where he lived. Ahab offered to buy Naboth’s vineyard from him or to give him another vineyard in exchange. Naboth said, “Oh no, I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers. This vineyard belongs in my family” (1Kings 21:1-3) [Pause]

*What questions came to your mind as you heard this story? I thought, “Ahab, why didn’t you just take it, you are the king? Why didn’t you offer to rent the vineyard, or ask Naboth to grow vegetables in his vineyard for you?”*

King Ahab went home angry and upset. He lay on his bed and refused to eat. Ahab’s wife Jezebel came to him and said, “Why are you so upset? Why do you refuse to eat?”

He said, “I am angry because Naboth will not give nor sell me his vineyard.” Notice that Ahab did not tell his wife that the vineyard was Naboth’s inheritance from his father. Jewish law would not permit the king to just take it. As so often happens when a person does not get what they want, they find someone to help them. And they don’t always tell the reason they were rejected. They leave out some of the information.

Jezebel, Ahab's wife said, "Is this how you act as the king of Israel? Get up, eat, and cheer up! I'll get Naboth's vineyard for you." [Pause]

*At this point, questions that come to my mind would be, "Why didn't she try to reason with Naboth? Did they not have enough room on their own property to put a garden? Ahab, why didn't you tell your wife why Naboth would not give or sell you the vineyard?"*

Ahab's wife wanted to make her husband feel better. She wanted him to have the vineyard. She thought he had the authority and right to have whatever he wanted. So, Jezebel wrote letters in her husband's name. She placed his seal on them and sent them to the elders in Naboth's city. In the letters she ordered, "Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people. Set two false witnesses across from Naboth. Have them testify that he has cursed both God and the king. After that, take Naboth out and stone him to death." [Pause]

*You might ask: "Was Naboth's refusal to give the king the vineyard worthy of death?" Or, "Why didn't the elders just take the vineyard and give it to the king without killing Naboth?"*

The elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city did as Jezebel's letter had directed. They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people. Two evil men came and sat opposite Naboth. They brought charges against him before the people. They claimed he had cursed both God and the king. Then they took Naboth outside the city and stoned him to death. As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth was dead, she went to Ahab saying, "Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth because he is now dead" (1Kings 21:4-15).

Let's learn from this story. Jezebel was trying to help her husband who was in great distress. She may not have known all the facts about the vineyard. It was an inheritance to Naboth from his fathers. You must be careful to get all the facts before offering counsel to anyone. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you listen to their problem. Jezebel may have thought that the king had the authority or right to have what he wanted. Ahab's behavior, however, seems to indicate he was unwilling or unable to get it himself. So he allowed his wife to get the vineyard for him.

Ahab did not do the dirty work to Naboth, but his wife Jezebel did. She did it in his name under his authority. Ahab was greedy and his wife helped him get what he was after. The story goes on to tell of God's judgment on Ahab and Jezebel for their sin of greediness.

Here are several ways we can guard ourselves against greed:

1. Put God first, not money. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Matt 6:24).
2. Know that God will satisfy all your needs according to his promise: "The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail" (Isa 58:11).
3. Focus on the Word of God and pray like David: "Turn my eyes away from worthless things; renew my life according to your word" (Ps 119:37).

This story is **important** because it teaches us that it is difficult to counsel someone who feels they have a right to what they want. Their hurt, anger, and disappointment can mislead you to make improper judgments. Ask the Spirit of God to give you direction and wise counsel. Often the questions that come to mind while you are listening to their story are not answered. You can be left without all the facts of the story. But, you will always have the help of the Holy Spirit. Someone with little power may be easier to counsel than someone with great power, but God sees us all as equals. God's servants should not be intimidated. If God sends someone to you, he wants to use you to minister to them.

The **truth** of this story is that God sees and judges the motives of people's hearts. He can use you to help them examine their hearts. The Holy Spirit will help you get the whole story and offer a solution that brings them to God.

To **review** this lesson, answer these questions:

1. Why did Jezebel think her husband had a right to Naboth's vineyard? [Pause]  
A. If you answered, "She thought that her husband had a right to it because he was the king," you are correct.
2. In hearing a person's complaint, what is it you may not get? [Pause]  
A. If you said that you may not get all the facts of the story, you are right.
3. What is one way we can guard ourselves from greed? [Pause]  
A. If you said one of the following: "Put God first, not money; know that God will satisfy your needs; or focus your life on the Word of God," you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story of Naboth. Listen as people tell you their hardships. Wait for the questions that will come to your mind as you listen. See if you can tell if they are leaving out some of the facts of the story. You don't need to correct them or seek the information; just listen. This listening exercise will be good training for you. Ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of discernment as you listen. He will also give you the gift of wisdom to know how to counsel the person. They may need to examine their motives and come to God for forgiveness.