

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-17 Temptation: Blaming Others

Often we meet friends, neighbors and even family members who will say, “I am what I am because of someone else’s behavior. It’s not my fault!” If we are not careful, we give them pity, instead of the help and direction needed when they have such a feeling. What you hear them say is often not true, not fair, or mean. It gives them little joy in their lives. Today’s fifth lesson on the theme of temptation is the story of three servants left in charge of property belonging to their master. Listen closely as the third servant explains to the master why he did not do well.

Before a man went on a long journey, he called three of his servants together. He gave each of them an amount of his wealth, according to what he believed they were able to manage. To one he entrusted five bags of gold, to the second servant he gave two bags, and to the third, he gave only one bag. So the first received five times as much as the last. Not all things in life are equal and not everyone has the same amount of responsibility. People also do not produce the same results with what they have been given in life. God knows not everyone faces the same temptations as others. And not everyone behaves kindly towards one another.

The first two servants put to work the money they had been given. They doubled the amount of gold they had started with. The third servant dug a hole in the ground and hid the gold that he was responsible for. Then the three servants waited for the master’s return. The first two servants acted out of the confidence they felt the master had in their abilities. The third acted out of fear. He yielded to the temptation to excuse his actions, based on what he considered were the character flaws of his master.

We can only guess what each of them faced as they made their decisions to do what they did with the goods they were responsible for. Perhaps all three of the servants thought the same way about the master; we do not know. The servants would be judged according to the trust the master had put in them.

After a long time the master returned. He called upon the three servants to give an account of what they had done with the gold left in their care. He was pleased to find the first two servants had done what he expected them to do. He gave them what goods he felt they could handle, and they had not disappointed him. He said to each, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”

The third servant gave back the gold entrusted to him and explained why he had acted as he did. “I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.” He blamed his failure on someone else.

It is good to listen, to show compassion, and not be fooled when you receive an answer as to why a person behaves the way they do. Have they done all they could to “stand” in the situation they were in—to resist the temptation of “the devil’s schemes”? (Eph 6:11).

The master said to his servant, “You wicked, lazy servant! ... You should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest” (Matt 25:14-27). He was saying that the third servant, at the very least, could have been faithful in a small way. He knew the master’s expectations.

Often you will hear, “My family is not fair with me!” “People show me no respect.” Or, “I only rely on alcohol and other drugs to escape the pressures I am dealing with.” It isn’t the task that is difficult, but how that difficult task is handled, that will affect how a person is judged.

As Christian counselors, we must be very careful not just to listen to a “pity party.” We must offer constructive avenues of help to such people. They may have more disadvantages than most. But our God is able and willing to guide such a person to become the servant he wants them to be. We should try to help people take responsibility for their own actions and not blame someone else for their shortcomings.

Listen carefully to the person who comes to you. Be aware that God, who is the master in this story, gave to each servant what he felt that person could handle. The unfaithful servant in this story was given what his master felt he could manage. But the servant saw only the reasons why he could not succeed. He was saying, “I am what I am because of a hard master.” He blamed his lack of diligence on the master, but it was really his fear that paralyzed him. Jesus says, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. ... For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt 11:30).

As a counselor, you must actively listen. Then give suggestions from God’s Word to help restore the person’s trust in God. Even if someone has failed him, they can repent and receive forgiveness. Our Lord Jesus gives second chances, and third, and more, to those who humble themselves.

This lesson is **important** because it helps you to understand that God gives to each person the responsibility he or she can handle. Then he sends his Spirit to help them succeed. If we are faithful with what God places in our hands, he will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” We should not compare what we have to what others have.

The **main truth** of this story is that God sees and knows our circumstances. He wants us to be faithful in serving him and take responsibility for our decisions.

Review questions:

1. Why were the first two servants able to double the amount of gold placed with them? [Pause]
A. If you said, “They doubled the funds, because they knew the master had confidence in them,” you are right.
2. The third servant did not doubt himself, but he mistrusted whom? [Pause]
A. If you answered, “The third servant mistrusted his master,” you answered correctly.

3. It is important to listen to a “pity party,” but not make what mistake? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “A counselor must not listen without giving constructive suggestions to people to restore their trust in God,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to this story until you have learned the actions of the main characters. Discuss the facts of this story with several people. Ask them if they can see that the third servant yielded to the temptation of fearing and blaming his failure on someone else. Memorize Paul’s words: “Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Ephesians 6:10-11).