

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-20 Family Issues: A Rebellious Child

Family issues are a common need that can require a lot of counseling attention. The next five lessons will consider some of them. Sometimes the people you live with and love can generate a lot of stress. King David's family was no exception. David's one son, Absalom, ordered his servants to kill his other son, Amnon. The reason was that Amnon had forced himself upon their sister Tamar. After the death of his brother, Absalom fled from his father to a nearby country for three years.

The Bible tells us that after David had mourned for his son Amnon, he longed to go to his son Absalom. David's servant Joab knew this, so he sent for a wise woman from the town of Tekoa. Joab told her what to say and sent her to speak to King David. The woman went to the king and bowed down to the ground to show respect. She cried, "Help me, Your Majesty! I'm a widow. My husband is dead. I had two sons who got into a fight with each other in a field. No one was there to separate them. One of my sons struck the other one and killed him."

"Now my whole family has risen up against me. They say, 'Hand over the one who struck down his brother. Then we can put him to death for killing his brother. We will also get rid of the one who will receive the family property so we can have it ourselves.' They want to kill the only son I have left. That will leave my husband without any son on the face of the earth to carry on the family name" (2Sam 14:1-7).

King David was ready to issue an order on her behalf, but she continued, "Let your servant speak another word." He told her to go on. "You are very kind. You are willing to save my son from death, but aren't you convicting yourself and harming God's people? You won't let the son you drove away come back. That is not what God desires; rather he devises ways so that a banished person does not remain banished from him" (2Sam 14:12-14).

Then the king asked her, "Isn't the hand of Joab with you in all this?"

She answered, "Yes, your servant Joab did tell me what to say. We did this to help change the way the way things are now."

"All right," said David. "I'll do what you want. Go bring back the young man Absalom." Then Joab brought Absalom back to Jerusalem.

In this account, the woman is the counselor. She accepted the advice of Joab and presented the king with a fictional story of the trouble in her family. This was a way for the king to see his situation from another point of view. When you counsel a person, ask God to help you. The Holy Spirit will lead you. You can apply a Bible story or life example that will help the person see their situation in another way. As a Christian counselor, you will find in the Bible descriptions of family problems. Those problems include love, hate, sorrow, revenge, and a cry for justice, just as the woman's story in this account.

When you conduct a session that is safe and in confidence, a hurting person will feel free to speak to you. They will tell you their hurts and concerns. Just remember, they will speak from their point of view. This does not mean that their view is incorrect, but it probably is incomplete. There

are always at least two sides to a story. You want to help this person to have a right spirit concerning this issue. In counseling them, you may be able to help them see their situation from a different point of view. A successful counselor will step aside and allow the Spirit of God to work. With God's help, the person can find and act on a solution suggested not by a counselor, but from above.

In our story King David chose to separate himself from his son Absalom because of the murder he had ordered. It might have been tempting for a counselor to suggest a solution of *justice*, when *mercy* was needed. Or sometimes a counselor insists on forgiveness, when the person may not be ready to sincerely forgive.

God is not only leading you in this session but is helping the injured person (David in this case). The person has to come to a decision about how to best address their own problem. You shouldn't really be telling them what to do. It took two years after the woman from Tekoa presented to King David the need for mercy, before he finally would see Absalom. It was hard for him to overcome pride and extend forgiveness to his son.

Don't be discouraged when a situation is not resolved after one or two conversations. When complex family problems have developed over time, they may take even more time to be resolved. You must give the person being counseled time to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit giving direction. Joab did not instruct the wise woman to berate, instruct, humiliate, or pressure the king to reconcile with Absalom. The woman presented her story, a similar situation to the one David was facing. She then trusted the Spirit of God to lead David to forgive and once again receive his son.

God's plan is always to bring back to his family anyone who has been driven away from him. It can be difficult to offer counsel to a person in distress. It is even much harder when the person is a leader or elder in your life. Counseling requires more than just listening and agreeing to what is being said. It is more than giving directions to someone on how to handle their problems. God will help you know when to be silent (which is important), when to speak, and what to say.

We can remember and be encouraged by the words of God to Jeremiah. He told God he did not know how to speak because he was too young. But the Lord said to him, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord. Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "I have put my words in your mouth" (Jer 1:6-9).

It is impossible to take in everything a person tells you. As they speak, try and put the things they share into some kind of order. Ask God for wisdom. As you continue to listen, believe that the Spirit of God will open their heart to speak about their burden. The same Spirit will guide you in your counsel. God has promised to give each of you wisdom if you ask for it: "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it shall be given to you" (James 1:5).

This lesson is **important** because it reminds us that the counselor's job is not to just tell people what they should do. You must allow the Holy Spirit to direct you in what to say. Often he will bring to mind a Bible story or principle. Sharing that can shed light on what God's will might be for a person needing counsel. The Bible often reveals real problems and answers for families. Those stories can encourage and direct us in finding solutions, as we counsel people God brings to us. Also important is that making the right decision often takes time. God is not in a hurry.

The **main point** of this lesson is that God has promised to give you wisdom as you listen to people's situations and offer counsel. As the greatest Father of all, God desires to show mercy and to bring his children into right relationship with others and himself.

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

1. How does God reclaim a person who has fallen away? [Pause]
A. If you said that he makes a way to bring back anyone who was driven away from him, you are correct.

2. What is a good way to encourage someone who is in distress? [Pause]
A. If you said, "Relate a Bible story or situation that is similar to what he/she is suffering," you answered correctly.

3. How do I begin to speak to someone in need? [Pause]
A. If you answered, "Ask God for wisdom and trust the Holy Spirit to provide the words when it is time for you to speak," you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story of David, the woman from Tekoa, and the story she told him. Tell the story to a fellow believer who may never have heard it before. Discuss how family issues are dealt with in your culture. Are Bible stories ever used to solve problems? Discuss a current family issue with them and think about what Bible story might give wisdom about a solution. Memorize the words of James: "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it shall be given to you" (James 1:5).