

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-32 Healing: Is Sickness a Result of Sin?

Sickness, injury, disability, and death are part of human life in our fallen world. A great part of a counselor's work is dealing with these life situations. They create strife, heartache, pain, and conflict in families. A great deal of focus and energy is often put into the question, "Why am I sick?" The family wants to know why. What did someone do or not do that caused this illness or disability? Was it inherited? Is it a form of judgment because of sin? Was carelessness involved or was there a curse? The counselor's answers may satisfy the person who asked the question, but the sick person is still sick. Others who think they know will even tell the person why they think he is sick.

The disciples asked Jesus a similar question. "As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'" But Jesus, the good counselor, focused on God's purposes. "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.... After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 'Go,' he told him, 'wash in the Pool of Siloam.' So the man went and washed, and came home seeing" (John 9:1-7).

When a person seeks help from you, a broken leg or severe bleeding are obvious. They need medical help. But usually it is necessary for the person to tell the counselor about their illness or injury and how it happened. What is it they need help with? A good counselor or pastor needs to know what the person believes about the cause and possible solutions for their situation. Sickness just comes, not because of a person's sins. We live in a fallen world where Satan works. But God will help people in their pain and problems. "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Rom 8:28).

The Bible tells about a good and righteous king who was sick. Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah went to him and said, "This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover."

Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall and prayed to the Lord, "Remember, Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with whole-hearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him: "Go back and speak to Hezekiah. ... I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. ... I will add fifteen years to your life. ..."

Then Isaiah said, "Prepare a poultice of figs." They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered" (2Kings 20:1-7).

Consider the following facts about this story:

- God knew Hezekiah was sick and about to die.
- God did not tell Hezekiah WHY he was sick or going to die, as far as we know.
- God told Hezekiah to put his affairs in order, to prepare for death, because he would not recover.
- God further used Isaiah to intervene in Hezekiah's situation and deliver a message of healing.

Now listen again to how Hezekiah responded to God's word from the prophet. He turned his face to the wall and wept. He was upset and depressed. Yet he spoke to God, saying,

- "I have been faithful to you."
- "I have served you with all my heart."
- "I've done what is good in your sight."

Then God sent Isaiah back to the king with the promise of 15 more years. God had heard Hezekiah's prayer and had seen his tears. We can pray, encourage, show empathy, and offer medical support, but healing is in the hands of God! Counselors and helpers always need to keep her or his role straight. God is the healer. When counseling a person who is sick or hurt:

- Ask them why they believe this is happening.
- Deliver a message from God.
- Offer a suggestion to comfort the pain they are experiencing.
- Pray with them for healing and encourage them to learn to be content in all life's situations (Phil 4:11-13).

It is not uncommon to want to know why things happen, or why things happen to some but not to others. The answer is that we do not know. Life, death, health, and healing are all things God controls. We can ask in faith, but our faith does not control God. We are his servants; he is not our servant.

This lesson is **important** because it discusses the way to counsel a person who is sick and is questioning God. God is sovereign; he will direct their steps.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that people in crisis will seek your help. Remember your position as a servant of God, who has been called to be a helper. As the person pours out their situation to you, simply listen. Ask God to give you wisdom and the words to say when it is time.

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

1. As a counselor, do you have to know WHY a person is sick or hurt before offering help? [Pause]
A. If you said, "No, we may never know why things have happened, but we know God loves each of us and will give help and strength for each problem," you are correct.
2. Does sickness indicate that a person has sin in their life? [Pause]
A. If you answered, "No, sickness comes because we live in a fallen world; God will help them in their pain and problems and work all things together for their good and his glory," you answered correctly.
3. Why did Jesus heal the blind man in John chapter 9? [Pause]
A. If you said that Jesus healed the blind man so that God would be glorified and people would see the power of God, you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the stories of the man born blind and Hezekiah until you can tell them yourself. Use role play to practice the counseling advice in this lesson with a friend who pretends to be sick. Practice praying for the person, as this lesson teaches.