

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-38 Grief: A Person Troubled by Remorse

Have you ever felt unlovable, unblessable, or unforgivable? Those are lies the enemy of your soul wants you to believe. He does not play fair. He often attacks when you are already down. It is true that “*all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). But, God laid on Christ the sins of all of us.

Some might say that Judas was the worst sinner that ever lived. Do you remember his story? Matthew was there. He recalls, “Then one of the twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, ‘What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?’ So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over” (Matt 26:14-16).

Then, after the deed was done, “Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. ‘I have sinned,’ he said, ‘for I have betrayed innocent blood.’

‘What is that to us?’ they replied. ‘That’s your responsibility.’ So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself” (Matt 27:3-5).

There is no place in scripture, in counseling, nor should it be preached in the church, that anyone who betrays or has betrayed Christ could not be forgiven. “We *all*, like sheep, have gone astray,” YET, “the Lord has laid on him [Christ] the iniquity of us *all*” (Isa 53:6). Everyone is included in the first ‘all,’ and everyone is covered in the second ‘all.’ We have all sinned and come short of God’s expectations, “his glorious ideal; yet now God declares us ‘not guilty’ of offending him if we trust in Jesus Christ, who in his kindness freely takes away our sins” (Rom 3:24, LB).

One of the basic skills of a successful Christian minister is learning how to accept an apology and offer forgiveness to someone who has offended you. You must also repent to God and, if possible, to any person you may have offended. You must teach this to yourself as well as to others. This is not only the message of Christ’s gospel but is the strength of the Christian witness. A successful Christian ministry will lead those God sets before them on a path of repenting to those they offend. If the behavior offends the scriptures; remorse is not enough. The person needs to ask God’s forgiveness.

Judas was sorry and repented unto himself. The story seems to say that is as far as it went. Feeling bad for what one did and saying, “I will do better next time,” is repenting unto yourself. Those who offend will often try to ease their guilt by saying to themselves, “I promise not to do that again!” They may justify themselves by saying, “Well, no one is perfect. It happened in a weak moment.” Or, a person may be unrepentant and think, “They had it coming, I’ve wanted to set them straight for some time now.” Whatever the reaction, an offense has been made. Someone has been hurt.

Being able to forgive someone who has offended you is important. It is godly to forgive. God forgives all who come in repentance to him. An offended person can become self-righteous

and say, “Let them go their way and I will go mine.” This is often an effort to get back at them, hoping they get what is coming to them. The offended person may enjoy hearing how things are not going well for the offender. They may even ask God to punish the one who offended them. However, God says, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay” (Deut 32:35). It is God who decides if you were offended and he will repay if vengeance is needed. “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (Eph 4:26). You must repent of any such anger and forgive.

Consider and remember: As a counselor, because you listen does not mean you agree with a person’s complaint. You are there to minister to the hurting and to help restore a relationship.

- You may be called upon to counsel, bear witness, or advise someone you hold strong negative feelings toward.
- God can place a person similar to Judas before you.
- The person’s past history that you know about, could be over and resolved. It is best left alone.

Questions you need to answer before or during the session are:

- Should I remain quiet about the issue they may be seeking advice for, if I don’t agree with what they believe about that issue?
- Would it be ethical for me to say, “I have knowledge of your past. It would help me if we either clarified that or agreed to not discuss it.”

Suggestions: Sometimes it takes a little listening before you can determine the real reason a person is seeking your help. We call that reason the ‘presenting’ problem.

- If remorse is not the ‘presenting’ problem the person is ready to speak of, you might say, “Let’s save this matter for a later time.” First address the need he or she is ready to discuss.
- If you discern that remorse is the presenting problem, even though the person has another issue too, you could say, “Let’s take care of the issue of your remorse first and leave the other thing on your mind for later.”
- If you really cannot give unbiased counsel, honestly explain, “I am willing to help you, but at this time I could not be the one to offer support on this matter.”
- As stated in an earlier lesson, be clear in saying to a person, “If you express to me anything that is illegal, harmful to you or others, or contrary to counseling ethical standards, I may end this session and notify authorities to protect yourself and others.” They may be in real danger.

Saint and sinner alike are made in God’s image. It is God’s will that no one perish. It is we humans that put condemnation on a person’s failure. The work God has called us to is HIS ministry of reconciliation. “There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luke 15:7).

All twelve disciples forsook him. Peter three times publicly denied that he knew Christ. Judas did repent of his misdeed, but it appeared he repented unto himself. Remember, all have sinned and come short of the expectations of Christ.

Judas tried to amend the pain and agony he was experiencing because of his actions.

- He recognized he had done wrong.
- He tried to return the money he had received for his misdeed.
- Then in despair, maybe to punish himself ... he hanged himself.
- He did everything except asking Christ to forgive him.

The Scriptures stated that one of Jesus' disciples would betray him. The scriptures did not say anywhere that the one who betrayed Christ could not have repented and been forgiven.

Forgiveness from God gives you freedom and the start of a new life. Accepting God's forgiveness insures a restored relationship with him. Accepting the forgiveness of others restores fellowship. Forgiving others builds the family of God.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches again that no one is outside the reach of God's forgiveness, if they come to him in repentance. We must strive to be godly in our relationships, not easily offended, and extending forgiveness to those who offend us.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that we have to leave Judas and any others who take their own life to God's mercy. He alone sees the heart, and we can trust him to do what is right.

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

1. What was the failure of Judas after realizing the consequences of his betrayal? [Pause]
A. If you answered, "He repented unto himself, but not to God," you answered correctly.
2. What is a 'presenting' problem? [Pause]
A. If you said, "A 'presenting' problem is the main reason a person has come for your help," you are right.
3. Who says, "Vengeance is mine?" [Pause]
A. If you responded that God says, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen several times and think about the story of Judas. Pray with your mentor that God would help you counsel any who come to you in such remorse. God wants to show his love for them through you.