

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-39 Purpose of Counseling: For Christ's Sake

This is the first lesson in the section “Conclusions for Counselors.” People will often come to their leader when they are perplexed with questions they meet. It may be God’s plan for them to meet him through you. Or they may need help in just living the Christian life.

One question you may hear is: “Why do bad things happen to seemingly good people?” Part of the answer is that some things people face in life may be the result of things they have done. The Bible says that people reap what they have sown, or are still sowing. “Whoever sows to please their flesh ... will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit ... will reap eternal life” (Gal 6:7-8). Difficulties may relate to poor choices and actions either in their past or present. And then, some bad things happen just because we live in a fallen sinful world.

We must also understand that some hardships and pain we suffer are a result of the ministry God has placed us in. Our mission is the same as Jesus had, saying: “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Dealing with our own struggles while listening to others can be difficult. We are told by Peter that, “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1Peter 5:8). Just because we have honored the call of God on our lives, we are not overlooked by the tempter. The Bible teaches that we are working out our own salvation. As counselors, we are helping others to do the same. For both the sinner and the saint, God “is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1John 1:9).

The Spirit of God will direct us in our witness and ministry of counseling. We may not feel worthy, clean, ready, or willing to serve. The truth is that ministry is not about us, but about the needs of other people. God’s plan is to meet the need of another person through you. As a counselor and leader, you may wish that certain persons would not come to you, but this is God’s call on your life. His plans for you can cause joy as well as hardship.

Stories from the last days of Jesus’ life show us God’s plan and the effect it had on others. As Jesus finished his teaching on the Mount of Olives, he said to his disciples, “As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.” The chief priests and the elders were plotting to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him (Matt 26:2-4).

Then Jesus went to Bethany and was reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper. A woman came with an alabaster jar of expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Leave her alone. Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you.... But you will not always have me. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial” (Mark 14:3-8).

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus’ disciples asked him, “Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.”

The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me.”

They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, “Surely you don’t mean me?”

“It is one of the Twelve,” he replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him.” He told them that they would all fall away, fulfilling Zechariah’s prophecy that the shepherd would be struck and the sheep would be scattered (Mark 14:12-21, 27). In the end Judas came and betrayed the Master with a kiss. Then all the disciples deserted him and fled. Jesus was crucified.

This happened, not just because he was their leader. Jesus had to die, because he was the incarnate, sinless Son of God. Only his death could pay the price for our salvation. His death as an innocent sacrificial lamb fulfilled the prophecies of old. An ordinary person’s death could not have redeemed anyone’s eternal soul, then or now.

These stories and each of the details in them happened so that what the Scripture had said about Jesus would be fulfilled. The pouring of perfume at Simon’s house, the eating of the Passover meal, the betrayal of Judas, and all of the disciples being scattered. These were the fulfillment of a holy God’s plan for our salvation. Christ trusted the Father, knowing the difficulties that lay ahead. In the same way, our counsel to others must direct them to trust God. If they do, his plan will be completed in their lives.

It may be hard to realize that as God leads you, life may be uncomfortable. You may be tempted to think that where you are going and who you are ministering to are unnecessary. The situations and places God sends you into seem awkward or harsh. You do what you feel led to do, for Christ’s sake—not for yourself or even for others. Some people who come to you for counsel and guidance may be very difficult cases. God has a plan, however, as he engineers circumstances and directs you. Often he challenges your faith, sometimes causing confusion. He is always working to increase your trust in him. He wants you, as a counselor, to challenge others to trust him too, for Christ’s sake.

This story is **important** because it reminds us that suffering and being misunderstood were a part of the life of Jesus. God’s call to us will involve both joy and sorrow as we submit to his direction in our daily life. He knows the end from the beginning; we don’t. He wants to use each of us to counsel those in need around us.

The **main truth** of this story is that living the Christian life involves both victory and suffering. We must be willing as Jesus was willing, to minister to those who dislike us and those who reject our message. We have a call to help others understand these realities as they follow Jesus. Bad things as well as good things happen to good people. God’s grace is enough to bring them through any trial.

Let's **review** by answering these questions:

1. Why may people come to us with all their problems and pain? [Pause]
A. If you said, "It could be God's plan for those persons to meet God through us," then you are correct.
2. Who was crucified on the Cross for his ministry to lost people? [Pause]
A. If you said that it was Christ, who died for their sins and ours, you answered correctly.
3. Why was Jesus led away to be crucified and not his disciples? [Pause]
A. If you said, "Jesus was crucified because he was the sinless Son of God and only his death could pay the price for our salvation," you are right.

Your **assignment** is to learn this story about the sufferings of Christ so that you can tell it to another believer. It is important to realize that so many details of the life of Jesus were foretold by the prophets, centuries before he was born. Then both of you memorize this verse which speaks about the mission Jesus had: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).