

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa 232-40 Recognize a Person's Resources

Sometimes people get so discouraged that they seem to have no more hope. They know that they need help, but they are in despair. Have you met anyone like that? This is the second in a series of lessons dealing with "Conclusions for Counselors" from Bible case studies. A 'case study' is the story of someone's problem and how it might be dealt with by a counselor. You can then use each case to find solutions for someone you know with a similar problem. This lesson uses an event from the ministry of Elisha. It helps us see how to help people who are dealing with difficult, almost hopeless, situations.

This lesson focuses on the counselor helping a person in need by reminding them of the resources they have. They may have forgotten what is in their hand. When the counselee begins to speak, you must be actively engaged in listening. Let the person describe their need. This allows a relationship between the them and you to form. Encourage them to speak freely with few interruptions. Stop them only if you need to know more to better understand their situation.

A counselor's best response is to listen, adding small comments, and encouraging the person to continue to speak. Keeping eye contact and nodding your head in agreement also shows you are paying complete attention. When a counselor keeps an open mind as a person presents their problem, it demonstrates their desire to help.

There are several things to listen for, as you hear today's story. As the prophet Elisha demonstrates good counseling practice with a new widow, consider the following questions:

1. *Who did the widow call upon when she was facing her problem?*
2. *What was the widow's need?*
3. *What was the first thing Elisha asked her?*
4. *Other than listening, what help did Elisha provide for her?*
5. *How did God help her?*

The wife of a man from the company of the prophets came to Elisha. She cried, "Your servant, my husband, is dead. You know how much respect he had for the Lord. But he owed money to someone. And now that person is coming to take my two sons away. They will become his slaves." This new widow felt all alone in this new chapter of her life. She was in a desperate situation. Yet she still believed that the LORD would be faithful. As a result she went to the man of God for direction. She and her husband had both learned to trust Elisha the prophet.

Elisha answered her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?"

Elisha asked a simple question that indicated his desire to help. He was a good listener. He listened both to the woman and to the voice of the Spirit of God. She was able to state the problem in simple terms. Elisha did not want this widow taken advantage of by cruel men. God gave Elisha a word to redirect her thinking. She needed to think about what she still had, rather than what she had lost. She still had her home, her sons, her friends, and one other item that didn't seem to matter. "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a small jar of olive oil."

When called by God to deliver Israel, Moses cried out for help and direction. God asked Moses a similar question, when he said, "What do you have in your hand?" (Ex 4:2). Moses faced a huge problem. How would he convince his people that God had spoken, and that he would bring them deliverance? Moses responded that he had only his staff, or walking stick. Under God's direction, Moses performed many mighty miracles with that simple stick. With what he had in his hand, he convinced Israel, and finally all Egypt of God's mighty power and plan.

So Elisha said to the widow, "Go around to all your neighbors. Ask them for empty jars. Get as many as you can. Then go inside your house. Shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars. As each is filled, put it over to one side." Here would be the answer to her need. It seemed so small, but she added her faith to the situation. She had a hope and expectancy that all would be well. We know she had these, because she acted on the advice given by God's prophet.

She left him and sent her sons to collect jars from the neighbors. They brought the jars to her and she shut the door behind them. She began pouring the oil from the small jar into all the larger jars. It was amazing! The oil kept flowing. Jar after jar was filled. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one."

But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing.

She went and told the man of God about what had happened. He said, "Go and sell the oil. Pay what you owe. You and your sons can live on what is left" (2Kings 4:1-7).

When people are in a crisis they can forget about what they have left—what is in their hands. Too often more time can be spent complaining to people about the troubles rather than finding a good counselor. Another common difficulty is depending too much on others to solve the problem with their resources and not one's own. A good counselor will remind the person of the resources they still have and what God can do. What we don't want is for the person to leave thinking, "I cannot help myself and no one else can help me either."

This lesson is **important** because it reminds us that God will provide for those who trust him. He can use whatever is in a person's hand.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that when a godly person meets someone who is in a stressful situation, the person with faith can remind the needy person of God's supply. These resources include some the person may have forgotten about, including friends, family, and a loving heavenly Father.

To **review**, answer the following questions:

1. Who did the widow call upon when she was facing her problem? [Pause]
A. If you said, "She called the man of God, who knew her family," you are correct.

2. What was the widow's need—the problem she presented to Elisha? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered that her husband had died, and someone was going to take her sons as slaves because of her husband's debt, you are right.
3. What were the first two things Elisha asked her? [Pause]
 - A. If you said Elisha asked her, "How can I help you?" and "What do you have in your house?" you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this story several times and be able to tell it to someone else. Notice the simple pattern Elisha used in his counseling with the widow. He listened well. He did not judge, but asked her how he could help her. He then gave her directions to follow. He left the results to her, her neighbors, her two sons, and the faithfulness of God. God took what she had and provided what she needed—and even more than was needed. Encourage the person you are counseling by saying, "Just as the widow's needs were provided for, God can also meet your needs." Memorize the following words of the apostle Paul: "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).