

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-42 Stay Vulnerable

It takes courage to take the first step in a conversation. Putting yourself in a place where someone can reject you is not easy. You may fear that someone will say, “Who do you think you are, that you can give me advice?” Maybe someone has said that to you already. You may think people will say, “You don’t know so much; you aren’t even married.” Or maybe the person will protest, “You are too young to tell older people what to do.”

In the previous lesson we discussed God’s divine appointments. The conclusion for counselors was to have unconditional positive regard or acceptance toward the person being spoken to. This lesson will discuss another conclusion for successful counseling, using the same story from Jesus’ life.

Here are a few sentences to remind you of the story. Jesus and his disciples were traveling north to Galilee from Judea. They passed through Samaria and stopped to rest at midday. Jesus sent his disciples into town to buy food. As he was waiting alone by the well, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. He asked her to give him a drink. Jesus showed respect and acceptance to the woman. He began to explain to her about “living water.” He said, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” Jesus told the woman to call her husband, but she admitted that she did not have one. Then Jesus continued the conversation, just as though the subject of her five husbands had not come up.

Sensing that he was a prophet, the woman asked Christ a religious question. He gave her a serious answer about the right place to worship God. Jesus discussed theology with this outcast woman! He told her, “A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. . . . A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:21-24). Jesus was saying that the place of worship is not what is important. What matters is the condition of the heart and how worship is offered.

Jesus then revealed to the Samaritan woman that she was speaking to the Messiah. She ran back and began to tell everyone in the town about this man. No person had ever spoken to her like this man. Could he really be the promised Messiah? The townspeople came out to where Jesus still sat at the well. Many of them believed in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony. He stayed there and taught the people for two days. Her neighbors said to the woman, “We know that this man really is the Savior of the world” (John 4:42).

Jesus demonstrated that he was vulnerable, human, and needed the help of others. Jesus was tired, and he needed to rest. He had been traveling and did not have what was necessary to draw water and drink. It was hot and dusty and he was thirsty. He had no pretenses or attitude that he was better than she. He expressed a common need, thirst. And he made himself dependent on her to meet his need. “Will you give me a drink?” he asked the woman.

Jesus showed that he was being real by speaking first. He was taking the chance that she might rebuff him, which she did. Being vulnerable is denying the impulse of pride and self-protection. It means you refuse to be offended by what others may say or do. Jesus' entire human existence is summed up in his choice to be vulnerable. The apostle Paul wrote about Christ, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Phil 2:6-8).

He came to earth as a helpless baby. He grew up in a human family. He waited through his young adult life for God's timing to start his ministry. Jesus chose to submit to his Father and to fulfill his purpose as Savior for all humankind. And finally, he chose to be vulnerable to the Cross and death. Considering Jesus' life and sacrifice, it does not seem that being proud and self-protecting is something any one of us can defend. Following his example, are you willing to take the first step in reaching out to someone who is hurt and needs help?

As you consider this lesson, discuss with others some of these questions.

- 1. How difficult is it for you to be open and unprotected in speaking to someone in need?*
- 2. How do you feel when someone comments about you with stories that are not true or says things they have no right to say?*
- 3. Can you think of a time when someone stepped out of their comfort zone to speak to you? They showed they cared and wanted to speak to you?*
- 4. Share with each other a time when you were afraid to be vulnerable enough to talk to a person. Why do you think you felt that way?*

Choosing to be honest, open, and unafraid to show that you are vulnerable is evidence of great spiritual inner strength. We can see this in the life of Jesus. Some thought he was weak, but we understand that he was stronger than his enemies or friends. He was even stronger than death. When you face a decision about how to interact with others, listen to God suggesting that you step out first. Make yourself vulnerable to potential rejection, disapproval, or anger. You will sense the Spirit's direction when it is time to step out. He will give you understanding of what to do and what to say. The Holy Spirit is a patient and kind teacher.

Paul was often weak as he faced beatings and persecution. The Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." So Paul could be thankful for his weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties. "For when I am weak, then am I strong" (2Cor 12:9-10).

This lesson is **important** because sometimes counselors think they must pretend to be strong, so that people will have confidence in them. At times, such a show of false strength actually turns people away. They might think you could not understand their weakness or their need. Just as Jesus let the woman know he was thirsty, we can let people know we have similar needs as they do.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that as a counselor, you should not be afraid to stay vulnerable. Be open and let people see that God will help them with their need, just as he has helped you. When you take such a risk and step out in faith, the Holy Spirit will direct you and people will listen. God will reveal himself to them through your spiritual counsel.

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

1. How did Jesus show that he was vulnerable? [Pause]
A. If you said, “He revealed a common need, thirst, and he made himself dependent on the woman to meet his need,” you are right.
2. In your words, what does it mean to stay vulnerable? [Pause]
A. If you said that it means to be open, willing to speak first, truthful, and not afraid to show weakness, you are correct.
3. When the woman said, “I know that Messiah is coming,” how did Jesus answer her? [Pause]
A. If you quoted Jesus as saying, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he,” you are right.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this lesson until you can repeat the story of the woman at the well. Gather some believers together and remind them of this story. Ask them the following questions: “How did Jesus begin the conversation with the woman? What did he already know about her? Why do you think Jesus revealed his true identity to this woman at the end of the conversation?” Then pray with these Christians, asking God to help each of you to reach out to others in your community who may be outcasts. Ask him to make you humble and open, not proud or pretending to be someone that is better than others.