

Pa 232 Counseling

Lesson Pa 232-45 The Ministry of Counseling

The promises people make to us are very important. As children, we depend upon them, and they stabilize us as we grow older. The problem is that people may have good intentions, but do not always keep their promises. When people fail you, where do you turn? As a believer you should turn to God, for his promises never fail.

After the death of King Saul, the first king of Israel, God established David as the next king. The Lord gave him peace and rest from all Israel's enemies. God then sent Nathan the prophet to David, with a special promise from him: "I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great.... And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed." God even promised to make one of his sons succeed him on the throne. David's throne would be established forever (2Sam 7:8-16).

Today the Spirit of God can lead you to give others direction, can help you advise people when they make mistakes, and use you to provide them with wise counsel. In the time of David, God directed the prophet Nathan to offer this counsel to David.

- I took you from feeding sheep to rule over my people.
- I was present when you were not even aware of it.
- Because of your faithful service, I will make you great.
- I will provide a place where the people you rule will be safe.
- I will make a son of yours ruler over my people and establish your throne forever.

We can apply many of these things to us today. Notice all the 'I's' in the preceding sentences. Those are the things *God* says he is responsible for. We are **not** responsible to do them or to worry about getting them done. Counselors have a role in which humility is essential. We are not God, nor should we ever pretend to be. You may find that a person you counsel can begin to look to you for emotional support, instead of to God. It is your task to re-focus each person back to God and the Bible. You will not always be there. But God and his Word are eternal. He will never leave or forsake that person. Here are some important biblical promises still good today.

As with Jeremiah, *before you were born he knew you*: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" (Jer 1:5).

You are known in heaven as you are on earth. "Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know what my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. You go before me and follow me" (Ps 139:1-5, NLT).

God does not want us to be afraid. Jesus reminded the disciples concerning their fear about the future: “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” (Matt 10:29-31).

David writes from his experience guiding God’s children. “I was young, and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread” (Ps 37:25).

Your ministry is regulated under the same limits God gave to David, so remember:

- The people you counsel are not yours, they are God’s people.
- Your personal life is to be a godly example for others to follow.
- As with all people, you too will die one day.
- God will give you peace from your enemies. Yes, you will have enemies.

In conclusion, you can have this confidence as you minister. “Do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” (Matt 10:19-20). God holds you, as a counselor, to the same high standards you present to the people you counsel. The guidance you give others, you must follow for yourself. The patience you advise others to have, should be practiced yourself. The stresses people wrestle with are common to everyone and could threaten to consume you as well.

Satan is no respecter of persons or their position in life. We have all fallen short of the expectations of God yet we *can recover*. The apostle Paul described how he was managing the ministry to which God had called him. We can put his words simple language: “I have not yet reached my goal. Christ Jesus took hold of me, so that I could reach that goal. So I keep pushing myself forward to reach it. Brothers and sisters, I don’t consider that I have taken hold of it yet. But here is the one thing I do. I forget what is behind me. I push hard toward what is ahead of me. I push myself forward toward the goal to win the prize. God has appointed me to win it. The heavenly prize is eternal life with Christ Jesus.” (See Phil 3:12-14.)

This lesson is **important** because it reminds counselors to encourage God’s people using stories and promises from the Bible. David and Paul each had things to repent of. Yet God forgave them and used them mightily in his plan. A counselor must have an attitude of humility. He or she must realize that only God and his Spirit can forgive and change a person. There is no person who is too broken for God to heal and use for his glory.

The main **truth** of this lesson is that through God’s promises, counselors can lead people to recovery. Real recovery sets people free from the fears and deceptions of Satan.

To **review** this lesson, answer the following questions,

1. Who are you ministering to as a counselor? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered that you minister to people whom God loves, believers and unbelievers alike, you are correct.

2. If you have failed in your duty as a counselor, what can you do? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “A person who fails can recover with God’s help,” you are right.
3. As ministers for Christ, how should we manage our lives? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered, “As counselors and ministers we should manage our lives the same way God expects all believers to manage their lives, by obeying his Word,” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to review the life of King David. Discuss with another believer how God provided good counsel to him through the prophet Nathan and others, and directly from God himself. Gather a few friends together to discuss David’s victories and failures. Then each of you can share a difficult event from your own experience. Discuss the good and not so good counsel you received during this trial. Then pray for each other, that God will enable you to be good counselors to the people God sends to you.