

## Discipling: Class 11. Counseling with Hurting People

### (Extended) Outline:

#### I. Introduction

- a. We need to think about how to deal with pain and suffering.
  - i. We set an example by persevering through our own suffering, while at the same time being realistic about our struggles
  - ii. Our friends will very possibly go through a difficult and trying time while you're discipling them. As a discipler, you need to know how to respond

#### II. What does the Bible say about suffering and pain?

- a. How does it fit into the Bible's story line?
  - i. The beginning: God creates the heavens and the earth. He declares His work "very good." (Gen 1-2). There is no sin, no suffering. Genesis 3, man rebels against God. Toil, pain, suffering, and death enter. Cain murders Abel (Gen 4). "then he died ... then he died ..." (Gen 5)
  - ii. The end: A new heaven and a new earth. (Rev. 21:1) The end of death, crying, and pain (Rev. 21:3-5). The end of sin (Rev. 21:27)
  - iii. In between: There is evil and suffering. At the core, the general cause of evil is rebellion against God. Christ came to pay the deserved payment of death for us who trust in Him, and to give us eternal life. This is summarized perfectly in:  
*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Rom. 6:23) Pain and suffering is a reality.
- b. God is totally sovereign and totally good. At the same time, man is sinful and responsible for sin. But God uses everything for His good purposes.
  - i. (Read D.A. Carson's How Long O Lord? for careful thoughts on the Problem of Evil)
  - ii. 1 John 1:5. "God is light. In him there is no darkness at all."
  - iii. Deut. 32:4. "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he."
  - iv. Ps. 115:2-3. "Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him."
  - v. Eph. 1:11. God "works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will"
  - vi. Example from Joseph. His brothers sold him into slavery, but Joseph understands the truth. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Gen. 50:20)
  - vii. Example from Habakkuk. Babylonians used to discipline Israel, but Babylonians held responsible.
- c. The place of suffering in our growth
  - i. Hebrews 12:5-11. God disciplines us to produce a "harvest of righteousness." Everyone undergoes discipline, as children of a loving God.
  - ii. Rom. 5:3-5. We rejoice in sufferings, because sufferings (produces) → perseverance → character → hope.

- iii. James 1:2-4. Consider it pure joy when you encounter trials, for they produce endurance.
  - iv. Phil 3:10-12. Being united with Christ through suffering.
- d. How we respond as Christians: We can certainly cry out in our pain. We also trust in God's sovereign goodness.
- i. Habakkuk. Plea for mercy on Israel. Trust in God's sovereign use of the Babylonians for Israel's discipline. Trust of God's judgment on the Babylonians.
  - ii. David's plea for mercy in discipline. Assurance that God hears: Psalm 6
  - iii. Jesus: *"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."*
  - iv. Jesus: *"My Lord, my Lord, why have you forsaken me?"* (Mat. 27:46)

### III. How can we prepare our discipling friends for difficulty when times are good?

*I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.*

-- Luke 6:47-48

- a. A general principle: Help your friend to know and serve the God of the Bible, and to act upon his/her faith. That includes thinking through the reality of pain and suffering.
- b. Encourage them to pray for others in the church body who are going through trials. (e.g. pray through the e-mail prayer requests together)
- c. Encourage them to serve the basic needs of others in the church body who are going through trials.
- d. Encourage them to think of the goodness of God (Deut. 32:4)
- e. Encourage them to think through the work of Jesus. (the Gospels, Hebrews, etc.)
- f. Study Job and/or Habakkuk together.
- g. Read through D.A. Carson's [How Long O Lord?](#)
- h. Help them to think about suffering BEFORE the day of trouble comes!

### IV. What can we do to encourage our discipling friends when times are difficult?

*... so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it.*

-- 1 Corinth. 12:25-26

- a. General principle: Be quick to listen and slow to offer "solutions." Don't say "I know how you feel". You probably don't. Let your friend do most of the speaking, unless you must correct dangerous or sinful intentions.
- b. Recognize that grief often comes in stages. [ \* state of shock, \* express emotion, \* feel depressed and very lonely, \* physical symptoms of distress, \* become panicky, \* sense of guilt about the loss, \* filled with anger and resentment, \* resist returning to our usual activities, \* gradually hopes comes through, \* we struggle to affirm reality ] Don't immediately rebuke someone for not trusting God fully.

- c. If confronted with a wavering trust in God, try not to show shock, judgment, withdrawal, or other negative responses. That could close the door to further conversation.
- d. Recognize that grief can take a LONG time to overcome. Be patient and persevere in prayer for your friend.
- e. Exercise the ministry of "being there" and listening. "Mourn with those who mourn" (Rom. 12:15). Encourage them to talk. We tend to bottle things up and try to deal with pains ourselves.
- f. Serve their other needs. Cooking, cleaning, etc.. Gather your other Christian friends to support him/her.
- g. Sometimes, verbal encouragement doesn't need to answer the "why?" question. It may be helpful to go over basic, simple truths of the Gospel; thinking about the love that God showed through Christ's work for us in general, not in application to their specific circumstances.
- h. Think about the needs and the capacity of your friend before answering "why?" questions. It may be that they can't handle an in-depth discussion, and they just need to be reminded that even Jesus said, "My God, my God, *why* have you forsaken me?" It may be that they can handle reading through some relevant passages with you. (e.g. Psalms 23, 90)
- i. Deal with guilt appropriately. Real guilt: confess and renounce sin and ask God for forgiveness. False guilt: think through together what Scripture says about that guilt. Godly sorrow leads to repentance, worldly sorrow leads to death.
- j. Offer hope. Short term and long term... sometimes, one day at a time.
- k. Encourage them to know the love of God more through prayer and reading of the Word.
- l. Pray with them and pray for them.
- m. Know when to get outside help from Christian counselors. Talk to a CHBC elder (or pastoral staff) any time you feel your are in over your head.