

HELPING THE HURTING WITH HOPE

LESSON 2: Do You Know Me?

OPENING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

You haven't seen the stranger at worship before. You come to find out that they are an ex-offender. They were released from prison into society just two weeks ago. They had come to faith in Jesus while locked up. They know that worship and hearing God's Word is important. Does knowing that they were in prison change how you treat them? Does the crime make a difference? What if there wasn't prison time, but it's apparent they have some problems because they've made some poor choices? Would that change what you say and do?

Evaluate these two possible responses: "We are okay with you being here." "You are part of us."

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1.) Who are the hurting? Listen to Paul's description:

Romans 7:15-25 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

a.) What was Paul's problem?

b.) What do we and Paul need?

2.) In Luke 15:1-2 we read, “Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” Jesus then tells the parables about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. As we read the latter parable underline the words and phrases that describe a hurting person and help you identify with them.

Luke 15:11-32

¹¹ Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ ”

a.) Who is the hurting person in these verses? What phrases did you select? How do these help you identify with him?

b.) How was the older son also hurting, even if he did not realize it?

c.) Look at verses 20-24. What help did the hurting person need most that the father provided for him?

3.) Let's look at another example from **2 Corinthians 2:5-11**: If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent—not to put it too severely. ⁶The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. ⁷Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. ¹⁰If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, ¹¹in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

a.) Who was the hurting person in these verses?

b.) Having come to his senses, repented, and returned to faith in Christ, how does Paul encourage the Corinthians to respond?

c.) What are the consequences of not doing so?

BRINGING IT HOME

4. If a hurting person, whose sins have made a mess of their life, begins attending your church, the person might see themselves like the lost sheep, lost coin, lost son, or as the tax collector in the temple (who on the outside looked far different from the Pharisee). Considering those parables, let's think of at least three reasons why that is true.

5. Explain how seeing ourselves as someone broken from sin influences how we see someone who is hurting from sin's messes? What will you see?

6. In what ways will this be helpful for a congregation?

LIVING MY FAITH

The more we see ourselves as broken, the more we can identify with others who are broken, too.

- This week, practice daily confessing your sins to God, admitting those sins you know that give evidence that you are hurting from sin's effects. In your prayers, ask the Lord to help you see the sins of another as someone who is also hurting from sin's effects. See them as one you want to help.

CLOSING PRAYER