

## — Dealing With Betrayal —

### The pain is great

Few things hurt like betrayal. It's the worst when you have gone out of your way over an extended time period to build what you thought was a genuine relationship, only to have the person turn on you. When you hear of their gossip, or they come against you in a group setting you feel shaken, wondering how long your relationship was actually a sham. Betrayal can happen in any relationship to anyone at any age, but it seems most common in leadership situations. Many biblical leaders experienced the painful actions of disloyal people.

Moses was challenged by his own sister and brother. The record isn't totally detailed about his relationship with his wife Zipporah, but at one point she went back home with her father **Exodus 18:1,2** and somewhere along the line, possibly after her death, Moses married a Cushite woman **Numbers 12:1-16**. This was their excuse to come against Moses and the authority God had vested in him. They criticized him for the marriage, but power was the real issue.

That is most often the case in betrayal — the real issue isn't clearly identified, just some criticism made, while all along the critics are actually rebelling against God's order as they clamor to undermine the leader's authority. That is exactly what Miriam and Aaron did. They criticized Moses' marriage, but they really wanted to elevate themselves in power. This is where the story gets real good and you might wish it would happen similar to this nowadays.

God suddenly called Moses, Aaron and Miriam to the Tent of Meeting where He came in a cloud and stood in the doorway. He called Miriam and Aaron to step forward and then informed them of Moses' stature in humility and faithfulness, concluding with the question, "Why didn't you hesitate to speak against him?" When God left and the cloud dispersed, Miriam was leprous, white as snow. Aaron was shocked and immediately begged Moses to not impute their sin to them and to heal her. Moses' humility showed through again as he called on God to heal her. God did heal her, but put her outside the camp for a week.

No sooner did everyone recover from this incident and its ramifications, than another onslaught came up. This time a Levite named Korah recruited 250 men — men of renown — to take action and come against Moses and Aaron with the accusation that they had exalted themselves above the people and were ruling like despots.

This brings up a point that can be difficult to discern. A Pastor is called of God to preach the Word and lead the Church as a faithful

under-shepherd. He is to be obeyed **Hebrews 13:17**, yet he is not to rule by lording, but by example **1 Peter 5:1-4**. That can be a fine line to walk and is often open to various questions and opinions. There has to be pastoral authority, and mutual submission all at once. If someone decides to betray the Pastor he can cause a great conflict that is unnecessary when honest, face-to-face communication could bring resolution. In many Churches the Deacons have the idea that their job is to control the Pastor, so instead of carrying out their real responsibilities they waste all kind of time with gossip and secret meetings that keep everything off balance and damage the Church's total ministry.

Moses fell on his face before God upon hearing Korah's tirade. He then called for a vote of confidence, one in which God would do the voting. He instructed Korah and his posse to assemble in the morning with their censers containing fire and incense to offer on them. Moses asserted that God would make clear who was or wasn't His man.

Then Moses gave a little rebuke in which he pointed out the scope and value of the Levites' ministry while questioning why Korah wasn't satisfied to be faithful in what God had assigned. Back to that Deacon thing — how beautiful it would be if in every Church everyone was content and willing to faithfully serve in the capacity God puts them. A biblical Deacon has a valuable assignment and the potential of great fruitfulness in the Kingdom. But when a man drops the biblical part and starts haranguing the Pastor trouble quickly multiplies.

Moses asked Dathan and Abiram to come up also. They refused along with leveling wicked accusations against Moses. It's amazing how the venom of rebellion can infect a congregation and then spread with its evil influence destroying lives who had nothing to do with the original betrayal.

When the morning came they all assembled at the door of the Tent of Meeting and the glory of the Lord appeared. As they burned their incense on their fire pans, God told Moses and Aaron to step back so He could destroy the entire congregation. Moses begged God to not do that, but to simply deal with the rebels. God relented and Moses cautioned the people to step back from Korah and his crew because if Moses was the leader God wanted the ground would open and swallow all of them. He barely finished speaking when the ground cracked, opened and swallowed Korah, all of his men, their families and possessions. Additionally fire came down and devoured the 250 men who were offering incense. Their censers were recovered and hammered into a covering for the altar so the people would always be reminded about rebellion and its cost.

Moses was faithful and even-handed throughout all of this, but you can be sure that his pain was great. Korah's bunch was largely made up of leadership quality men with whom Moses likely had relationships. He experienced pain for what they did and then the physical loss as God destroyed them.

Moses shows that betrayal is best dealt with by faith. You need to

commit the situation to God and trust Him to set things straight. If correction is required, the steps for Church discipline **Matthew 18:15-20** are the best path to take and hopefully resolution can be found short of Church-wide action.

David experienced betrayal several times. Look at the account of Shimei who came out cursing and throwing rocks and dirt at David and his entourage as they approached Bahurim **2 Samuel 16:5-14**. His words were especially hurtful and must have immediately discouraged David. Shimei kept it up until Abishai offered to go over and cut off the "dead dog's head". David rebuked him on the grounds that his actions could be the result of God telling him something. It's vital to keep a godly perspective on yourself and your ministry in times of betrayal. It is so easy to have a knee-jerk reaction and do or say things that cause great pain in the long haul.

David's much bigger problem was with his son Absalom who had killed Amnon because he had violated Absalom's sister Tamar. This resulted in a couple years of estrangement from David during which time Absalom began carrying out a strategy to steal the throne from his father. Shimei was part of the rebellion. David loved his son and did all he could to find reconciliation, but Absalom wouldn't have it. When things escalated to war, David instructed all his men to deal gently with Absalom, but when he got caught hanging by his hair from an oak tree, Joab and ten men killed him and buried him in the forest.

Absalom's betrayal hurt David greatly, but he was nearly inconsolable after his death. I wonder what David would have done differently had he been able to get a do-over. It's common for betrayal to have its roots in an offence **Proverbs 18:19**. Maybe David wished he would have tried even harder to restore things with his boy before all the trouble. When you are experiencing betrayal it might be worth it to ask the person how you have failed, disappointed, or even wronged them and if there is a way you can make it right. You might be surprised how fast the betrayal is replaced by loyalty. Although there might be a hidden agenda involved and that can wreck everything.

Paul experienced betrayal which he mentioned to Timothy **2 Timothy 4:10,14**. Demas was part of the team according to Paul's greeting to the Colossians **Colossians 4:14**, but something went wrong and by the time Paul wrote to Timothy he said that Demas had deserted him and gone to Thessalonica because of his love for the world. This sort of betrayal is often reflective of the impetuous behavior of young people. When you invest in someone, being diligent to disciple them, and they suddenly walk away it's a great disappointment. When a young man does it there is usually a girl involved. Alas, remember you once were young as well.

This Alexander character is a different situation. He is first mentioned **1 Timothy 1:20** as a cohort of Hymenaeus. We don't know exactly what they said or did, but Paul gave them over to Satan to learn not to blaspheme. The final remark about him **2 Timothy 4:14** is that he did Paul a lot of harm. It is sadly common for this sort of thing to happen in Churches. One man can decide for whatever reasons that he wants

the Pastor to be fired and by the time he is through sowing his discord in a small group, with the deacons, and everyone else who will listen, irreparable damage can be done. The enthusiasm of a growing church can be dampened. Young believers can be hurt and just walk away, and your ministry can become burdensome as you feel distracted. The difficulty in dealing with such a man is discerning how aggressive to be. A man on this course seldom stops on his own. The best idea is to implement Matthew 18 sooner than later, again trying strenuously to find resolution short of throwing him out of the Church.

When betrayed you can certainly take it Jesus — He knows all about it on the deepest levels. Demon possessed Judas was one thing, but Peter had to hurt the most due to his closeness and broken promises. Yet Jesus recognized the role of the devil in it all and ultimately restored Peter to the highest place imaginable. I'm praying that God will allow you a similar experience.

Call me if you need someone to talk and pray with.

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