

It Is Written

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When A Loved One Is Making A Terrible Mistake

By Heath Rogers

What are we to do when a loved one is making a terrible mistake? We often feel helpless as we must stand on the sidelines and watch the approaching disaster unfold before our eyes. Is there anything we can do? Does the Bible offer guidance in such situations?

Jesus gives us a pattern to follow in the words He spoke to Peter on the night He was betrayed. "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren'" (Luke 22:31-32). Notice the things we can do.

Warn Them

Peter was unaware of the severity of the trial that awaited him. The Lord did, so He warned Peter. Those who see dangers that lie ahead are duty-bound to warn others (Acts 20:31). Older brethren know about the pitfalls of life. Those who are not emotionally involved in situations can often see and think more clearly than those who are involved.

Warning those we care about is an act of love (Revelation 3:19), but these warnings will not always be appreciated. They can be received as wounds (Proverbs 27:6) and as a slap in the face (Psalms 141:5). Giving such warnings is never easy, but it is better than living with the regret of having done nothing.

Respect Their Free Will

Adults have the right to make their own decisions, even our grown children.

We all enjoy the gift of free will from God. He warns us in His word and then allows us to make our own decisions. Sometimes, these decisions please God, but other times, they grieve His heart. Either way, God allows us to make these decisions.

The same is true for us. We can offer advice, warnings, wisdom, and a good example to those we love, but ultimately, they have the freedom to make their own choices. This free will has the potential to grieve our hearts, but it is part of living with free will.

Pray for Them

Jesus let Peter know that He had prayed for him. After we have warned and encouraged our loved ones, there is still something we can do – we can pray. Pray for them to make the right decision. Pray they will come to their senses and repent (Luke 15:17). Pray the consequences of their error will be minimal. Pray God will give you wisdom and peace during your heartache (1 Peter 5:6-7; Philippians 4:6-7). Remember, there is power in prayer. "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

Remember: Satan is the Real Enemy

Jesus correctly identified Satan as the cause of Peter's failure. Satan loves to destroy God's people. If he cannot do so through a direct assault on us, he will use our loved ones.

It is only natural to project our pain and anger onto the individual who is causing us harm. We must rise above this temptation and have the presence of mind to see Satan's evil hand involved in such situations. Unfortunately, he can trap people into doing his bidding (II Timothy 2:26). Sometimes these trapped individuals are our dear loved ones.

Anticipate Their Return

Jesus warned Peter, told him He was praying for him, foretold his failure, but anticipated his repentance. The Lord stated beforehand that He was willing to receive him back.

Why would we pray for our loved ones if we did not anticipate their repentance? Hope is a powerful thing, and as long as our loved ones have life, we have hope (II Peter 2:9). The father of the prodigal son watched for his son to return. When he did, the father ran to him, and when he heard his son confess his sin, the father welcomed him back into his home with celebration, "For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24).

Conclusion

The day may come when we must watch helplessly as a loved one makes a terrible decision. It will likely be one of the greatest burdens we must bear, but the statement made to Peter by the Lord gives us help in bearing the burden.

Finding God In The Flood Waters

By Kyle Campbell

The floods last week in Kerrville, Texas not only took everyone by surprise, but at the time of this writing left around 100 people dead, including several young girls at summer camp. Tragically, it won't take long for people to use this incredibly sad event to blame God for perceived inattention and inactivity. Is this true and appropriate to do?

At the end of His six days of creation (Genesis 1:31), God surveyed all that He had made, and proclaimed it "very good." Flooding, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and death were unknown. Mankind existed in a paradise of happiness and beauty where they shared an intimate and eternal relationship with their Maker (Genesis 3:8, 22).

But as a direct consequence of human sin, the earth was "cursed" (Genesis 3:17). This effectively means that the cause of everything that's wrong with the earth is ungodliness. Since God is love, and since love allows freedom of choice, God allows freedom of choice (cp. Joshua 24:15; John 5:39-40). God didn't create men and women to serve Him without free will on their part. Regrettably, mankind now reaps the consequences of the misuse of freedom of choice (i.e. the sin) of previous generations (Galatians 6:5-8).

Instead of blaming God because evil, pain, and suffering exist, we should turn to Him for strength, and let tragedies (of whatever nature) remind us that this world never was intended to be a final home (Hebrews 11:13-16). Our time here is temporary (James 4:14), and with God's help, we're able to overcome whatever tragedies come our way (Psalm 46:1-3; Romans 8:35-39; 1 Peter 5:10).