

Betrayal: I Got a Raw Deal

It is likely that there is no phrase in our modern culture that represents the utmost feeling of betrayal more than Julius Caesar's question, "Et tu, Brute?" On March 15 (the Ides of March), 44 BC, Caesar was attacked by a group of senators, including Marcus Junius Brutus, Caesar's close friend. Caesar initially resisted his attackers, but when he saw Brutus, he supposedly spoke those words and resigned himself to his fate. As you likely know, the phrase means "even you, Brutus?" In just three short words we can sense the deepest feelings of betrayal that Julius Caesar must have felt realizing that his close friend was a part of the group of attackers.

About 70 years later a very similar event took place 1400 miles from the place of Caesar's murder in a garden called Gethsemane outside of Jerusalem. Jesus was praying, His followers and closest friends were nearby. Matthew records what happened there this way:

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend."

Matthew 26:47-50 (NIV)

The image of one being betrayed by a kiss is known throughout the world, even by those who may not even know who Jesus is. It is truly a horrible thing to be stabbed in the back by such an intimate greeting.

We have all experienced, in some way, the sting of betrayal. It can happen at work, with our family, with our friends and even at church. Betrayal is really about someone, who is supposed to be on your side, being disloyal to you and doing something to cause you harm or prevent something good from happening to you. It is shocking to us because we trust the offender. It is not surprising when an enemy does us wrong, but it is when a friend hurts us.

So how we do process being betrayed? Our initial response is anger and leads to a desire for revenge. The betrayer hurt us deeply and they deserve to pay for what they've done. Our revenge is not usually physical, it's usually relational. We give the silent treatment, or we are nice to their face but end up talking badly about them when they're not around. The tricky thing about revenge, however, is that it can hurt us more than it hurts the one with whom we are angry. Revenge can be consuming and lead to deep seeded bitterness that can ultimately destroy us.

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone... See to it that no... bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Hebrews 12:14-15

Revenge is not a helpful response to disloyalty and revenge, so how should we react? The first thing to realize is that sinners sin. Obviously that's not rocket science. We are all sinners. We sin and that sin hurts others. It even can hurt our friends. We have just as much potential to hurt someone as the person who has hurt us. This realization can help take the shock out of a painful betrayal. Does this mean we should never trust anyone? Absolutely not! But our trust must be tempered with the knowledge that people can and will fail.

Once we have lessened the shock value of betrayal by realizing that no one is perfect we can then move on to dealing with the hurt appropriately. Jesus tells us in Matthew 18 when someone sins against us we need to handle that with that person directly, one on one. This needs to be handled with love, grace and lots of prayer. Forgiveness of the offender is the only thing that will free us from the bondage of bitterness. As difficult as it may be to forgive our betrayer it is truly the best course of action and will be a blessing to us and them.

The betrayal of Jesus led to the salvation of the world. He brought forgiveness out of a horribly painful betrayal. How does God want to use us in our painful experience?

Can God Fix This?

First Colony Church of Christ
Small Group Series Discussion Guide
Fall 2011

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IceBreaker:

It's very common in stories for the hero to be betrayed in a shocking turn of events. In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* it was Brutus who betrayed to which Caesar responded "Et tu, Brute?" What literary or cinematic betrayals can you think of? Briefly describe the betrayal to the group and share why that has stuck with you.

Discussion:

1. Read Matthew 26:47-50. Here we read of Judas betraying Jesus. Why do you think Judas was willing to be disloyal to Jesus? Is betrayal always as intentional as this instance?

Judas received 30 pieces of silver for his act. This is the same price that was paid to free slaves.

2. Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss, a common greeting among close friends in that culture. What is it about this that seems so painful? What other means of betrayal can also hurt badly?

Allow the group time to think and talk here. Friends, family and coworkers can intentionally and unintentionally hurt us by betraying us in many ways

3. Jesus was arrested and killed as a result of what Judas, his disciple and friend, did. What effect can betrayal have on us? Can our enemy ever betray us?

What makes betrayal so painful is the shock that a friend would hurt us in that way. We expect our enemies to hurt us, so the shock isn't there.

4. Once we have been betrayed we have to choose how we will respond. What is our initial response to this type of disloyalty? Is this response helpful or harmful? How do we learn to respond correctly to the hurts caused by a close friend?

We generally respond to this hurt in anger and desire revenge. Revenge destroys us from the inside out. To respond correctly we realize that we are all sinners and prayerfully bring love, grace and forgiveness to the one who has betrayed us.

5. What Judas did led to Jesus' death, which brought about the salvation of the world. How do you think these types of difficult experiences can bring about good in our own lives?

Again, this is what do you think question. Encourage creativity as the group explores the concept of good coming from bad.

Prayer:

1. Pray for a forgiving spirit
2. Pray for healing for the hurts you have as a result of betrayal
3. Pray for grace to admit when we have hurt others
4. Thank God for the forgiveness and love of Jesus

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4. Once we have been betrayed we have to choose how we will respond. What is our initial response to this type of disloyalty? How do we learn to respond correctly to the hurts caused by a close friend?
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