

Lesson 4 (Teacher)

THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

1 Samuel 19:1-10

¹ Saul now urged his servants and his son Jonathan to assassinate David. But Jonathan, because of his strong affection for David, ² told him what his father was planning. “Tomorrow morning,” he warned him, “you must find a hiding place out in the fields. ³ I’ll ask my father to go out there with me, and I’ll talk to him about you. Then I’ll tell you everything I can find out.”

⁴ The next morning Jonathan spoke with his father about David, saying many good things about him. “The king must not sin against his servant David,” Jonathan said. “He’s never done anything to harm you. He has always helped you in any way he could. ⁵ Have you forgotten about the time he risked his life to kill the Philistine giant and how the LORD brought a great victory to all Israel as a result? You were certainly happy about it then. Why should you murder an innocent man like David? There is no reason for it at all!”

⁶ So Saul listened to Jonathan and vowed, “As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be killed.” ⁷ Afterward Jonathan called David and told him what had happened. Then he brought David to Saul, and David served in the court as before.

⁸ War broke out again after that, and David led his troops against the Philistines. He attacked them with such fury that they all ran away.

⁹ But one day when Saul was sitting at home, with spear in hand, the tormenting spirit^[a] from the LORD suddenly came upon him again. As David played his harp, ¹⁰ Saul hurled his spear at David. But David dodged out of the way, and leaving the spear stuck in the wall, he fled and escaped into the night.

In this passage, we see the beginning of a cycle that occurs in some domestic violence relationships. The cycle often consists of abuse, a “honeymoon” phase, a building up of tensions, then another abusive incident. The cycle repeats itself over and over and its severity may increase each time. In Saul’s case, we see the cycle repeat in chapters 19, 24 and 26.

In the honeymoon phase of the cycle, the abuser may promise to stop the abuse, or to get professional help. He may ask for forgiveness or apologize profusely. The abuser may also try to win back his victim with presents, favors, or charming behavior. This is often an attempt to maintain his control over her. In

Saul's case we see that his honeymoon phases included:

1 Samuel 24:16 Tears

¹⁶ When David had finished speaking, Saul called back, "Is that really you, my son David?" Then he began to cry.

1 Samuel 24:17 Apologies

¹⁷ And he said to David, "You are a better man than I am, for you have repaid me good for evil.

1 Samuel 26:21 Promises & Confessions

²¹ Then Saul confessed, "I have sinned. Come back home, my son, and I will no longer try to harm you, for you valued my life today. I have been a fool and very, very wrong."

Unfortunately, the honeymoon phase usually does not last. Without intervention and help by a domestic violence specialist, the abuse often continues. Things may deteriorate to the point that the victim is "walking on eggshells" as she sees the abuser's attitude and behavior worsen again. Eventually, abuse erupts in a violent incidence, and the cycle repeats.

Wisely, David did not blindly trust Saul's promises, confessions, and apologies. He cautiously kept a safe distance from Saul, waiting to see fruits of repentance.

Luke 3:8

⁸ Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones.

Matthew 7:15-16

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. ¹⁶ You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?"

David quickly found that Saul was merely going through the honeymoon phase of the Cycle of Violence. Victims of domestic violence should not feel obligated to immediately trust their abuser until they have proven their sincerity. In **Matthew 10:16**, Jesus tells us we are like sheep among wolves and must be shrewd as serpents.

Matthew 10:16

¹⁶“Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.

Questions:

- 1) Have you noticed a cycle in an abusive relationship?
Were there behaviors that repeated themselves?
How did you feel during the different phases of the cycles? How did you react?

- 2) If your partner made promises in a honeymoon phase, did he follow through?

Verse of the Week:

Hebrews 10:23

²³ Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.

Weekly Thought:

If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten.

Cycle of Abuse

1

Tensions Building

Tensions increase, breakdown of communication, victim becomes fearful and feels the need to placate the abuser

2

Incident

Verbal, emotional & physical abuse.
Anger, blaming, arguing.
Threats. Intimidation.

3

Reconciliation

Abuser apologizes, gives excuses, blames the victim, denies the abuse occurred, or says that it wasn't as bad as the victim claims

4

Calm

Incident is "forgotten",
no abuse is taking place.
The "honeymoon" phase