

BEYOND BETRAYAL

by Marie Armenia

The Burden of Betrayal:

It took less than five seconds for John Hampton's¹ world to collapse. Five seconds is the amount of time it took for his brain to interpret that the scene he'd stumbled upon—his wife Brenda in the intimate embrace of his best friend, Mark—was the picture of the word “betrayal.” John's heart died that day—though it stubbornly continued beating in his chest. He vowed to never trust anyone again—and who can blame him? He did nothing to deserve such pain. Betrayal's Burden for him is a bitterness he cannot escape, one which poisons his every thought, every moment, of every day.

The Burden of Betrayers:

What John doesn't know is that Betrayal's Burden for Brenda and Mark is a suffocating, all consuming, and self-loathing guilt. The pain their selfish decision has had on innocent family members and friends is something they hadn't factored in when they imagined their life together. They aren't happy. Brenda knows Mark is the kind of man who will take his best friend's wife. Mark knows Brenda is the kind of woman who can't keep promises. They never thought of

themselves as capable of such cruelty. No one ever does.

The Truth About Betrayal:

Betrayal is as old as humanity itself. Whether it's something as simple as a friend betraying another's trust, or Eve betraying Adam in the Garden of Eden, none of us will escape it's brutal sting. Jesus understands the pain of betrayal. But he's more than just a sympathetic friend who can empathize with our pain—He has the power to take it away and heal our broken hearts. Consider His story:

- **Jesus did not deserve what happened to Him.** Not only was Jesus motivated by pure love at all times, He was the only sinless human who ever lived. He truly understands the indignity of betrayal. If we cry out to God about the injustice of being betrayed and the unfairness of the wounds it brings, Jesus, according to biblical accounts, stands right next to God's throne to plead our case to God Himself. He understands exactly what we're going through, and He wants to do something about it.²

- **He didn't let it stop Him.** Jesus knew who was going to betray Him before it even happened.³ But that didn't keep Him from fulfilling God's plan for His life—to save the world from sin and death. You cannot give up on God's future for you because someone hurt or betrayed you in the past.
- **He felt abandoned by God Himself.** Jesus understands what it feels like to feel that God has turned away during an hour of need. "My God, My God," He cried out from the Cross, "why have you forsaken me?"⁴ Jesus was willing to be forsaken by God so that we would never have to be. He's close to brokenhearted people, and that means each of us.⁵
- **He forgave the betrayers.** Yes. This seems impossible, but with God all things are possible. Forgiving our betrayers is the example Jesus set for us. It's true they don't deserve forgiveness. None of us do. The key to being free inside is to forgive. Only Jesus has the power to help you. Just ask.


The Truth About Betrayers:

The name "Judas" is synonymous with betrayal, but the truth is that the seed of betrayal lives inside each one of us. When Jesus announced to the disciples at the Last Supper that one of them would betray Him—each one asked, "Is it I, Lord?"⁶ They all vowed it would never be them—promising to die with Jesus if necessary. Yet, hours later when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, "...all the disciples left Him and fled."⁷ When the

time of testing came, Judas was not the only one who betrayed Jesus. They all did.

Beyond Betrayal:

Peter's is also an example of faithless betrayal. He followed as Jesus was arrested—but when confronted about his association with Jesus, he cursed and denied the One he'd just vowed to join in death. Jesus turned to look at Peter.⁸ Peter wept bitterly at his own weakness and ran away. For the price of 30 pieces of silver, Judas was bought by the accusers of Christ. He was so consumed by guilt that he took his own life.

When Jesus rose from the dead, he specifically asked for Peter. He reached out to Peter, and restored Him.⁹ Which betrayer do you identify with? Are you like Judas who has decided his sin is too great for forgiveness? Jesus understands betrayal and Jesus continues to love and redeem betrayers. To those who acknowledge their wrong and choose to follow Christ there is release and freedom from the burden of betrayal. Jesus says, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."¹⁰ You can be free of the burden of betraying—just ask. 

REFERENCES: ¹ Names changed. ² Hebrews 4:14-16. ³ Matthew 26:21. ⁴ Matthew 27:46. ⁵ Psalm 34:18. ⁶ Read Matthew, Chapter 26 and 27. ⁷ Matthew 26:56. ⁸ Luke 22:61. ⁹ John 21. ¹⁰ John 8:36.

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