



## PREVIEW

We all have regrets—some serious, some not so serious. Some regrets are of our own doing; some are the doings of others. Some we can make up for and some we can't. Regrets can wreak havoc on our emotional life because they tend to rise up over and over again. Today we are going to explore how to handle regret properly and effectively.

## PRAISE

Go around the room and ask each student to name the biggest thing they regret doing in the last three to five years. Encourage the students to share funny stories that deal with their regret. Be sure to share something from your life as well.

## PARABLE

The dictionary defines the word regret as "a feeling of sadness, repentance, or disappointment over something that has happened or been done." Scripture records several accounts of the devastating effects regret can have on a person's emotions. For instance, when Peter denied the Lord, his anguish deepened when the rooster crowed. Luke 22:62 says Peter "wept bitterly." I imagine every time Peter heard a rooster crow after that he couldn't help but feel a pang of regret. Matthew 27 and Acts 1 recall that Judas, after he betrayed the Lord for money, hanged himself and fell to his death. He could not deal with the terrible thing he had done. The well of regret can be deep!

# REGRET

## **PARABLE** *(continued)*

The distance it takes to climb out of regret is equal to the depth of the regret. "I regret eating that hot pepper." We laugh and move on. "I regret not doing my best in school this year." This well is a bit deeper, so we don't laugh. It may actually hurt a bit. Regret is an emotion—not a wrong emotion, but an emotion. Jon Bloom, an award-winning filmmaker, said, "Emotions are gauges, not guides. They tell us where we are, but we shouldn't let them tell us where to go." It is true: emotions are warning signs like the red or yellow lights blinking on your dashboard. They tell you something is wrong, but they don't tell you how to fix it. Judas tried getting help from the people he bargained with in the betrayal. He did the correct thing by seeking comfort and forgiveness, but he went to the wrong source, and it ended in disaster. Peter went to the right source, and it ended in forgiveness and emotional healing.

Twice, God said that He regretted doing something: He regretted making humans (Genesis 6:6–7), and He regretted making Saul king (I Samuel 15:11). The apostle Paul sent a harsh letter to the Corinthian church and later felt bad about it. He said, "I do not regret it, though I did regret it" (II Corinthians 7:8, NLT). Paul regretted he had to write such a severe letter to the Corinthians, but since his words had caused the Corinthians to repent, Paul's regret was turned into joy. apostle Paul sent a harsh letter to the Corinthian church and later felt bad about it. He said, "I do not regret it, though I did regret it" (II Corinthians 7:8, NLT). Paul regretted he had to write such a severe letter to the Corinthians, but since his words had caused the Corinthians to repent, Paul's regret was turned into joy.

## **PRESENT**

In a 2011 study, psychiatrists Schwartz and Gladding wrote about deceptive brain messages that cause us to believe things that are not true, which we then tend to act out.



# REGRET

## **PRESENT** *(continued)*

Let's face it: some things we should regret because we were thoughtless, unfaithful, or inconsiderate; but some things really are out of our control, and for those we should not accept deceptive "brain lies." Regret can be a heavy word! How about this: "I regret having you," a mother says to a child. A wife or husband says, "I regret marrying you!" That's heavy.

The opposite of deceptive brain messages is the truth. Read Lamentations 3:22–23. If you have the time to remedy a regret, do it. "I regret not learning to play the piano," then start! You are still alive, so you can remedy the situation. The regrets you cannot remedy, accept that God's compassion is new every morning and start over!

## **PRACTICE**

Reason (thinking) must guide our actions during emotional times. Joshua was having a rough time when Moses died, because Joshua had followed his mentor for forty years. Read Joshua 1:8. In those tough days, the Lord guided Joshua to the Scriptures. Let your head deal with your heart! Accept those feelings, but lean in on those difficulties with the truth of God's Word. Your guide should always be God's Word. God promised Israel and Judah if they would return to Him, He would restore the time and things they had lost. Read Joel 2:25. Sometimes I regret having wasted the time the Lord has given me, and I ask Him to give me back the time I used in trifling.

## **PRAY**

Thank You, Jesus, that Your mercies are new every morning. Where would we be today if it were not for Your grace and mercy? Help us to overcome feelings of regret by giving them to You. Your Word says to cast all of our burdens on You because You care for us. Thank You for the reminder today that our failures are not fatal. As long as we have breath, we have new mercy. Thank You for what You are doing in our lives. Bless us and keep us until we gather together again. In Jesus' name, amen.

# REGRET

## PLUS

If time allows, use the following questions to guide a discussion.

In what ways do we experience regret on a day-to-day basis?

How can we properly overcome regrets in our lives?

What warning signs show up when regret starts to become an issue?

Where can we turn to help us deal with regret in our lives? and mercy?