

Series: **GREATER THAN...June 10, 2007**

GREATER THAN MY BETRAYAL
Matthew 26:14-25; 47-50; 27:1-5

I. INTRO

- A. The adrenaline channels on TV sometimes carry a show called, ***When Good Times Go Bad!*** It's kind of a cross between America's Funniest Videos and the movies like ***Jaws*** and the ***Texas Chainsaw Massacre***. It's video footage of people in air balloons hitting powerlines, people getting attacked by dogs, wrecking boats and motor-cycles. I have to admit the shameful truth that I'm fascinated by things like that—I know, I need therapy—but it makes something shudder and hurt inside when I see it. Anyone have the same reaction?
- But, actually, most of us won't have to face some rabid dog or some killer virus or a neighbor's pet cobra. We are most vulnerable to getting our hearts hurt. Not the pump—the part of us that trusts and loves and feels. And we get hurt, not by strangers, but by the people we allow into our hearts. People we've trusted. That hurt is called ***betrayal***. Your chances of getting your heart broken run about 100%. It just happens.
1. Let me describe betrayal so you know exactly what I'm talking about. You're share a secret—make yourself vulnerable to a friend. Then they tell someone else.
 - *Someone makes a promise to you and breaks it.
 - *You cheat your family to give yourself fully to a job you believe in—and then your employer throws you away—like garbage.
 - *Someone stands at an altar with you and makes promises before God about how they will love you forever. You find out that they have given the love and romance and affection that was rightfully yours to someone else.
 - *A parent you depend on to protect ***you***, hurts you, violates you.
 2. When you're betrayed—you at first feel numb--sometimes too shocked to do anything. Then you're devastated--there's this lump in your throat, this pain in your chest that won't go away. Then you're angry--filled with rage--and you just want to do ***hurt*** somebody—particularly the one who betrayed you. Then you just feel sick and depressed and worthless.
 - If this describes you, you've got a ***lot*** of company. Unfortunately, when it comes to betrayal, ultimately ***no*** one gets left out! And betrayal is one of the ***toughest*** things to forgive.
- B. When it comes to emotional pain thresholds, I think betrayal pretty much hits the top. Betrayal shocks you. It's a sort of a relational sucker punch that catches you off guard. See, we ***expect*** bad things from enemies, but not friends; not the ones who are closest to us. And the question is—how do you keep your stomach from become a ball of acid--and your heart from becoming a mass of scar tissue?

II. THERE'S NO VACCINE FOR THIS STUFF

- A. Now, I've done this demonstration before, but for effect, I want to do it again. I want to demonstrate why betrayal feels so bad—and it's through a game kids sometimes play. I need two volunteers. One to be the **faller** and one to be the **catcher**. Two guys. Don't worry, you don't have to talk or answer questions--and I won't make you look dumb.
- It's very simple. One stands behind the other—and the faller just falls backwards without looking. Let's try it.
 - That's what trust in relationships is like. Really trusting a friend means believing that they're watching your back! That they won't let you fall.
1. I remember a guy telling a story about how, as a teenager, his Dad played this game with him. When he fell backwards, his Dad just moved out of the way and let him hit the floor. And he hit the floor so hard it almost knocked him unconscious. Then his Dad said, "There! The lesson is—**never trust anybody!**" And he never did.
 - When someone betrays you—they **just let you drop!** It hurts. It throws you into chaos and turns your world upside down.
 2. Some of you may have been betrayed as children. See, from the time we're infants, the unspoken question we walk around asking is, "Who can I trust?" There is this implicit promise parents make by having kids, "You fall, and I'll **catch** you." For some of you, that didn't happen. Your parents were too broken, too selfish, too busy, or too addicted. And now you find it **very** hard to be vulnerable. You did that once and got hurt.
 - This can also make you a person who trusts **too** quickly--and it's like there's this revolving door of hurt you find yourself in.
 3. If you're in business—and many of you are—you know that betrayal has hit epidemic proportions in the business world. Proverbs 16:29 says, **Calloused climbers betray their very own friends; they'd stab their own grandmothers in the back (Proverbs 16:29 Msg.)** When **money is god**, people will do almost anything to worship it—and if you get in between people and their money, **watch out!** Employees leave, sell ideas, embezzle. And employers sometimes just use people and throw them away. It's really tough these days to stay in the rat-race without becoming a rat.
 4. And the romance arena? Betrayal is **epidemic!** "I love you—I will always be true...of course, until someone **better** comes along!" People will say what they have to say, do what they have to do, lie where they have to lie, betray where they have to betray to get what they want. People get thrown away like an empty potato chip bag when the chips are gone!
 - The lying and deception of betrayal is maybe the hardest part. Someone looks you in the eye, acts genuine--and you **believe** what they tell you about the job, about their love, about their respect, about their friendship. Then you find out that they were just greasing you up.
 - We live in a world that is into instant gratification and convenience big time. When you become inconvenient, or a relationship gets difficult—we're like 3 year olds waiting for cotton candy. And you can't help but feel, **I guess I just wasn't worth the trouble!**
- B. The main questions you ask yourself when someone promises to catch you--and lets you fall--is, "What's **wrong** with me? How could I have been so stupid and blind? How come everyone else could see what was going on—except me? I must be defective!" Ever said something like that to yourself?

1. Well, don't answer the question too quickly. The most brilliant person who ever lived, someone with flawless insight into people and life--was taken down by betrayal. Of course, I'm talking about Jesus. I'd like to talk about **His** story of betrayal for a few minutes.
-As you may know, when Jesus started on his mission, he chose twelve disciples. They would be his closest associates, his closest friends. They would be the ones who would carry on his mission.

2. When it came time to choose them, Jesus didn't take this lightly. He went up to the top of a mountain and spent all night. Then he came down in the morning and called the twelve—including Judas to be his inner closest companions—the circle he would fall backward into.
-And everyone in the whole group trusted Judas—so much so that he became the treasurer for the group. Judas spend three years with Jesus and the others, listening to the most intimate of conversations, watching the miracles, listening to Jesus' teaching. For 3 years he saw and heard things you and I would **die** to see and hear and be a part of for a single day.
-And **then** GOOD TIMES WENT BAD! Judas sold out to Jesus' enemies. First, he went to them to offer his services. Then right in the middle of Jesus' last meal with his disciples, he left the table and went out into the night to seal the deal. And then he led a posse right to the private hiding place Jesus had with the twelve.
-The secret signal Judas had arranged with his posse was that he would kiss Jesus—and then they would know. In the record of the event, it's clear that this wasn't just the middle eastern custom of a polite peck on each cheek. The Greek word used here is the same one used to describe the Dad kissing the prodigal son—embrace, affection. Know what Jesus calls him? **Friend!** "Friend, you have come to betray me with a **kiss?**" He didn't condemn him, call him a snake or a sinner...**friend?"**

3. And, of course, Jesus is hauled away, kicked around, condemned, scourged, nailed to a cross—and by the end of the day, he's dead. Why? **Why would Judas do this?**

-There's been a lot of speculation—including what's recorded in a recently translated document called the **Gospel of Judas**. That actually doesn't help, because it was written about 250 years after Jesus died. The speculations run from Judas trying to provoke Jesus to act, to him potentially being a part of a group of secret Zealot assassins called the **Secari**.

-I mean, knowing that the disciples of failed Messiahs also ended up on crosses, Judas may be been turning **state's evidence**--the witness protection plan—to save his own skin.

4. It's cool to speculate—but the Bible is actually pretty straight-forward on why he did it. The story that gives us the most insight into Judas' character takes place in the last week of Jesus' life. At a dinner party held in Jesus' honor, Mary came in and poured this expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped it up with her hair. Up to this point, there is no record of a single word Judas has said. Listen:

But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, “That perfume was worth a year’s wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor.” Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples’ money, he often stole some for himself. Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me (John 12:1-8 NLT).”

-Funny, Judas sounds **very** compassionate. “Why would you waste this on Jesus when you could’ve helped feed the poor with it?” Of course, the back story **no** one knew then was that he was embezzling money from the disciple’s bank account.

-Matthew records precisely what happens next. Judas immediately turned on his heel, went directly to the religious professionals, and offered his services. They agree on 30 pieces of silver—which Jeremiah had prophesied would happen 500 years before.

-Jesus had made several comments throughout his ministry about one his inner circle being tainted. About Satan’s involvement in one of their lives. And it would seem that the entry point in Judas’ heart was his greed. Which is fascinating, given how much betrayal in our world revolves around money.

-There wasn’t a noble reason—or a noble bone in Judas’ body. He was already living a lie. He was a hypocrite. He was just smart enough to keep his mouth shut. Whatever his agenda was, his bottom line was personal profit. Greed, lust, pride, power, personal advantage—self-interest, not love, is **always** the bottom line with betrayal.

5. Know what I find amazing in this story of what Judas did to Jesus? It’s how Jesus treated him. **That** is astounding. Right at the supper table on the last night of his life, Jesus is very troubled and says, “One of you is going to betray me!” And the disciples don’t have the **faintest clue** who it is! They keep asking Jesus, “It’s...it’s not *me*, is it?”

-Jesus says time after time in this story, “Judas, I know what you’re doing! Don’t do it! Turn back!” But he doesn’t.

6. The end, for Judas, is pretty gruesome. His betrayal catches up with him. Friends, write it down. **Betrayal ALWAYS catches up with the person who does it!** Listen to this:
When Judas, who had betrayed him, realized that Jesus had been condemned to die, he was filled with remorse. So he took the thirty pieces of silver back to the leading priests and the elders. “I have sinned,” he declared, “for I have betrayed an innocent man.” “What do we care?” they retorted. “That’s your problem.” Then Judas threw the silver coins down in the Temple and went out and hanged himself (Matt. 27:3-5 NLT).

-For all time, Judas has embodied the qualities of every spouse, every friend, every company who's betrayed someone they pretended to care about. If you've been betrayed, you probably know these qualities by heart. Deceit, self-centeredness, and unbelievable callousness.

-If you'd had a heart-to-heart with Judas right before he turned Jesus in, I can **guarantee** you that he would've had some line about why what he was doing made perfect sense, "You know, I love Jesus and I'm devoted to him and all, but..." Anyone who betrays does that. They weave this web of treachery and lies and deceit, rip the heart out of someone they made promises to, said they cared about, even loved--and **step** on it. **Spit** on it! And **then** they proceed to lie to **themselves** that the person had to coming, and they're actually warm, sensitive, caring, unselfish people. It's unbelievable!

-At the end of his life, we find Judas hanging from a noose. Dead. His sorrow led to regret and remorse, but not repentance. He committed suicide because he couldn't live with himself. His time with Jesus had at least left him with one thing. A conscience. Some people don't even have that.

7. If you were to ask our culture, "What do you do when someone betrays you—and with hatred that runs so deep it makes you want to vomit blood?" What do you think people would say? What do people in the movies do? Well, the biggest would be **revenge**, right? Watch a Clint Eastwood spaghetti western like **Pale Rider**, or a Rambo movie, **First Blood**—what happens? Someone **dies!**
- a. Several years ago, there was a listing in the Los Angeles Times want ads that read: **Porsche. Mint condition. \$50.** This guy who saw it thought they'd made a mistake in the ad, but decided to check it out anyway. This car was **gorgeous!** It looked like it had just come off the show room floor—and only had a couple of thousand miles on it. When he checked the price, the woman said, "That's right. \$50 bucks." He said, "Sold! And flipped the cash right out of his pocket before she could change her mind. **Then** he asked, **WHY?**
- She said, "Oh, this thing used to belong to my husband. It was his pride and joy. A few weeks ago that filthy snake in the grass left for a woman 20 years younger than me! He didn't even have the guts to tell me himself--he just sent me a letter telling me he wanted a divorce. He told me that I could have the house and everything--and to just sell the Porsche and **send him the money!**" **Revenge!**
- b. Another interesting response to betrayal is **denial.** Have you ever wondered how a spouse can have an affair or be a pedophile for **years--** and the person who shares their home, kitchen table and bed not even have a clue?
- See, sometimes the pain of acknowledging betrayal that deep is so massive--you're just not ready to believe it. You need shock absorbers. You need time.
- And maybe for some of you this morning--it's **time.** It's time for you to see the truth you don't **want** to see.
- c. But these aren't the most common responses to betrayal. Can anyone guess what the most **common** response to betrayal is? "This is **never**

going to happen to **me** again! I'll just stop trusting." You need to know that if, out of fear of being hurt, you just close up and withhold a part of your heart from people and never go deep again, you will never really know love and intimacy your heart craves. You can't. Not without **trusting**. So, you'll have to through a kind of relational rehab with your damaged trust muscle.

III. WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN GOOD TIMES GO BAD?

- A. When **good times go bad** and the numbness, shock and anger of betrayal hits you, it's **very** easy to just follow your instincts. And **that's** where you need to be careful—cause instincts will not always lead you in the right direction.

-Chuck Swindoll tells a story about a pet for whom good times went bad. Chippy the parakeet never saw it coming. One second he was sitting peacefully in his cage singing, the next, he was sucked up and blown over. His problem started when his owner decided to clean his cage out with a vacuum. She stuck the nozzle in to suck up the seeds and the feathers at the bottom of the cage. Then the phone rang. Instinctively, she turned to pick it up. She barely said "*hello*" when, **Shwiiptf!** Chippy got sucked in. She gasped. She let the phone drop. She stopped the vacuum. With her heart in her mouth she unzipped the bag. There was Chippy, alive--but **stunned**. And covered with heavy black dust. She grabbed him, rushed him to the bathroom, put him under the faucet--turned it on full blast—and held Chippy under a torrent of ice cold water, power-washing him clean. He was shivering, so she did what any compassionate pet-owner would do. She grabbed the blow drier and blasted the wet shivering little bird with hot air. Chippy doesn't sing much anymore.

1. Chippy's owner kinda followed her instincts, and it didn't work out all that well for Chippy! Your instincts may lead you to do precisely the **wrong** thing in a crisis! It might create **more** pain! We talked about our instincts earlier. First, to be numb; then to be shocked and hurt and humiliated. And then to be boiling mad! Like you want to kill them first—and then hurt them **real** bad!
 - a. Jesus, the most relationally brilliant person who ever lived says, to summarize, "Don't retaliate! If someone hits you in the face, 'turn the other cheek.'" In our recent forgiveness series, we talked a **lot** about this. If you want, you can get the CDs of that—or go to our website and download the messages.

-But, to **not** retaliate sounds a little crazy. We think, "Just let them **get away?**" But think about retaliation for a minute. Think about Kosovo. Rwanda. The Sunnis and the Shi'ites? Who wins? **No one** wins! Ever! Jesus is saying, "Stop the stupidity! Let Someone bigger than you settle things. Don't up the ante.
 - b. Know why? Because when we think with our emotions instead of with our mind, we **always** do things we regret! And retaliation doesn't really make you feel better. Go ask the people in jail who've done it.

-Now, don't worry. Jesus is not telling us to do life like an over-cooked noodle. He never hesitated on telling the truth. He held people accountable for their actions--including Judas. **But He never gave other people the power to yank His chain and determine his reactions or his**

future! He chose to **respond**. And love was Jesus' weapon of choice. **Love wins!** Now, if you look at Jesus' life on the Saturday before Easter, it doesn't seem like love worked all that well. It looks like Judas' betrayal took him down for good. But when you look at Easter and beyond—well, it's clear that **nothing** could keep Jesus down!

2. There's a second dead-end street you can take. It's when you take on **victim status**. You do this when you spend the rest of your life licking your wounds--blaming your lack of a life on someone who hurt you. Words like **helpless, feeble, weak and vulnerable** come to mind. Is that really what you want? **Help, I've fallen and I can't get up!** Playing victim may get you some sympathy—at least for a while—but it won't get you a life.
 - Remember the illustration I used during the forgiveness series—about someone getting run down by a drunk driver—and then leaving it up to the drunk driver to come back, pick them up, get them to the hospital, and help them learn to walk again? What is the likelihood of that happening? Well, when you take on victim status, that is exactly what you're doing!
 3. Let me mention a third dead-end street. **Instant pain relief**. Wouldn't it be great if, when someone rips you open with betrayal—you could just take some kind of emotional Tylenol or Ibuprofen to relieve the pain? Actually, people do this! Some people try to drink their way, drug their way, eat their way, or spend their way out of pain. Does it actually **help** the pain? No! While they're numb, the pain just gets worse—and life gets **way** more complicated!
 - Do I have your permission to get into some messy stuff here? I've watched people get decimated by relational betrayal. A spouse rips out their heart and steps on it. The pain and the loneliness is overwhelming—and self-esteem is obliterated. **Instinctively** they go shopping for someone else to hook up with a.s.a.p. to help heal their heart, or share their bed. This is disastrous. It's not fair to you **or** the person you hook up with. Simply put, when you've been really hurt—you need time to do the hard work of healing; to **figure out who you are as a single person**.
 4. Now, this is what I'm trying to say. When life hits the bottom--you have to sometimes just **feel** the pain. Ask God for help! **Choose** to act in relationally intelligent ways--and ask others to support you and help you be accountable. Don't let the hurt and pain you feel drive you into something **worse**.
- B. Remember the story I told you about the boy whose Dad let him hit the ground instead of catching him? One of the things we need to figure out in life is, "What does a **safe person** look like?" Truth is, **some people are unsafe!** If you entrust your soul to them—they will hurt eventually hurt you! The book of Proverbs warns again and again about a whole category of people it labels as **fools**. It says that if you hook up with one, he or she will take you places where you really **don't** want to be! Ever.
- Now, are fools valuable? Does God love them? Should **you** love them? Of course! Just don't marry one, or hire one, or choose one as a best friend. And don't let a one borrow your car or watch your kids. And try not to **raise** one.
 - In closing, I want to talk briefly about some solid decisions you will need to make if you're going to heal properly--and **trust** again. See, if you **don't** heal, you **won't** trust. And if you don't learn to trust--again, you will miss out on the one thing that makes life fun,

warm, and beautiful. It's the closeness your heart longs for. Intimacy. Intimacy has little to do with sex--and everything to do with **trust**.

1. First, if you're going to heal, you have to figure out what happened. And **you're** thinking, "I **know** what happened. That @#!&* screwed up my life!"
 -But there may be more to it than just finding someone to blame and label. There may be a part **you** need to own. When betrayal happens, rarely is on person all villain and the other all victim. So, **learn!** Get help if you need to—but **find the truth as best as you can!**
 -Then have the courage to accept responsibility for what you've done. Hold the other person accountable—blame them for what they've done. You'll have to if you're going to forgive them.

2. I know you don't want to hear the "F" word at this point—but **FORGIVENESS** is absolutely necessary. And God will help. Why? Well, you do it for Jesus' sake—as an act of obedience—but you also do it for **you!** To set yourself free to move into the future. It's God's gift to people who have been deeply hurt.
 -A few years ago, there was an article about this in the **Globe and Mail**. It says, "**Dr. [Leslie] Greenberg of the York University Psychotherapy Research Clinic, has made an international reputation helping people learn to let go of old emotional baggage... Dr. Greenberg's initial research suggests that if the patient can forgive, this might be the most powerful healing force of all**".

3. Want to know why that's true? Because **that's how God wired us up!** God forgives us—and asks us to imitate Him. We have to **choose** to forgive; forgiveness is a **choice** you make, not a feeling you wait for. You have to 1) rediscover the other person as a human, not unlike you! 2) let go of your right to get even—retaliate. And finally, 3) you have to choose to release them from what they've done, with the goal that you will wish them well.
 -I thought this coffeemaker might drive the forgiveness truth home. Remember how Jesus said that the contents of our heart spill out into and contaminate the contents of our lives? Holding unforgiveness and resentment and hatred in your heart is like putting garbage in your coffee filter. Even if you fill it with fresh Starbucks coffee and water from the mountain springs of BC—your coffee will **always** taste like garbage! Forgiveness **empties** and washes out the filter.
 -The question is—**what do you want to come out of your life?** Even if you've been betrayed and deeply **deeply** hurt--will you **choose** to forgive? Will you make that choice today?

3. Once you do that, **then** you can decide what kind of person you want to be. You have to decide, "No matter what happens to me, no matter how badly I have been betrayed, **I** will be a trustworthy person! I will become the kind of person that will **not** let those who trust me hit the concrete! Know why? Well, first of all, because it's **right**. You do that to become someone **you** respect. Secondly, it makes you a good friend--and **good friends** attract **good friends** they travel through life with.
 -But it will cost you. You have to decide in advance, "No matter what anyone does to me, no matter what personal advantages there appear to be in messing with a relationship, I will be a person others can count on. I won't even do **little** betrayals. I won't talk about my friends behind their backs; I will not shade the

truth to escape conflict; I will not climb over other people to get ahead. I will not make promises to friends and not keep them. I will not use truth for my own personal advantage."

4. Can I tackle one more messy issue? It's very noble to think, "Yes, I've mostly been betrayed and hurt by others!" Truth is that sometimes *I* am the person who betrays. *I* am the one who **desperately** needs forgiveness.
 - When I lived in Pennsylvania, a guy named Jerry was one of my best friends. One day I took some information he had given to me in confidence and used it to get myself out of a difficult moment. I didn't mean to, but I put him in a very awkward situation. I **betrayed** him. And it really hurt our friendship--to the point where it took a couple of years to recover. I initially tried to play Houdini--squirm and rationalize my way out of it. But I eventually had to look in the mirror and say, **You're** the man!" And I had to ask Jerry to forgive me. And he did.

5. And maybe you've betrayed someone. Some one expected you to be faithful and you **weren't**. Someone thought their secret would be safe with you, but it **wasn't**. You've broken someone's heart. Someone trusted you—and you let them drop like a sack of hammers. And you need to find that person, own what you've done, and ask forgiveness. If it's an act of betrayal in your marriage--I'd get some counsel on **how** to do that well--but you **need** to do it.
 - a. Let me take a swan dive right into the messy stuff! It's possible that **right this moment** you are involved in an act of betraying someone who trusts you, and it needs to stop. Right now. It just does. Whatever pay-off you think you're going to get from what you're doing is a **lie!** There **will** come a time, either now or in eternity, when you will hate whatever quick-fix you're looking for.
 - It's possible that today you need to make a phone call to a man or woman and say, "It's over. The deal's off. Right now." Some of you need to repay money you've taken. Some of you need to go to someone you've slandered or gossiped about and set it right.
 - b. It's possible that you haven't yet betrayed someone, but right this moment you're nibbling around the edges of it—and **lying** to yourself the whole time about what's going on in your heart. And I **plead** with you: **Stop!** Don't do it. That road will **kill** you! God will give you **all the power you need** to say "no"--but you need to ask!

- C. There's one more thing I need to say this morning. If you've been betrayed and your heart is broken—crushed—Jesus has been there. He knows. He totally understands what you're feeling.
 - But the **good** news is that betrayal, pain and death wasn't the end of the story. That's where Satan wanted it to end—and where he wants **your** story to end. But his betrayal and death was the beginning of redemption and the ultimate healing of **everything**. Here's the deal. He knows how to turn your tragedy around! Believe it or not, He can work it for **your** good. He's God. He sees it all! I've been betrayed—and He did that for me.
 - See, He's Yahweh Rapha—healer of broken bodies and broken hearts. He healed my heart—and He has the power to heal yours, too.

1. When you're lying in bed at night, staring at the ceiling—and the pain goes **so** deep—He knows! He's there!
-Right now He says to you, "I know! I know. I know how you feel. My friend sold me for 30 bucks. I came to a world I created--and was mostly rejected by everyone! I **know** how you feel."
2. The one who created the human heart knows what to do when they get dropped and broken.
-This morning, this God who created the universe is greater than your betrayal. And He has a special place in his heart for the wounded and broken hearted. That's what made Jesus so deeply loved by those He touched. They had never felt so deeply cared for. I know, it feels impossible to forgive. But God is a professional forgiver—and He'll help.
3. But you have to do your part. There's not a crash bar on your heart; the handle is on the **inside**—and only you can open your heart and invite Him into the most painful parts of your life. He's right **here!** He's closer than your next breath. Why not ask. What could you **possibly** have to lose?