

LOYALTY

Question before the story: Have you ever disappointed or let down a friend ?

Betrayal

A man was ploughing his fields and at the end of the day, when he and the oxen were tired after a long day of working hard in the hot sun, the oxen grazed in the open fields and the man fell asleep early. The oxen started moving toward the forest where the grass was greener, and soon they had wandered deep into the forest. The next morning, the man went out to look for them. He went into the forest, wandering further and further, and soon was lost. He had no food, he couldn't find his oxen, and had no idea how to get home. He wandered for several days without any food, until finally he found a mango tree. He quickly gobbled up the mangoes that had fallen on the ground, but he was still hungry, so he climbed the tree to get more mangoes. Suddenly, he heard a cracking sound as a branch that he was standing on broke off. He fell helplessly from the tree, trying to grasp a branch, but all he could grab were leaves, which tore off in his hands. He fell hard – not on the level ground but into a deep pit near the tree. He got up to try to climb out of the pit, but discovered that his shoulder was badly injured, and he could not use one of his arms at all. He tried to pull himself out of the pit with one arm, and he tried jumping, but he could not get out of the pit. It was dark in the pit, and he was afraid, and very, very hungry. For several days he suffered in agony in the deep pit.

While he was in the pit, a monkey came to eat mangoes from the tree. He saw the man in the pit, and wanted to help him. But the monkey saw that he was small and the man was much bigger, so he wondered how he could help him. He could not carry him. He needed much more strength and muscle. “How could I become stronger?” he thought. Then he saw a large rock nearby, and thought that if he carried the large rock around, his back would become much stronger. So he crawled around with the rock carefully balanced on his back, and then climbed up a hill with it on his back. After many days practicing with the rock on his back, he felt that his muscles were stronger and that he might be able to lift the man.

So he climbed down into the pit, and saw the man laying in the water at the bottom of the pit. He was not moving. He opened his eyes when the monkey touched him, and was terrified, wondering if the monkey would bite him. The monkey told him to climb onto the monkey's back and put his arms around the monkey's neck. The man was starving and weak, and could hardly move. But he reached his arms up around the monkey's neck and stretched a leg over and with great effort, pulled himself onto the monkey's back. The monkey felt the great weight of the clumsy and weak man hanging onto his back. He crawled very very slowly up the wall of the pit, his whole body aching with every step carrying the heavy weight. Finally, he reached the top of the pit and grabbed a tree root to haul himself and the man out of the pit. The man fell off of his back onto the soft ground. Both of them were terribly exhausted, and just lay on the ground, panting.

The monkey's body ached so badly and his muscles were so strained from the effort that he knew he needed to sleep, but he was too weak to climb a tree to find a safe place to sleep. He said to the man, "I am so tired, please guard me while I sleep. Protect me from any tigers, bears, or lions." The man agreed. Soon the monkey was deep in sleep, trusting the man to guard him.

The man sat up, looking at the monkey. The man was extremely hungry, and thought, "Monkeys can be eaten for meat, like deer meat. I could kill him and then I wouldn't be hungry anymore. I could eat my fill and then find my way out of the forest." He found a large stone and threw it at the monkey's head to kill him. The rock hit the monkey's head, but was not sharp enough to kill him. The monkey was hurt badly and blood poured from the wound, but he was still alive. In his fear, the monkey ran up a tree and, with tears flowing from his soft brown eyes, looked at the man.

The monkey said, "Don't act this way, sir, because the result of your act will be very bad. Aren't you ashamed? What do you give me for having saved you? I saved you from death, and evil overcame you. Agony will result from your evil deed. I don't trust you. Walk in front of me and you can get back to your village." The man was speechless, and just quietly walked in front of the monkey. The monkey pointed, and said, "Here is the path. Follow this path, and I will leave you now." Then the monkey climbed up a tree.

The man walked along the path, and soon came to a lake. He was very thirsty, so he scooped some water in his hands and drank the cool fresh water. He looked at his reflection in the water. He saw that there were sores on his face. He looked at his body, and saw that sores had formed all over his body. He knew that he had an incurable disease and that he would soon be in agony and die. The sores made his body stink. As he walked into his village, people saw the sores on his body and were afraid of catching his deadly disease. So they threw sticks and stones at him, yelling "Get away from me!" The man walked to his home and lived alone for seven years in agony and pain from his disease.

Then one day, the King of Benares came to a park where the man was laying on the ground in agony. The king asked, "Who are you, and what did you do to bring such suffering on yourself?" The man told the story of the monkey who had saved him, and how he tried to kill the monkey for food. The man said to the king, "I learned my lesson. Never betray your friends. How bad is a person who harms someone who is good and helpful. That person will suffer, as I am suffering." At that moment the man died, and the king learned a good lesson from the man's bad deed.

Questions:

1. How did the man fall into the pit?
2. What did the monkey think when he saw the man in the pit?
3. How could the small monkey carry the man out of the pit?
4. How did the monkey feel after he brought the man out of the pit?

5. What did the man think when the monkey fell asleep?
6. How would you describe the behavior of the man, throwing the stone at the monkey?
7. What did the monkey tell the man would happen to him?
8. What did the man teach the king?

What the Buddha said:

“He who is violent to those who are not fighting, or who hurts those who are not hurting anyone, will soon have one of these ten bad results: sharp pain, or disaster, injury to the body, serious illness, mental illness, trouble from the government, being accused of a criminal act, loss of relatives, loss of money, house getting destroyed by fire; also, he will suffer rebirth in a hell-world.”

Dhammapada 137

Discussion about loyalty:

The man was violent to the innocent monkey, who wasn't hurting anyone. What happened to the man? He soon had a serious illness. He suffered a terrible result from his terrible deed. We might think, “I don't do terrible things like that. I would never try to kill anyone or any animal. I would not hurt an innocent animal.” But do we ever hurt anyone who is innocent? Do we ever hurt someone who tries to help us?

Who are the people who help us? Our parents, teachers, sisters and brothers, friends, relatives, neighbors, coaches, and others. We might think that they are just doing their job – parents are supposed to help their kids, teachers must help their students. But they are choosing to do their jobs well, and they give their time and attention to us rather than to someone or something else that might be more enjoyable. They care about us, and they take care of us or make us happy in many ways. We get a lot of good guidance and thoughtful help from them.

Do we show our appreciation for all their kindness? Or do we take them for granted sometimes? Do we take advantage of their kindness? Are we ever ungrateful? We might think that we are not ungrateful. But, do we just expect them to help us regardless of what we do? Do we complain to them? Do we argue with them, or shout at them? Do we misbehave when they are there? Do we act selfishly toward them? Are we inconsiderate of them? Do we just do what we like to do without thinking about how they feel? Do we ignore them? These things are hurtful to them. We don't throw rocks at them, like the man in the story, but we may hurt them in other ways. Just acting in a way that disappoints them is hurtful. Talking in a disrespectful or unfriendly way, forgetting what they wanted us to do, or even ignoring them, is hurtful to them.

How can we avoid hurting those who have been kind to us? How do we stop complaining, arguing, and acting selfishly? How do we learn to be considerate, not forget them, not forget

what they asked us to do, not ignore them? We need to learn to not just focus on our selves, how *we* feel and what *we* want. We need to learn to be more aware of how others around us are feeling. We should always remember how others have helped us.

We should try to think about how others feel even when we are anxious or upset. The man in the story did not remember the kindness of the monkey, and did not think about how the monkey was feeling, when the man was anxious for food. When we are upset, angry, impatient or uncomfortable, that is when we tend to forget to be aware of how others are feeling. We need to learn to practice awareness of others' feelings more often, so that it becomes a habit, even when we are upset.

Activity to reinforce the lesson:

See next page.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Circle the answer that best describes you, and then put a square around the answer that is the best way to act, speak or think.

1. When a classmate who has been kind to me invites me, I visit:
a) after I finish homework and other duties c) if he or she has something fun to do
b) if he or she will help me with homework d) only if I feel like it

2. When I am upset and a classmate asks me to help him do something, I:
a) don't help him unless he is my friend c) help him if I can
b) help him if I think he will help me d) help him only a little bit

3. When someone helps me, I usually:
a) say "thanks" and forget about it c) think that he helps everyone
b) remember his kindness and try to help him d) hope that he will help me again

4. When I am angry, I often think about:
a) how my anger may upset others c) how to make others do what I want
b) how my anger may make others do what I want d) what I want to do

5. When I want someone to help me, I often:
a) persuade him to help me by promising something, even if I don't know whether I will fulfill the promise
b) persuade him to help me by telling him I will not to do something for him if he does not help me
c) am helpful to him before he helps me
d) am helpful to him before and after he helps me

6. When a good friend does something that upsets me, I often:
a) shout at her to make sure she never does it again
b) don't talk to her for several days
c) tell her what upset me and then be friendly again
d) tell other friends what she did

7. When an elderly relative asks me to do something that I don't feel like doing, I:
a) tell her I am too busy c) tell her that I forgot
b) do it anyway d) do it very quickly so she won't ask me to do anything else

How many answers have both a circle and a square around it? Try to remember the answers with the square around them (1-a, 2-c, 3-b, 4-a, 5-d, 6-c, 7-b) and practice them.