

2026-08-16: Mistakes of the Past - Lessons in the Present

"That you may **remember and be ashamed**, and **never open your mouth anymore** because of your shame, when I provide you an atonement for all you have done" (Ezekiel 16:63)

Biblical Examples

- Judah
 - "So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. Then they took him and cast him into the pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. So Judah said to his brothers, 'What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.' And his brothers listened." (Genesis 37)
 - "Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?' Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, 'Make everyone go out from me!' So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers." (Genesis 44-45)
 - Judah yesterday was the one who had the idea to sell his brother to slavery. But now, he is the one who will give himself to slavery before leaving his brother.
 - This experience didn't just give him "regret" over what happened with Joseph - definitely he regretted it and all the brothers did. But his mistakes transformed into lessons.
 - Yesterday's mistakes are tomorrow's lessons
- Moses
 - "Moses looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian." (Exodus 2:12)
 - Moses was someone who took things into his own hands - he thought he would be the savior of Israel by his own hand. And because of this, he made a mistake and he killed.
 - 40 Years later... "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written." (Exodus 32)
 - Yesterday, Moses would take matters into his own hands. Today, he puts the matter in God's hands and intercedes for the people.

- Yesterday's mistakes are tomorrow's lessons
- St Peter
 - (Servant Girl) "He **denied** it before them all" (Matthew 26:70)
 - (Another girl) "Again he denied with an **oath**." (Matthew 26:72)
 - (Those who stood by) "Then he began to **curse** and **swear**" (Matthew 26:74)
 - "Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem..." (Acts 2)
 - Yesterday, Peter was afraid of the people and would deny Christ - but today, he stands publicly before thousands and proclaims Christ... until such a time that he is even martyred!
 - Yesterday's mistakes are tomorrow's lessons

Yesterday's mistake becomes today's lesson when God's work in my life produces a different response.

Mistakes of the Past

1. Recognize the Mistakes

- You should know in every confession what your weaknesses and sins are. Focus especially on those things that are repeated... there is something that in every confession, I repeat it. Sometimes I wish I could go to Abouna one time - JUST one time - and NOT say this sin." I want to go to him one time and say "By God's grace, and by your prayers, Abouna, this situation has improved or ended." But every time I say the same thing!
- Yesterday's mistakes teach us more than any sermon could teach us
 - When you see how much a mistake costed the Lord Christ
 - And how much a mistake costed you
 - You will HATE the mistake
- I can identify different categories in my life:
- Relationship with God, Others, Self
- You can also identify categories in the service which we will talk about in the last section

2. Don't Dwell

- Dwell can lead to Returning to Sin
 - "Cleanse us from all blemish, all guile, all hypocrisy, all craftiness, and **the remembrance of vice-bearing death**."
 - I fall into judgment a lot, especially with my boss at work - because he does this and that and this and that... you just judged him again... in confession!
 - Many sins, when I dwell on them - even in an attempt to repent! - I put myself in danger.
 - I'm in a relationship and Abouna told me to end the relationship - but I keep dwelling. I keep thinking. Don't dwell!
- Dwell can lead to Despair
 - I start to say "I cannot be forgiven" or "I am no longer a son of God" or "God will not accept me" or even "The Church will not accept me" or EVEN "Abouna will not accept me"

- These lead to isolation which further leads to despair.
 - Mistakes Do NOT mean Failure
 - Hope not Despair
 - The correct response to recognizing my sin is actually to have hope in the forgiveness of the Lord and the efficacy of His Blood.
3. Learn from the mistake
- When there's a hole in the ground - the first day, you fall in it.
 - What about the second day? You fall in it again? No! You walk around it - actually you'll probably even announce to everyone who is with you about this hole in the ground!
4. Teach Others from the Mistake
- The repentant sinner is the BEST one to bring another sinner to repentance - because he experienced it! He experienced the sin and he experienced the solution! He'll say "I was like you... this does not go away except with a FoC and Psalms and Tasbeha!"
 - When we get together and start talking about others, it only takes ONE person to say "Ah! I made a commitment that I'm not gonna talk about others and gossip and judge."
 - Psalm 50

Lessons in the Present

1. Change is Possible
 - Deception: You can't change - "This is your nature" - "This is your personality" - "This is who you are" - "This is your cross to carry"
 - With God, change is possible
 - Or else why would St Paul say "be transformed by the renewing of your mind"
 - Even the word repentance - metanoia - means "change of mind"
2. Take an action
 - After every confession, every sermon, every liturgy, every SS Lesson, every Servants Meeting, etc. take an action.
 - What are you gonna do?
 - You regretted your mistake, awesome.
 - You said it out loud and confessed it with Abouna, great!
 - You received the absolution - may God absolve you!
 - Now what? Take an action!
 - "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." (Luke 19:8)
 - Make a commitment with yourself and a commitment to God
3. Listen to the Wise People Around You
 - Serious People, Focused People, Eager People, Wise People, Watchful People
 - Surround yourself with those people
4. Don't Allow the Devil to Trick you Twice... Or another time
 - Day by day or year by year
 - Goha... there's a hole in the ground in front of his house. He walks out of his house and falls into it. The next day, he walks out of his house and falls into it. Everyone is

watching him day by day leave his house and fall into the same pit. So someone goes to him and says Goha! Don't you know there's a hole in front of your house - he said "No, I know!" - "Okay, so don't fall again tomorrow!" Next day, he came out and fell right into the hole again. The moral of the story is that sometimes, we don't learn from our own mistakes

- Someone can know the problem, be able to describe it, understand it, and still fall into it.
- "Give me chastity and continence, only not yet." St Augustine (Confessions)
- Don't you know that when you take the phone to your room, the night is gone? No prayer, no Bible, no self-control... how many times did that happen before? Are you Goha!?
- Find the Root of the Problem - What happened BEFORE I made the mistake? BEFORE I fell?
 - Every time I take my phone in the bathroom, I fall into the sin of lust.
 - Every time I stay up late I fall into the sin of laziness
 - Every time I answer a phone call from fln I fall into gossip
 - Every time I go on a cruise I fall into such and such sin
 - Every time I spend time with this person I judge
 - Every time I go out after liturgy, I am late to Servants Meeting
 - Every time I go to this person's house, we gossip and we judge and we talk negatively about the service and...
 - (Meme it hurts when I do this)
- "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead," (Philippians 3:13)

5. Don't Give Up

- Every attempt is weighed
- Every struggle makes a difference
- Every confession
- Every promise - even if you only last two days - makes a difference

6. Rejoice in the Victories

- If you overcame one time, rejoice!

Mistakes and Lessons in the Service

This is a good framework for examining myself on a regular basis.

Now, let's take that framework and apply it to our service. This year, we will be presented with the same or similar situations as last year.

- If I thought I had a troublemaker last year, I'm going to have a more difficult troublemaker this year
- If I thought I had a lot of responsibility last year, I'm going to have even more this year
- If I was distracted last year, I'm going to be distracted this year

So let me prepare myself! Let me identify the mistakes I made last year in my service, especially those that I made repeatedly, and see how I can address them this year in my service. How can I

diligently take yesterday's mistakes and make them lessons for today?

We have four categories and each person can focus on just one mistake from each category. The point of this workshop is not to write a lot. It's not to list out all of my failures and mistakes and how I fell short and all that. It's just to identify one area of growth in each category. None of us is perfect, and ALL of us have room to grow in every category.

1. Mistakes in my Faithfulness

- Being late to Sunday School
- Not preparing my lesson adequately
 - Using AI
 - Bare minimum
 - Not going deep myself
- Missing or being late to Servants Meeting
- Waiting until the last minute
- Late to submit Lesson or Hymns

2. Mistakes with my Fellow Servants

- Gossiping about another servant
- Getting angry or defensive
- Not communicating
- Holding a grudge
- Not helping another servant, or letting tasks fall into the same servant's hands all the time
- Being overly critical
- Creating division
- Assuming bad intention (instead of giving the benefit of the doubt)

3. Mistakes with Coordinator, Ameen Khidma or Abounas

- Not following through with instructions
- Being defensive when corrected
- Complaining instead of communicating
- Assuming I know better
- Not offering up my ideas
- Being upset when my idea is not accepted/implemented/implemented in the way I envisioned

4. Mistakes with my children

- Spending time with my children
- Checking on them
- Getting to know them
 - What are their interests?
 - What extracurriculars do they do? (Play an instrument? Play a sport? Chess?)
 - What do they want to be when they grow up?
 - What is their major?
- Visiting them

- Encouraging them
- Praying for them regularly, by name
- Does every child KNOW that I love him?

	Mistake of the Past	Lesson in the Present
Faithfulness		
Fellow Servants		
Coordinator/Ameen Khidma/Abounas		
Children		

The change I need to make this year is:

One commitment I will make with myself is:
