

## Counselor's Corner

### "Beginnings and Endings"

*Downton Abbey* has ended, and now I don't know what I will be doing every Sunday at 9 PM. For six seasons, I was one of the 9.6 million who connected with the characters, both up and downstairs. Although the writers did a great job of tying things up, it is hard to believe that I will no longer witness a royal way of life that is so drastically different from mine. Hounds will no longer be hunting with their masters, and ladies and gentlemen will cease to be dependent on others to dress them and put them to bed. Tables will not be elegantly set with china and enticing culinary specialties. Love stories, tragedies, and sibling rivalry have come to an end, leaving us to wonder how marriages and children will turn out. I don't know why one of my favorite programs has ended, and I wish it had not. However, I do know one thing: Another series will come along and grab my attention, and *Downton Abbey* will be a pleasant but distant memory.

Life is like this, too. There is a beginning and an end. At births and funerals, we seem to fully comprehend this, but the reality often escapes us in our daily living. It would NOT be good to dwell on the ending of our worldly existence, but an acceptance of the bookends around our lives could impact us positively. It could encourage us to experience life more fully each day by opening our eyes to the beauty that surrounds us in people and places. It might keep us from gossiping or belittling another, because (for a variety of reasons), the people who walk with us today may not be with us tomorrow. Recognition of our mortality might also help us prioritize properly and put people at the top of our "to do" lists.

*Downton Abbey*, like any major literary work, contains more than one big plot. It is full of subplots that overlap each other but individually have distinct beginnings and endings. In addition to failing to comprehend the ending of our entire lives, we can be naïve about the beginning and ending of each of the subplots within it. When the good times are here, we often cannot imagine that life could possibly be different. We take things for granted and are often shocked when changes occur.

When we encounter rough times, it might be more difficult to recognize that the beginning and ending theory also applies. Our immersion in a negative subplot can dupe us into believing that we will be stuck there forever. That is not valid thinking. We will move forward through failing grades, difficult bosses, changing friendships, grief, divorce, financial disasters, and other disappointments. We will be changed, but we would benefit by remembering that hard times are temporary times for us and for our children. When we acknowledge that, we avoid hopelessness and prepare ourselves to embrace the next subplot in our lives, or the one that might have already begun.

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