

Solving problems successfully

By Pastor Rene Lussier

As we move in a very Hi-Tec, highly educated and highly pressured society, it seems that we are facing more and more complex problems at every level.

People are looking for expert to help them solve their problems. They are willing to pay for these services (Lawyers, Psychologists, doctors, social workers etc...)

Did you watch the news last night about this family of 4 who committed suicide. Social workers were saying that more and more people in HK are considering suicide as a means of escape from problems.

How many have ever had any problem, trouble?

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON SOURCES OF PROBLEMS?

1. We can say Satan (as in the case with EVE).

Satan, the thief, steals peace out of our heart and life when we do not defend our inheritance.

2. Our own human nature
 - a. Lust

Jame 1:14 (NIV) but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

MESSAGE The temptation to give in to evil comes from us and only us. We have no one to blame but the leering, seducing flare-up of our own lust.

- b. Impatience-SARAH
- c. Greed-

1Tim 6:9 (NIV) People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

3. Some of our own decisions (Decisions made without thinking)- ESAU
 - a. The decisions we assumed to be minor issues (not important) but develop into a major problem.
 - b. Decisions made with a lack of knowledge and experience.
 - c. Decisions made with a limited view of the future or decisions made with no consideration or perspective of the future.

Matt 7:26 (NIV) ... like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

Esau—Influenced by his immediate needs

- Esau had no vision for the future. He lived completely in the present, depending on his own strength & resources (independent).
- Today we remember Esau as a self-centered, independent man without a long term perspective of life.

MESSAGE – Heb 12:16 - Watch out for the Esau syndrome: trading away God's lifelong gift in order to satisfy a short-term appetite. 17 - You well know how Esau later regretted that impulsive act and wanted God's blessing-but by then it was too late, tears or no tears.

4. People—WHO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OTHERS FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT (using deceit—like Jacob & Esau)). He was easily blinded and deceived. There are also people who are jealous, and envious like enemies, etc...

How many when you have a problem, you think of ways to solve it?

- Have you ever wonder why human beings always feel they have to solve problems?

This ability to solve problems comes from our likeness with our Maker:

²⁶God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, And, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."

²⁷God created human beings; he created them godlike, Reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female.

²⁸God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

- Being made in God's image means we were created with the ability to organize, plan manage.
- This ability has been given to both the man and the woman.

*“Human beings are PROBLEM SOLVERS by nature. Usually they don’t solve problems alone.”
Is it true that usually when we cannot solve a problem on our own, we turn to a friend (Neighbor) to help us solve the problem. (Hopefully they’ll help us solve it...*

- *Could you lend me \$ 5000 HKD?*
- *What do you think I should do? (Just divorce her and find another one...)*

There are 2 kinds of neighbor to assist us in problem solving: THE UNGODLY AND THE GODLY

- We also mentioned that both men and women have the ability to solve or help solve problems
- Realize that the role of problem solving carries also the power of influence along with it.

EXAMPLES OF PROBLEM SOLVING: Let’s begin with an ungodly wife...

1. Jezebel—How she solve the problem and influenced her husband King Ahab...

Ahab couldn’t get Naboth’s vineyard...

4Ahab went home in a black mood...He went to bed, stuffed his face in his pillow, and refused to eat. ... 7Jezebel said, "Is this any way for a king of Israel to act? Aren't you the boss? On your feet! Eat! Cheer up! I'll take care of this; I'll get the vineyard of this Naboth the Jezreelite for you."

NLT.... ²⁵No one else so completely sold himself to what was evil in the LORD's sight as did Ahab, for his wife, Jezebel, influenced him.

- She was a real problem solver. She got the vineyard for her husband.
 - *(Remember Saphira, wife of Ananias in Acts 5?)*
- Influence can be both positive or negative...

2. Eve—How she influenced her husband to make a choice contrary to God’s principles.

- Eventually, she influenced Adam to join her in following Satan’s advise rather than God’s instructions.
- Adam should have taken a stand, but he remained passive and neglected his God given responsibility.
 - *Unfortunately, many spiritual leaders continue to repeat Adam’s mistake, by escaping their responsibilities at home, in the neighborhood, on the job, and in the church.*
 - *Don’t forget that while Adam’s failure started at home, in just a short time, it spoiled the beautiful place where he lived and caused a mess in the entire world.*
- Eve entered in a land free of pain, heartache, and sin. She exchanged a life without pain for a hostile and brutal environment. She became the **first mother to endure the heartache** of a murdered child.
- Eve later restored her relationship with God. She learned from her mistake. When God gave her Seth, she expressed gratitude for this new life.
 - *Remember that anyone who can solve problems will never lack influence, but the influence may not always positive.*

3. Sarah - was a typical problem solver who did God’s will her way.

- Sarah knew that God had promise her husband descendants as numerous as the sands and the stars. But there was a problem. She remained barren and she was getting past the age of bearing children.
- As the years passed, God’s promise didn’t appear any closer. She felt compelled to solve this problem. She lacked understanding and patience concerning God. She looked at her own method and resources.
- *She influenced her husband to go to her Egyptian maid to get this promised descendant.*
- The result is that Sarah’s solution brought her no peace, no satisfaction. She despised both Hagar and Ishmael.
- Later, God came again to Abraham and told him that in a year Sarah herself would bear him a child. Sarah laughed... But a year later God brought another kind of laughter—the joy that comes when a promise is kept.
 - *We all struggle at times with a desire to control problems and solving it our way rather than doing things God’s way.*
 - *Impatient leaders (people) need to learn what Sarah discovered that God always keeps his promises, but in his timing and in his way.*

4. Jacob—The natural leader

- Often leaders with tremendous natural leadership have a difficult time with issues of character.
- No matter what he did or where he went, he stirred things up.
- He “influenced” his brother to let him have his birthright. He captured his mother’s heart.
- Later his mother helped him to influence the best blessing out of his father.
- His influence over the family messed up his parents’ home.

- He had a similar impact on Laban’s home. (Father in law)
- Overtime, his leadership brought him a great prosperity.
- Wealthy, influential, blessed with a large family, he seemed to have everything. (Did he?)
 - *What kind of influence did he used to gain all this? He lied, cheated, and grabbed everything he could from anybody, friends or family.*
 - *Was he truly happy? Did he have peace?*
- He had to run away from his father’s house to escape being killed by his brother and lived abroad until after his mother died and his father was very old when he came back.
- Years later he still lived in total fear of his brother. He was greedy and self-seeking...
 - *NATURAL LEADERS who are “Self-pleasing and self-seeking” like Jacob often need to be broken to become useful.*
- He needed God to break him... When God broke him and chaged his life around, the deceiver Jacob became a “*prince with God*” who later in life served God rather than himself and influence his family positively.

PRE-CONCLUSION:

- In all the examples we’ve seen of problem solving, we can conclude that even with a brilliant mind, it is very likely that men’s best solution will often lead to another type of problem or make the original problem more complex.
- You may say, you’ve only chosen negatives examples; there are surely positive examples, aren’t they? (*The examples that came to my mind were related to families, husbands & wives, etc...*)
- The positive examples I can think of are when God was directly involved, when people consulted the Lord, either directly or through a man of God, a prophet.

GOD IS THE GREATEST PROBLEM SOLVER.

God’s desire has always been that human beings will choose to trust him, will choose to come to him for everything, will regard God as their Leader, and guide.

- He created both men & women in His image, able to solve problems...
- But He also created human with a will of their own, men & women who must choose to follow his leadership.

Have you ever recognized God as the alternate leader problem solver?

- Unfortunately, many Christians, as in the examples we’ve seen, try to control their circumstances and solve their problems their way...

As a **result**, many children of God live their spiritual life with a troubled heart.

- Many begin their day with a thought like:

What new bad luck will fall on my head today? (will come my way today? Will get me today?)

Let’s look at a story in which 2 deeply troubled men found peace, joy and teach us how we can best solve our problems.

- They were troubled as a result of the terrible events that just happened in Jerusalem.
- The problem was being discussed on the road...See V. 14, 17.

Luke 24:13 (NIV) Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 *They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.* 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, “*What are you discussing together as you walk along?*” They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

19 "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.

22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

- We know very little about these two men. 2 disciples living in Emmaus.
- We know that they were deeply troubled.. They were in a state of emotional crisis, very distressed by disappointing experience.
 - *The problem was being discussed by these two friends* (maybe they were trying to think of what they were going to do in their future (*Problem solving—adapting to new negative circumstances*)
 - Maybe today, you are very disappointed and you wonder, "*How am I going to cope with that? What am I going to do now? How am I going to react?*"
 - These men went from very high hopes to broken dreams.
 - That often happens in marriage relationships and in business experience.

- It was in the context of human needs that Jesus approached these men.

15Suddenly, Jesus himself came along and joined them and began walking beside them. 16But they didn't know who he was, because God kept them from recognizing him.

- WHY DO WE NEED GOD AS OUR PROBLEM SOLVER?
- Because we see life as through a key hole, (only a second at a time). We don't know what the next second will bring (*Remember the Year 2000 and Y2K?*)
- This is why we doubt, we worry. We see only part of the picture.
- We try to solve our problems on our own or with the help of other people who are as limited as we are.
- That is also why, at times, when we are going through a tragedy, the Bible teaches doesn't seem to make sense. We are confused and we don't understand...

- In Verse 25, this is how Jesus says it...

Luke 24:25 (NIV) He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!

"HOW FOOLISH YOU ARE": Oh you without knowledge. (anoetos: not understanding— (A) absence of, beginning of—noeo, to understand, perceive with the mind).

- They only had part of the information. They lacked understanding about God's will, God's work...
- **They did not understand.**

"SLOW OF HEART TO BELIEVE": Slow in trusting God for what he had promised

Luke 24:26 (NIV) Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

- **He explained to them** what they needed to know in order to understand God's purpose and to trust God.

Luke 24:28 (NIV) As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.

31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

- **V. 29.** When they reached their final destination, they felt strongly the need of his presence...
 - Drawing near to God and tasting his presence, makes us want to remain even more in his presence.
- As they were about to eat, He gave thanks, and then...
- **V. 31,** their eyes were opened... they recognized him... They felt a glimpse of his supernatural touch.

- **Earlier**—V. 16 ...but they were kept from recognizing him (Their eyes were restrained and they were not able to understand God's plan & purpose.
- V. 25 (how Foolish you are—without knowledge, understanding, unable to understand)
- **Now**—V. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him (dianoigo—open what had been closed, penetrate the mind, the soul, cause to understand)
- **By the way**, *The disappearance of Jesus did not inspire any comment.*
- Instead what made them excited was what he had told them on the road...

32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

- Their hearts were on fire when he "**opened**" the Scriptures—(dianoigo—open what had been closed, penetrate the mind, the soul, cause to understand)
- This is a very nice example where we see people receiving help from Jesus to solve the problem and find peace.
- Christ wants to be our life journey's companion, not someone we talked to at the last stop.

CONCLUSION

One very practical way to invite the Lord to walk with us in our daily situation (home, work, etc.) is through beginning our day with **daily devotion...**

Psal 37:7 (NIV) Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

When we turn to God TO BE OUR PROBLEM SOLVER AND THE GUIDE OF OUR LIFE,
"our eyes will open, our mind will be penetrated by God's revelation.

- We can better understand our situations in the light of God's purpose.
 - We can find peace, even in a storm.
- Roma 12:12 (NIV) Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
- We are enabled to make decision to solve our problem, based upon God's wisdom and revelation.
 - We are enabled to help someone solve their problem.

- God's purpose for us is to be at peace with Him and with One another.

2Cor 13:11 (NIV) Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

- I am sure you we have people here this morning that are going through major problem, (What seems to be a mountain, a fiery trial).
- There might be people with broken hearts over family situations
- Others worrying about the future and wondering what kind of decisions to make...

Don't try solving your problems on your own strength and ability...

- Allow Jesus to join you along the road and confide in Him.
- Like these 2 disciples, they told him that they had lost hope. They dwelled with him, invited him in their home, ate with him, and suddenly, the supernatural touch happens:
- Their eyes opened, their mind was penetrated with the thoughts of God.
- Their hope was restored. Their strength renewed and they walked another 11 kilometers to tell the good news.
- They found the solution to their problem. Jesus was the solution.
- They found peace, they found joy.

Note: Transparency Chart Material

Appendix A

COMMON SOURCES OF PROBLEMS?

1. Satan (as in the case with EVE).

2. Our own human nature
 - a. Lust—Jame 1:14
 - b. Impatience-SARAH
 - c. Greed—1Tim 6:9

3. Our own decisions (Decisions made without thinking)- ESAU
 - d. The decisions we assumed to be minor issues.
 - e. Decisions made with a lack of knowledge and experience.
 - f. Decisions made with no consideration of the future.
Matt 7:26 ...like a foolish man who built his house on sand.
Esau— ...trading away God's lifelong gift in order to satisfy a short-term appetite – Heb 12:16

4. People
 - g. Who take advantage of others.
 - h. People who are jealous, and envious.
 - i. Ennemies, etc.

Appendix B

Example of Problem Solving:

1. Jezebel—How she solve the problem and influenced her husband

- 1Kgs 21:7 Jezebel said “I'll take care of this; I'll get the vineyard for you.”
- 1Kings 21:25 No one else so completely sold himself to what was evil in the LORD's sight as did Ahab, for his wife, Jezebel, influenced him. NLT

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- Eve exchanged a life without pain for a hostile and brutal environment.
- Eve later restored her relationship with God. She learned from her mistake. When God gave her Seth, she expressed gratitude for this new life.

3. Sarah- was a typical problem solver who did God's will her way.

- As the years passed, God's promise didn't appear any closer. She felt compelled to solve this problem.
- The result is that Sarah's solution brought her no peace, no satisfaction.
- Later, God came again and promised that in a year Sarah herself would bear a child. Sarah laughed... But a year later God brought another kind of laughter—the joy that comes when a promise is kept.
- *Impatient leaders (people) need to learn what Sarah discovered that God always keeps his promises, but in his timing and in his way.*

4. Jacob—The natural leader

- He succeeded to have everything—wealth, influence, blessed with a large family.
- *Was he truly successful, satisfied? Did he have peace?*
- He ran away to escape being killed by his brother and lived abroad until after his mother died. Years later he still lived in total fear of his brother.
- When God broke him and changed his life around, the deceiver Jacob became a **“prince with God”** who later in life served God rather than himself and influence his family positively.

CONCLUSION:

IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT MEN'S BEST SOLUTION WILL OFTEN LEAD TO ANOTHER TYPE OF PROBLEM OR MAKE THE ORIGINAL PROBLEM WORSE.

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