



## **PROBLEM-SOLVING**

The Bible is kind to us when it reminds us that we need to spend time rehearsing in our minds and hearts things we already know. 2 Peter<sup>1</sup> is a good example of this kindness. We are a people who constantly need to come back to basics. Secular psychology mishandles problems in such a way that more often than not produces more difficulties or compounds the confusion at hand. One way to avoid being caught up in non-solutions is to remember how problems are not solved.

### **1. Problems cannot be solved by time alone**

It is not unusual to hear couples rationalize, “Yes, we know we are not living together, but our strategy is to give it some TIME.” The fact of the matter is that no one ever learned to live together apart!

Think about the mindset behind this line of reasoning. The presupposition is that given time and chance, chaos will produce order. Problems cannot possibly just solve themselves anymore than a car can fix itself if the transmission is shot. Take Judas as an example. He had time, but time spent the wrong way, doing the wrong things, neglecting responsibilities, is nothing but wasted and misused time. What people do with the time they have will determine whether they compound their problems or solve them God’s way. Time alone does not solve problems.

### **2. Talk alone does not Solve Problems**

Modern psychotherapy considers talk therapeutic in and of itself. Don’t get me wrong. In this age of social networking, human contact and face time is important, but to equate talking with some sort of “psychological bath” is, excuse the pun, “hogwash.” John Drakeford in *The Awesome Power of the Listening Ear* calls listening “the primary counseling method.” If all you need is a listening ear, buy a dog. It is wrongly assumed that verbalization alone will produce self-understanding and self-awareness and get people “in touch with themselves.”

What is wrong with this? The danger is that it might help a person to “feel better” for a time after venting, but then return to a place of hopelessness because he/she still sees

no solution to the problem. In short, talk alone produces no hope and gives no direction.

If you have a faulty thermostat in your car radiator you can open the cap as often as you would like to “let off steam,” but you had better get the thermostat fixed or it won’t be long before you burn up the motor. Proverbs 14:23 tells us “Hard work always yields its profit, idle talk brings only want.” (Jerusalem Bible).

### 3. **Problems cannot be solved by tears alone**

In order for change to take place, there must always be repentance. Tears may or may not be a part of repentance. They are incidental and not much can be made of them one way or another. Tears can be a cover, they can manipulate, and they can be part of genuine repentance: but tears alone cannot solve problems. 2 Corinthians 7:9, 10 warns us that there is a sorrow that only works death. With this Paul contrasts godly sorrow that leads to action and behavior change (vs. 11).

Godly sorrow involves:

An understanding of sin(s) involved

Guilt which brings conviction

Confession

Forgiveness

Reconciliation

Restoration

### 4. **Tact Alone does not solve problems**

It is possible to exercise so much tact out of a concern of hurt feelings that confrontation of the real issues are sidestepped or covered over. Church discipline **Has fallen by the wayside in most churches for two reasons. First, it has been used in the wrong (unbiblical manner) and has therefore produced harmful results. Additionally, it has been used in the correct manner, but our culture has convinced us that it has no place in the modern day church.** The substitute, says the culture of the day, is simply to handle each and every situation with tact. There have been books written by Christian counselors that have suggested that Scripture should not be used in some counseling situations. For instance, if you use scripture with a depressed individual they might “get more upset.” Some secular therapists are quite outspoken in asserting that the worst possible thing you could ever do is have such a person read the Bible! Be loving. Be kind. Be understanding. However, whatever you do, do not forsake tact on the altar of truth.

## 5. **Turning Away will not solve Problems**

Avoidance patterns are without number. We turn away from problems when we blame-shift. The book *The Adversary* by Mark Bubeck is just one example. In his book, Bubeck asserts that a Christian can be demon-possessed. My point here is not to debate that theological point, but to point out that such an assertion is an example of “it is not my fault.” It is easy to hide behind people and claim that all we do or all we don’t do is because of them. It is naïve to pin current problems on other people. Paul says, “Whatsoever a man sows, that will he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). Turning from problems either to avoid them or to blame shift will never solve the problem.

## 6. **Teaching will never solve problems**

This is an error that counselors and even Pastors can promote. We have encouraged Bible study so much in the church you would think that it is the “cure all” for every ill that comes our way. I doubt that there is a Christian alive that does not know that he/she is supposed to love others. The vast majority of husbands know that they are supposed to love their wife like Christ loved the church. Just because people have the right information does not mean they will use it to solve problems. Judas sat under the teaching of Jesus for three years.

## 7. **If time, talk, tears, tact, turning, and teaching will not solve problems as standalone solutions, what should we do?**

**A.** Seek Biblical Solutions. Proverbs 10:16 says “The labor of the righteous tendeth to life.” Behind every problem, there is a reason for the issue at hand. We must be willing to go beneath the surface of the presenting problem and look at attitudes, motives, desires, and the controlling heart issues. The Bible deals with us here.

**B.** Apply Biblical Solutions. Write out good, clear, concrete, observations about what you discover as you use the Scripture to discover what is in your heart. The Holy Spirit takes His Word and faithfully exposes the things that need to be changed within us. It does us little good to change unless we are changing in the right direction – toward Christ likeness.

**C.** Work and keep on working on Biblical Solutions until they take hold and become a new way of life. This is the New Testament way of dealing with the human dilemma. Proverbs 11:27: “He that diligently seeketh good procureth favor.”