

CHAPTER 3

Where Do Problems Come From?

In the last chapter we began thinking about the SOURCE of problems. Where do problems come from? What causes problems? Why do we have problems? We learned three things:

1. **We Have Problems Because of Who We Are**
2. **We Have Problems Because We Are in This Body**
3. **We Have Problems Because We Are in This World**

What creates problems? What causes them? We will now consider eight things that will help us to understand where problems come from.

1. Problems Come Because We Do Not Know.

Some problems are due to our own IGNORANCE. When a person lacks knowledge about something, his ignorance can lead to problems. For example, a young child may not know that a stove can get very hot, and this ignorance can lead to a serious burn. There might be a very hot pan or dish on the table, but one person at the table might not know it is hot. When he tries to pass it to someone, he gets burned! A young person might try to slice some meat, but for some reason the carving knife does not seem to work because he does not realize that the knife is upside down.

On vacation, your family might be trying to find a certain town. Someone gives you directions, but they are the wrong directions. If you follow these directions, will you arrive at the town? _____ Will you successfully reach your destination? _____ You have a problem (you are lost!) because you did not know that the directions were wrong directions. Or, someone might give you some gadget or gizmo but not give you the instructions that are supposed to go with it; therefore, you cannot get it to work because you do not know how it works.

In the same way, your ignorance causes many problems. Joseph's brothers did not know that the man who was governor over all the land of Egypt was their brother (Genesis 42:8). Because of their ignorance Jacob's sons ran into all kinds of problems. In Esther 6:6, who did wicked Haman think that the King wanted to honor? _____ Who did the King really want to honor (Esther 6:10)? _____ Because of Haman's ignorance in the matter, he created a big problem for himself!

To **NOT KNOW SOMETHING** can lead to trouble or problems (see 2 Kings 17:26 and Proverbs 4:19). Does God want *us* to be IGNORANT (1 Corinthians 10:1 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13)? _____ Can you think, of some problems in your own life that have come because you did not know something?

2. Problems Come Because We Fail To See and Sense.

This problem is similar to ignorance, but it is slightly different. This ignorance is due to a person's own failure to not see and sense something because he is careless and not paying attention. It is one thing to be given wrong directions and to end up lost. It is another thing to be given the right directions and to end up lost for not paying attention to those directions.

This problem comes when a person should know something but he does not, such as a teenager who dives into a pool that was drained the night before! Have you ever carried the books home from school and then realized that the books you really needed were left behind in your school locker? Has your teacher ever announced a quiz when you were not paying attention, and then

later you came to class totally unprepared? Have you ever placed an object down such as a pair of glasses, a watch, or a wallet without paying attention to where you put it and then later have not been able to find it? These are problems that we cause by our own carelessness and failure to see and sense as we should.

What problem did Eutychus make for himself by his failure to pay attention to what was going on (Acts 20:7-9)? _____ Think of Pharaoh and the great plagues that God sent upon the land of Egypt. Was Pharaoh really paying attention? Was he really seeing and using his senses in the right way? He should have said in his heart, "If God is great enough to cause all of these plagues, then I need to obey Him and let His people go!"

Did Israel see and sense who their Master and Creator was (Isaiah 1:3)? _____ Did Peter, James and John pay attention and see and sense what the Lord wanted them to know (Matthew 26:36-46)? _____ Did they get into trouble because of not knowing something they should have known? _____

Can you think of some problems in your own life that have come because you did not see and sense and pay attention as well as you should have?

3. Problems Come Because We Do Not Do.

Often we create problems because we refuse to do what we should (because of neglect, indifference, ignoring our duties, stubbornness, etc). These are problems that are caused by my WILL (by the choices and decisions that I make or refuse to make). I choose not to study for my class, and I end up with a problem (a bad grade). I am indifferent when it comes to spiritual things, so I decide not to read my Bible, not to pray, not to pay attention in church, and I end up with a problem. I become spiritually sick and my heart is getting harder and harder.

Which of the two sons in Matthew 21:28-30 refused to do his duty? _____ Consider Proverbs 13:4. According to this verse, the lazy man has a problem. He does not obtain that which he desires. Why does he have this problem? _____ What did the rich young ruler refuse to do (Matthew 19:21-22)? _____

_____ What problem did this refusal cause for this man? _____ What did the children of Israel choose to do when Moses was up on the mountain (Exodus 32:1-4)? _____ Did their choice cause a great problem?

Can you think of some problems in your own life that have come because you did not do what you should have done?

4. Problems Come Because We Do Wrongly.

We can fail to do right, but we can also do the right thing in the wrong way, and this failure causes problems too! Often we try to do things in a way that is contrary to certain principles and laws, and we get into trouble.

A person might step off a roof, and immediately he has created a problem for himself because he has violated the law of gravity. A deep sea diver might foolishly think that he can work underwater without his oxygen tanks, but if he tries, his life will be in "deep" trouble!

There are laws in the spiritual realm also. In the book of Esther, when wicked Haman thought that he could destroy the Jewish people, he was acting against a spiritual principle found in Genesis 12:3. Did Haman end up cursed (Esther 7:10 and compare Galatians 3:13)? _____ Another spiritual law is that a person cannot fight against God and win. Can you think of someone in the Bible who tried to fight against God and ended up the loser?

Another spiritual principle is that OBEDIENCE results in God's B _____ (Deuteronomy 28:1-2) and DISOBEDIENCE results in God's C _____ (Deuteronomy 28:15-16). How did King Saul illustrate this principle in 1 Samuel chapter 15?

Can you think of some problems in your own life that have come because you did something in a wrong way and contrary to certain laws or principles?

5. Problems Come Because Of Our Relationships.

We contact people and connect with people each and every day. Think about yesterday or the day before yesterday. What people did you make contact with and have to relate to in some way?

I must relate to others! I must make contacts with other people every day. I am with other people who have problems, and I must seek to relate to them and get along with them. When I am in a store, I must relate to the other shoppers and sometimes stand in a line with them. I must relate to the person at the cash register, and there could be problems if she does not give me the right change or if I do not give her enough money. I must relate to others on the school bus and in class. I must relate to my teacher, and sometimes when she asks me a question in class, I have a problem! I must relate to parents and neighbors. I must relate to people I know very well and people whom I hardly know at all. I must relate to young children and to elderly grandparents.

Elijah had to deal with Jezebel and all the problems that this evil woman caused. David had to relate to King Saul who was trying to kill him. Moses had to relate to the children of Israel who were often complaining and grumbling. What kinds of people did Paul have to contact (2 Corinthians 11:23-26)?

How did Jacob handle his relationships with his sons (Genesis 37)? Did he create a problem by favoring Joseph so much? _____ How did Paul skillfully handle the Jews who wanted to kill him (Acts 23:6-9)?

How do I handle my relationships with people? Do I handle them in a right or wrong way? Can you think of problems in your own life that have come because of relationships with people?

6. Problems Come Because of Our Resources.

Suppose you were to go to a store and try to purchase a forty dollar radio (or some other electrical device) even though you only have \$20.00 in your wallet (or pocketbook). Are your resources enough? Would this lack of money create a problem?

Did you ever try to drive a car without gas? Did you ever try to ride a bicycle with no air in the tires? Is it difficult to throw a basketball into a hoop if you do not have a basketball?

Sometimes we simply do not have the resources that are needed to handle a situation in the right way. Your family might be driving on the highway when suddenly the car breaks down. Perhaps no one in the family is able to fix it. You have a problem because you do not have the needed "know-how" or equipment or parts.

There are other times when we might try to make use of the wrong resources. Putting orange juice in the empty gas tank will not help the car to run. Or, there might be a nut on the bicycle that needs to be tightened. Could you do it if you only had a hammer?

Solomon had a problem. He was king over a great kingdom, but he did not have the resources to be the kind of king he should be (see I Kings 3:7-8). Did God give Solomon the resources that he needed to do the job (I Kings 3:9-13)? _____

Did the disciples think they had enough resources to feed the vast multitude (Matthew 14:16-17)? _____ What resources did King Saul think David needed to fight the giant (1 Samuel 17:38-39)? _____

Can you think of problems in your own life that have come because you did not have resources or because you tried to use the wrong resources?

7. Problems Come Because of Our Reactions.

Many of our problems are due to the fact that we react in the wrong way to people and to situations. We often react in a negative way. Instead of going forward and making progress, we react wrongly and take a step backwards. We react in an opposing way.

Someone might suggest that we do something, and we oppose it and say, "I'LL DO THE OPPOSITE!" For example, our parents might be concerned about our school work. Is it possible to react in the wrong way and say (or think): "If you want me to learn, then I won't learn!" Notice how Peter reacted in John 13:6-9. When he saw that Jesus wanted to wash his feet, how did, he react?

When Peter learned how necessary it was to have his feet washed, how did he overreact (verse 9)? _____

How did Peter react when Jesus announced His coming death (Matthew 16:21-23)? How did Jonah react when God told him to go to the wicked city of Nineveh (Jonah 1:1-3)?

Can you think of problems in your own life that have come because of the way you reacted or overreacted?

8. Problems Come Because of our Responses.

Many problems come because of the way I respond to the words, works and ways of others. Sometimes I respond in a voluntary way (no one made me respond in this way; I just did it), and sometimes I respond in a spontaneous way (I respond automatically to a stimulus). If a cow walks into an electric fence, you can be sure that it will respond in a certain way! If you are hungry and your mom puts some freshly baked food on the table, you will respond (your mouth will water)!

Animals respond instinctively to things. They just respond in the way God made them to respond. We should be careful not to say, "That dog (or cat or bird or whatever) has a better life than I do!" Is that really so? I need to realize that I am not a dog, that God has not made me a dog, and I therefore do not want to be a dog! God has much better things for me because I am a PERSON. God wants me to learn to respond to life's situations and life's people in the right way.

Some problems come because we give the wrong kind of responses. Too often we respond to things by being afraid or by worrying. If someone starts arguing with us, we usually respond by arguing right back. If someone wrongs us or harms us, the natural response is to retaliate. Many problems are created by such natural and sinful responses.

How did Haman respond when he saw that Mordecai would not bow before him (Esther 3:5)? How did Joseph's brothers respond when they saw that Jacob loved Joseph more than they (Genesis chapter 37)? How did Moses respond when the children of Israel complained that there was no water (Numbers 20:1-11)? How did Miriam and Aaron respond to Moses' leadership (Numbers 12:1-10)? How did Peter respond when Jesus was arrested (John 18:10-11)?

Can you think of problems in your own life that have come because of the way you have responded to a certain situation or a certain person?

Handle the Problems or the Problems Will Handle You.

Problems there are, and problems there shall be, so it is up to each person to cope and not collapse (and/or be crippled). Every individual must carry and care and not rush and be crushed.

Whether I am alone or whether I am in a crowd, I am going to be faced with many problems. It is NORMAL and COMMON to have problems: "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is _____ to man" (1 Corinthians 10:13). The problems you have are not UNCOMMON! Even Elijah was a man "subject to like passions" A _____ W _____ A _____ " (James 5:17). Even this godly man had problems JUST LIKE WE DO!

My world is going to be filled with problems. The question of importance is this: HOW WILL I HANDLE THESE PROBLEMS? Either I will handle them right, or they will handle me! Either I hold my problems, or they will hold me! Either I deal with them, or they will deal with me!