

An introduction to basic problem solving skills

Discipling people with life-controlling problems

Notesheet with Answers

By Dave Batty

The new Christians you are training in Teen Challenge have problems. If they didn't have any problems, they should not be in your program. If they are to become a successful Christian, then one of the important skills they need to develop is a godly way of solving the problems in their lives.

This is not a workshop to teach you how to fix all the problems in the lives of your students. Quite the opposite—our goal is that you can learn how to train your students to learn effective problem-solving strategies which they can apply in their life. In raising up students to be disciples of Jesus, we want them to learn problem-solving strategies that are based on Biblical principles.

It is not possible in one workshop to teach everything that needs to be learned to be about how to solve problems. In one respect, the students are in Teen Challenge for approximately one year to learn this. But specifically, what do they need to learn about how to solve problems?

A. What are their old ways of solving problems?

How did they solve problems before they came to Teen Challenge?

B. What are the big issues related to solving problems?

1. _____ Face _____ your problems. Don't run from your problems.

Not all the problems in my life are caused by me. Some of them are caused by other people. However, many of the problems in our lives are the results of our own decisions. Whatever the source of the problem, we need to face it. James 1:2 talks about facing our problems with God's help.

2. What is _____ God's _____ way out of this problem?

You need to be very intentional about looking at the old strategies you used for solving problems and ask yourself, "Is this the strategy Jesus wants me to use today in addressing this problem in my life?"

Discovering God's way of solving a problem may be very simple, or it may be quite complex. The key point we are addressing here is that as a follower of Jesus, I need to be very intentional in asking for God's help in solving each problem in my life.

3. What is God's way to live _____ healthy _____ and _____ avoid _____ this problem in the future?

Solving a problem is one part of being a successful disciple of Jesus. Another equally important part is learning how to live my life the way God wants me to live, and to avoid creating problems in my life. Preventing a problem is much better than waiting until the problem is full blown in your life, and then beginning to address it.

C. What are the basic steps to using in solving problems?

There are no simple "magic wand" solutions that will instantly make all your problems go away. *Some small problems can be quickly solved. But other problems—life-controlling problems—may take many months and lots of hard work to overcome.*

Let's look at a few basic steps that can be used in solving problems.

1. Ask yourself, “Do I want to change?”

Or do you simply want to get away from the painful consequences of the problem in your life? Do you simply want to get rid of the symptoms, or do you really want to go to the root of the problem and get rid of it?

For example, you can get rid of the cob webs in a room, or you can get rid of the spiders that are making the cob webs.

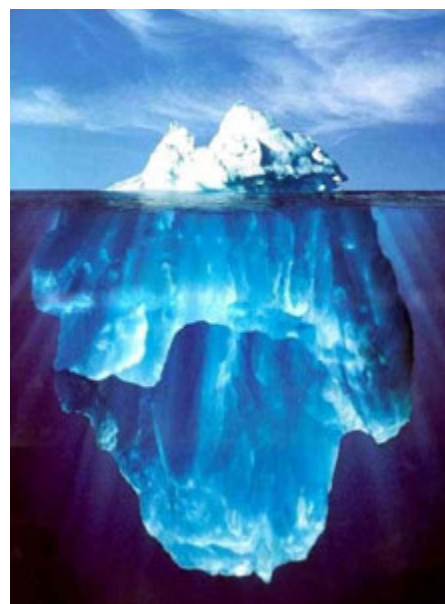
2. What caused this problem?

We are not looking for someone to blame. That will do little to resolve the problem. Instead, we need to try to see what are the root causes to this problem. Sometimes one problem is connected to another problem. What is the surface problem may simply be a symptom of a deeper problem.

Identifying the cause is one step toward finding the best solution to use in solving this problem.

3. What does God’s Word say about solving this problem?

For some problems there are very specific verses that speak to the cause and the solution. Others may require you to search for Biblical principles that can be applied to a problem that is not specifically addressed in the Bible.



4. Apply the “put off, put on” strategy of Colossians 3:1-17

The Bible tells us to put out of our lives the sin and other activities that hinder our relationship with God. So to stop doing these sinful things is part of the answer. At the same time the scripture tells us to “put on” or replace these sinful behaviors and attitudes with new actions. When we put on the new things that God wants in our lives, we can experience the new life that He has planned for us.

This problem solving strategy has two equally important parts. Put off or get rid of the sinful ways of doing things, and second, add to our lifestyle the new ways of responding to these problems.

5. Demolish arguments that set themselves up against God's truth

2 Corinthians 10:5 tells us to demolish every thought that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. We can't simply put these old ways of responding in a "closet behind closed doors." We need to get rid of them. Put these old sinful ways out of our life.

6. What is the damage in my life that this problem has caused?

What steps do I need to take to repair this damage?

Sometimes problems cause damage—both in our lives, and the lives of others around us. We need to assess the damage and then take steps to resolve that damage.

7. What growth needs to take place in my life so that I can overcome this problem?

What is God's part?

What is my part?

What is the other person's part?

Sometimes we want God to simply pass his "magic wand" over our life and instantly make our problems disappear. However, what is needed is that you take a careful look at what changes you need to make in your life and take responsibility to make those changes. In James 1:5 God promises to give wisdom to all those who ask for His help.

8. How does a person of accountability fit into this solution?

Some problems we can solve all by ourselves. But many problems may require the help of others if we are to successfully overcome the problems.

Who is a safe person, with a good understanding of the Bible that can help solve this problem?

Conclusion

Our goal is to provide students with "tools" that they can put in their "toolbox for life" and use when needed to address the problems in their life. We all need to learn to use Biblical strategies in solving the problems in our life.

We all will encounter problems in our life. How we respond to these problems is the key to being a successful disciple of Jesus

Personal Problem Assessment Project One

Instructions: You are being asked to fill out this project so it can be used in a staff training workshop. Please do not put your name on this project. Thank you so much for your willingness to help with this project.

1. What is one problem you are facing in your life today? Briefly describe it.

2. What do you think is the cause(s) of this problem?

3. What damage is this problem causing in your life, and the lives of others?

4. What do you think are the steps to solving this problem?
