

Introduction to Biblical Counseling

What are Five Benefits Believers have to Work through Problems in Living?

Key words: Tools, Power, Training, Support, Rewards

INTRODUCTION

A. One of the biggest surprises that face new and older believers alike is the reality that they will still experience many of the same problems that non-believers face. Couples who divorce or don't divorce, argue over the same things.

1. This is a big shock for most new and mature believers because they may have been given the false idea that everything in their life would change for the good upon committing their life to Christ at salvation.
 - a. II Cor. 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." The old life of slavery to self and sin has gone and the new life of devotion to Christ means that we have new attitudes and actions. CF. (Rom. 6:4; Eph 4:23-5:2; II Cor 5:14,15; Phil 1:6)
2. The Apostle Peter acknowledges that believers should not be surprised if and when they experience trials.
 - a. I Peter 4:12, "Dear friends, do not be surprised (amazed) at the painful trials you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you" even though you are a believer.
3. We were even selected by God to experience suffering.
 - a. 1 Peter 2:21, "To this (suffering) you were called (selected), because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps."

B. Scripture explains how common problems happen whether one is a Christian or not.

1. The Apostle Paul explained the universal existence of problems even for believers this way:
 - a. I Cor. 10:13, "No temptation (trial) has overtaken you but such as is common to man" (he goes on to say) and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted (tested) beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape, so that you will be able to endure it."

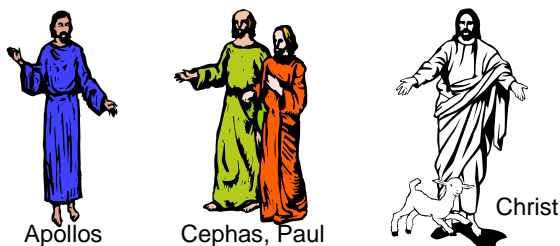
2. The word “temptation” is used in a broad sense which includes “tests,” “trials,” “temptations,” and “afflictions.”
3. The phrase “overtaken you” – describes a situation which “has seized” (grabbed) you in the past and continues to hold you in its grasp up to the present. // (perfect active verb)
4. The phrase “common to man,” means that the temptation or trial is common to people everywhere and is nothing unusual. The trials that the Corinthian believers experienced were not any different than those of the Greek or Asian believers. There is no difference regardless of nation or culture. Fear is fear. Worry is worry. Rejection is rejection. Shame is shame. Though trials may be acted out differently in each culture, they are similar in nature.

C. The reason every culture experiences the same basic problems is that mankind has been affected by the same three results of Adam’s sin.

1. Man lost his personal sense of worth and value and significance. He now believes he is of little worth or value outside of what he is able to do for himself or others.
 - a. But Jesus still acknowledges our value even though we feel worthless.
 - 1) Matt. 6:26, “Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?”
 - b. People create a great deal of conflict in life and relationships by trying to re-establish their own worth and value apart from God.
 - c. People have become performance-based in order to reestablish their own worth and value. Religious legalism is one such effort. It’s all about appearance.
 - 1) Gal. 3:1-3, “You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2) This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3) Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”
2. Man lost his purpose and goal (direction) in life and as a result became very self-centered, empty with feelings of void inside.
 - a. The Apostle Paul described this self-centeredness.
 - 1) Eph. 2:1-3, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3) Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”

- 2) Rom. 1:18-32
 - 3) Phil. 3:17-19
- b. King Solomon in Ecclesiastes admits that in spite of having everything there is to have, life feels empty and without purpose.
 - 1) Eccl. 1:1-2, "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem. 2) 'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher, 'Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.'"
 - c. Purposelessness is the foundation of boredom and total selfishness.
 - d. Purposelessness is also the foundation of evolution ... There is no purpose for creation and no one is supervising it (i.e. God).
3. Man lost his identity (who I am). He still is an image bearer of God (Gen. 1:26) but his mind has distorted that reality.
 - a. Man attempts to find his identity through sports, clothes, wealth, looks, possessions, power, position or accomplishments, etc.
 - b. The Apostle Paul described how believers in Corinth were attempting to get their worth and value by identifying with certain significant religious leaders and groups.
 - 1) I Cor. 1:12, "Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.'"

2) DRAWING



- c. The loss of identity explains much of the bazaar cultural extremes in clothes, behavior and body markings (tattoos).
- d. God re-established believers' lost identity, but it is totally regained in relationship to who he is in Christ.
 - 1) Gal. 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."
 - 2) Phil. 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."
 - 3) Col. 3:3, "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

What do you struggle with most; loss of worth, purpose or identity? How has it impacted your life? What have you done up to this point to deal with it? Who has been the most helpful to you and how did they help you?

- e. One of the tasks of a biblical counselor (discipler) is to lead the believer to change his core beliefs of the heart in these three areas: value, purpose and identity. (Romans 12:2)

D. Because all believers have trials, temptations, tests, and a need to grow, God has established a process of discipleship which can, and often does, include spiritual counseling. It is important to distinguish between catching fish (evangelism) and cleaning fish (discipleship, spiritual counseling).

1. We are all called by God to catch fish – evangelize with the goal of people coming to personal salvation.
 - a. Matt. 4:19, “And He (Jesus) said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men’” (evangelism).
 - b. II Tim 4:5, (The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy) “...endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry”
 - c. Evangelism is one of the spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:11).
2. But we are also called to clean the fish and this is called discipleship (progressive sanctification). This is our responsibility. // One Christian brother who has the gift of evangelism wrongfully stated, “It is our responsibility to catch fish and it is God’s responsibility to clean the fish.” This concept is not supported in scripture. In fact, most of the New Testament deals with “cleaning fish.”

E. The big question is, what difference or benefit do believers have over the non-believer in dealing with problems in living? Believers often feel inferior, intimidated, unqualified and helpless to help others. In reality, they have at least five benefits in working through their own needs or helping others to work through their problems in living from a biblical perspective.

1. God gives us biblical TOOLS to deal with the problem.
2. God gives us POWER to use the tools.
3. God gives us TRAINING to use the tools.
4. God gives us SUPPORT to use the tools.
5. God gives us REWARDS for using the tools.

TOOLS

I. God gives us His TOOLS to deal with all our problems in living in His word. What are tools?

A. (Definition) Tools are clear scriptures or principles from scripture that apply to your problems in living (partial listing). Tools can also be techniques or practical strategies in applying those tools.

1. II Peter 1:3, "as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue..."

B. Specific Tools

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Tool</u>	
1. Guilt (true/false)	Confession and forgiveness	I John 1:9
2. Shame	Transfer it to Christ	Heb. 12:2
3. Discouragement	Encouragement	Heb. 3:13
4. Despair	Hope	I Thess. 4:9-18
5. Anxiety (fear/anger)	Prayer	Phil. 4:6
6. Struggling	God's armor	Eph. 6:10-17
7. Rejection	Acceptance by God	Rom. 15:7
8. Failure	Restoration	Gal. 6:1
9. Overwhelmed	Burden bearing	Gal. 6:2
10. Abused	Entrust to God	I Pet. 2:23
11. Marital Conflict	Love and respect	Eph. 5:33
12. Confused	Trust	Prov. 3:5-6
13. Worthless	Identity in Christ	Eph. 1:4,5
14. Disconnected	Abide	John 15
15. Tested	Consider it joy	James 1:2-4
16. Attacked	Resist	James 4:7
17. Unloved	Accept God's love	John 3:16; Rom. 8:38-39

18. Condemned	Justified	Rom. 8:31-34
19. Lonely	His presence	Psalm 23
20. Anger	Forgiver	Eph. 4:23
21. Conflict	Personal Responsibility	Rom. 12:18
22. Addictions	Consider self dead	Rom. 6:11
23. Arguing	Listen	James 1:19
24. Hurt	Forgiveness	Col. 3:13

What verses or principles from scripture have you personally used that have been effective in your own life or to help others?

C. (The good news is) God has gone on record that He has already given everything (tool) we need to live a godly life and deal with problems.

1. II Peter 1:3, "Seeing that by his divine power (*dynameos*) He has granted us EVERYTHING pertaining to life (spiritual vitality) and godliness (godly living), through the true KNOWLEDGE (full knowledge) of him who called us by his own glory and excellence."
2. II Tim. 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."

D. Even Jesus' disciples realized that He had the only tools (truths) for life.

1. John 6:60-69, (66)"As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. 67) So Jesus said to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?' 68) Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words (tools) of eternal life.' 69) 'We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.'"

POWER

- II. God gives us His POWER to use those tools. This is one of the major distinctions of Christianity from other religions. You can't change anyone. That's God's job. Acts 1:8, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."**

- A. Other religions may tell you what to do but they cannot give you the power to do it.**
- B. In contrast, the Apostle Paul told the Philippian believers, “I can do ALL THINGS through him (Christ) who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).**
1. Never accept the response to God’s commands, “I can’t do it.”
 2. Believers now have a choice to use God’s power or not (CF Rom 6), the power of choice.
- C. Paul told Timothy to remember, “For God has not given us a spirit (an attitude) of timidity (cowardness) (fear), but of POWER and a sound mind” II Tim. 1:7.**
1. The Greek word translated “fear” (*deilia*) should be translated “timidity” or “cowardness”. Timidity is never used in a good sense in New Testament. Yet, fear (*phobias*) was experienced by Paul in I Cor. 2:3.
- D. Jesus’ last words to the disciples were, “but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).**
1. We get our English word, “dynamite” from the Greek word “Power” (*dunamin*).
 2. You can be powerful while still afraid. The Apostle Paul experienced that while ministering in Corinth.
 - a. I Cor. 2:3-5, “I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. 4) and my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. 5) that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God”
- E. You get this power to use God’s tools when you are connected by faith, first for salvation then stay in fellowship by obedient faith.**
1. There is no power outside of obedience to Christ and His Word.
 - a. I John 1:6-8, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7) but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8) If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”
- F. God’s power is strongest when we are in touch with the reality of our own personal weaknesses and minister in spite of them.**
1. The Apostle Paul personally experienced both weakness and power first hand in his own life.

- a. II Cor. 12:9, “And He (God) said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power shows up most in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

Describe a significant time when you can say you definitely felt or experienced the supernatural power of God. What was the outcome of those events? What did you learn? How did this help you with other issues later in life?

TRAINING

III. God gives you the TRAINING in using these tools (outside of four walls).

A. Other words for God’s training program are trials, afflictions, temptations or testings. // You have or will go through these as learning experiences again and say to yourself, “That was a Learning Experience!”

1. Peter is a classic illustration of this training through a trial; how to help someone who has failed
 - a. Luke 22:31, “And Jesus said to Simon Peter ‘Simon, Simon, indeed Satan has asked for you, that he may sift (test, separate) you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail, and when you have returned to me (you’re trained now) STRENGTHEN your brethren.”
 - 1) Satan wanted Peter to fail so badly or experience such a loss so great that he would lose (or be separated from) his faith and then turn away from God, or fail so badly that he believed that God would never take him back. This is probably one of the reasons Judas went out from the religious leaders and hung himself because they refused to take back the 30 pieces of silver and release Jesus (Matthew 27:3-5). He had to believe Jesus would not take him back after such deep betrayal by Judas. Peter’s denial followed Judas’ betrayal (Luke 22:47-62).
 - 2) Notice: Jesus knew Peter was going to fail...and He did not pray that he would not FAIL. Why?
 - 3) God had a plan for Peter’s experience of failure (the trial). .He was going to use his failure to prepare Peter to help people who failed a test in their lives, plus help those who suffer for doing the right thing.
2. Peter later was able to describe the training process to those who had just undergone persecution.
 - a. I Peter 1:3-7, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4) to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away,

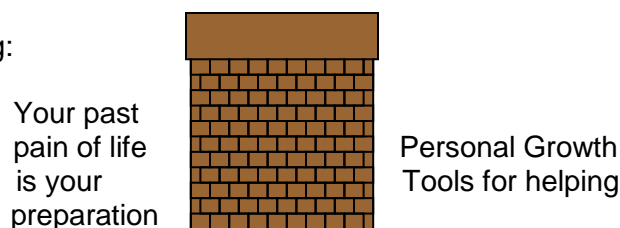
reserved in heaven for you, 5) who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6) In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7) so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

What would it would take to separate you from your faith? Describe an event you experienced that really made you question if there is a God. If you were Job and experienced his losses what do you guess your response would be?

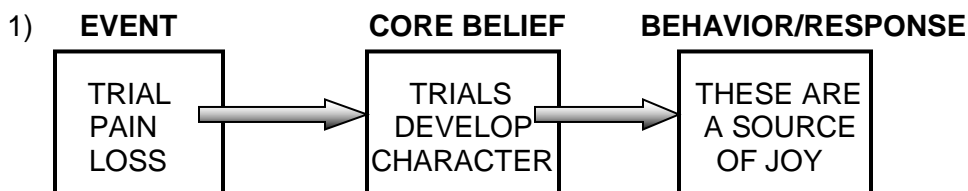
B. This testing-training principle was the first personal problem addressed in one of the first books written in the New Testament (James 1:1-3). // Remember, personal pain and loss were the first issues also addressed in the earliest book written in the Old Testament, Job.

1. James explained the connection between personal pain, personal growth, and preparation to help others.
 - a. James 1:1-4, “James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. 2) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (endurance). 4) but let patience have it’s perfect work, that you may be perfect (mature) and complete, lacking nothing.”
 - b. James removes the wall in our thinking that separates the pain of personal loss and the gain of personal growth.

c. Drawing:



- d. James encourages his readers to change their thinking about trials in order to view them as a source of joy.



- e. One of the key responses to all trials, tests and afflictions is, “What a learning experience!” What are you learning and how are you growing and how will what you are going through help prepare you to help others?
2. The Apostle Paul explained to the Philippian church that his persecution and later imprisonment and his response to it (training) had a tremendous effect on the spread of the gospel among his captors.
 - a. Phil. 1:12-14, “Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, 13) so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else, 14) and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.”

Everyone has been through a difficult situation in their life. Share one specific event you went through and how you were able to help someone else because of your experience. Share with the group an event you have not been able to see the benefit either to yourself or to anyone else. Ask the group to share from their perspective how God may use that event you’re going through either for His glory, your benefit or both.

SUPPORT

IV. God gives us SUPPORT to use the tools. // That support can be physical, spiritual or emotional. We have at least two main sources.

A. God gives us support through other believers if we are willing to share our needs with them.

1. Fellow believers can carry one another’s crushing overloads of physical, emotional, psychological or spiritual pain.
 - a. Gal. 6:2, “Bear one another’s burdens (crushing overloads), and thereby, fulfill the law of Christ (which is loving one another - Jn.13:35).
 - 1) “Bear one another’s burdens” is a command, not a suggestion.
 - 2) The verb is in the present tense which means we are to keep on caring (loving) and don’t stop.
 - b. Rom. 12:15, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”
 - c. I Thess. 5:14, “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”
 - d. Ecc. 4:9-12, “Two are better than one.”

- e. Patti Smith's testimony: "My Wednesday night class circled around me, and had a prayer time. I had finally opened up to them a little bit and asked for prayer support. They cancelled the lesson and they prayed the whole time. I felt encircled by the love of God. They all cried with me and prayed prayers from their heart. It was a special healing time. Much needed."
- f. A medical doctor in Venezuela stood up and shared in tears, the abuse he received as a kid and that he now forgave his dad. People gathered around him and gave him a group hug of support.

Project: Look up all the "one another" passages in scripture and list out what we are to do for one another.

- 2. Believers can give personal encouragement.
 - a. Heb. 3:13, "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'today' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."
 - b. I Thess. 4:18 (Paul comforting the bereaved) "Therefore comfort one another with these words."
 - c. Phil. 2:19-20, "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. 20) For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare."
- 3. Believers can share out of their personal resources, financially or materially.
 - a. 1 John 3:17 "But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother in need and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"
 - b. Acts 11:27-30 "And in these days, prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28) Then one of them named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Ceasar. 29) Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. 30) This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."
 - c. Acts 20: 34,35 "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 35) I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

B. God supports us by His Holy Spirit.

1. The Apostle Paul describes one practical way His Spirit supports us.
 - a. II Cor. 1:3-4, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of ALL comfort who comforts us in ALL our tribulation” (or affliction - Why?) “That we may be able to comfort those who are in any (all) trouble (tribulation or affliction) with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”
 - 1) Notice the reason God comforts us (gives us hope/strength), so we can pass it on to others.
2. The Holy Spirit is our best prayer supporter.
 - a. Rom. 8:26, “In the same way the Spirit also helps (keeps on helping) our weakness (physical, emotional, Spiritual disability); for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”

ETERNAL REWARDS

V. God gives us rewards in heaven for using our tools on earth.

A. The Apostle Paul identified the time and location of these rewards.

1. II Cor. 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

B. The Apostle Paul described his personal anticipation of that event of receiving these rewards.

1. II Tim. 4:7-8, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8) in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”
2. I Cor. 9:25, “And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for* an imperishable *crown*.”

C. True, we will get tired (worn out) doing what is right.

1. II Cor. 1:8, “For we do not want you to be ignorant brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.”
2. Gal. 6:9, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (become discouraged).
3. II Thess. 3:13, “But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.”

4. Isaiah. 40:31, “Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”

VI. Summary Keys

1. Accept that problems will come.
2. Realize sin changed our worth, purpose and identity.
3. Understand you will struggle while in relationship with God.
4. Identify your tools.
5. Access your power to use your tools.
6. Cooperate with God’s training to use your tools.
7. Utilize your support team.
8. Anticipate your rewards for using your tools.

VII. Bibliography

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VIII. Props

- A. **Diamond**
- B. **Fish**

Five Benefits Believers Have to Work through their Problems in Living

Small Group Questions

1. What surprises did you experience after you became a believer regarding problems you would face? What were you told or led to believe regarding problems before you became a believer that caused you to be surprised?
2. What personal struggles have you had with your own sense of worth or value? Where do you believe the thoughts behind these struggles came from?
3. What were your goals or purposes before you became a believer? How did they change after becoming a believer? How would you define your goals or purposes in life now?
4. What struggles have you had or now have with your own sense of identity? What do you look to for your identity? How has being a believer changed who you believe you are?
5. Name one major trial or temptation that caused you to grow the most in your Christian life. How did God cause you to grow?
6. What tools (Scripture or biblical principle) did you use to grow through that trial or temptation? How did you go about applying these to yourself personally?
7. On what occasions have you experienced supernatural power that has helped you through difficult times? Explain what you went through and what did you do while going through it?
8. Share an occasion when you felt very weak and yet God seemed so strong to you.
9. In what way would you say God has been preparing you to help someone else work through a problem in living?
10. Share about a difficult time you went through and who God brought into your life to help you through it. What did they do that was such a big help to you?
11. How has looking forward to heaven and your rewards helped you go through difficult times now?