

Problems
Fairview Texas Church of God
March 6, 2010

Music runs a peculiar pendulum of themes. Some music is a joyous sound. Some music laments sadness. One major influence of recent music (maybe not so “recent” to some of you) was the advent of “Blues” music, followed quickly by the music of the 50s and, soon, by the protest songs of the 60s.

“Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen”
“Since I Lost My Baby”
“Since I Don’t Have You” (I don’t have anything)
“Abraham, Martin and John”

Does anyone here today have any problems?
..... Of course, we do.

During my 32 year career in data processing, I had a reputation as a problem-solver. On at least 10-12 accounts, whenever there was a problem account, I was called on to provide the solution. Today, I still have a problem-solving attitude, and put it to use daily by doing crossword puzzles, Sudoku, and, as often as I can fit it in, the occasional jigsaw puzzle.

One lesson I have learned about problems is that the solution to any problem only changes the problem.

Let’s say you need a car to replace your current one; or maybe you need a new home. Whatever choice you make, you will need to deal with a whole new set of problems. You might have to make a choice between the car you want and the car you can afford; between styling and fuel economy. Regarding a house, you might have to make a choice between convenience to work or the house you really want to buy. You may have to compromise between lot size and location or price. You need to choose between gas and electric heat and appliances. Whatever your choices, you will end up dealing with maintenance, driving time, gas prices and a whole list of other ‘opportunities’.

When you have a problem, you have to make choices. You might have to weigh time against money, speed against efficiency or quality against value.

From an email I received in October, 1999 (no credit was given to anyone):

WHAT GOD IS TELLING US

What is God telling you with the problems He blesses you with? The problems you face will either defeat you or develop you - depending on how you respond to them. Unfortunately, most people fail to see how God wants to use problems for good in their lives. They react foolishly and resent their problems rather than pausing to consider what benefit they might bring.

Here are five ways God wants to use the problems in your life:

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1. God uses problems to DIRECT you.

Sometimes God must light a fire under you to get you moving. Problems often point us in a new direction and motivate us to change. Is God trying to get your attention? Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways.

Proverbs 20:

- 30 Blows that hurt cleanse away evil, As do stripes the inner depths of the heart.

2. God uses problems to INSPECT you.

People are like tea bags ... if you want to know what's inside them, just drop them in hot water! Has God ever tested your faith with a problem? What do problems reveal about you?

James 1:

- 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,
- 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

3. God uses problems to CORRECT you.

Some lessons we learn only through pain and failure. It's likely that as a child your parents told you not to touch a hot stove. But you probably learned by being burned. Sometimes we only learn the value of something ... health, money, a relationship ... by losing it.

Psalms 119:

- 71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

4. God uses problems to PROTECT you.

A problem can be a blessing in disguise if it prevents you from being harmed by something more serious. Last year a friend was fired for refusing to do something unethical that his boss had asked him to do. His unemployment was a problem - but it saved him from being convicted and sent to prison a year later when management's actions were eventually discovered.

Genesis 50:

- 20 "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

5. God uses problems to PERFECT you.

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Problems, when responded to correctly, are character builders. God is far more interested in your character than your comfort. Your relationship to God and your character are the only two things you're going to take with you into eternity.

Romans 5:

- 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;
- 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Here's the point: God is at work in your life - even when you do not recognize it or understand it. But it's much easier and profitable when you cooperate with Him.

1. God uses problems to DIRECT you.
2. God uses problems to INSPECT you.
3. God uses problems to CORRECT you.
4. God uses problems to PROTECT you.
5. God uses problems to PERFECT you.

1. God uses problems to DIRECT you.

Acts 9:

- 1 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest
- 2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
- 3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.
- 4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"
- 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."
- 6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."
- 7 And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.
- 8 Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.
- 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.
- 10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

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- 11 So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.
- 12 "And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."
- 13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.
- 14 "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."
- 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.
- 16 "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."
- 17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
- 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.
- 19 So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.
- 20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.
- 21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?"
- 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

2. God uses problems to INSPECT you.

Matthew 26:

- 33 Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble."
- 34 Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."
- 35 Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples.
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- ...
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- 69 Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee."
- 70 But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are saying."
- 71 And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth."

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- 72 But again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the Man!"
- 73 And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you."
- 74 Then he began to curse and swear, saying, "I do not know the Man!" Immediately a rooster crowed.
- 75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly.

3. God uses problems to CORRECT you.

Proverbs 29:

- 15 The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

Proverbs 22:

- 15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

Proverbs 13:

- 24 He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

Proverbs 19:

- 18 Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction.

4. God uses problems to PROTECT you.

Ephesians 1:

- 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace
- 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,
- 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,
- 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him.
- 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
- 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.
- 13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

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- 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

5. God uses problems to PERFECT you.

Romans 5:

- 1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
- 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;
- 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.
- 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Matthew 5:

- 48 "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Colossians 1:

- 24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,
- 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,
- 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.
- 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
- 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.
- 29 To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Hebrews 12:

- 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,
- 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,
- 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

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M. Scott Peck, MD, in his book “The Road Less Traveled” (in our library) wrote “Problems do not go away. They must be worked through or else they remain, forever a barrier to the growth and development of the spirit.”

That is a way of saying “Bad news does not get better with age”. Choices must be made – and the sooner action is taken, the better.

Dr. Peck goes on to say, and I paraphrase, that we need to take responsibility for problems that come our way, give them the time and thought to develop a solution (with prayer) and to possibly give up something to implement the solution. For instance, if I want more time to spend with the grandchildren, I need to give up something that is taking away that time no matter how much I enjoy it. I know since I have been whittling away at those “time-eater” for the past 2 years.

Remember - The solution to any problem only changes the problem. That means you are growing.

Here’s the main point: God is at work in your life - even when you do not recognize it or understand it. But it’s much easier and much more profitable when you cooperate with Him.