

Solving People Problems – a 5 Part Process

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(This document is a section from the larger article, "His Personal Counsel", on www.SoulCare.ORG)*

Practical Soul-care to © L.E.A.D. One Another into the Character of Christ Jesus

(L.E.A.D. = Loving, Equipping, Accountability, Discipline) = (Family Discipleship Counseling)

2 Timothy 3:14-17 *solī deo gloria*

"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures [**objective Word - "logos", not subjective feelings or philosophical guesses**], which are able to make you wise for salvation [**"sozo" = mature wholeness, not just justification**] through faith [**submissive trust, not just intellectual assent or emotional experience**] which is in Christ Jesus.

"All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be mature, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

People	Socialization	<i>manthano</i>
Purpose	Teaching	<i>didaskalia</i>
Problem	Conviction	<i>elegchos</i>
Plan	Correction	<i>epanorthosis</i>
Practice	Training	<i>paideia</i>

What did God do before Sigmund Freud and all the other anti-Christian philosophers of modern counseling? Did God have to wait for them to help His people overcome "people-problems" like: depression, anxiety, anger, bitterness, arguing, marriage conflict, parent/child struggles, addiction, etc? Of course not! Remember the fruit of the Holy Spirit - Galatians 5:22-25

Galatians 5:22-25

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

Our sovereign God is good, and His sufficient counseling plan has always been profound enough for any Ph.D., yet simple enough for a little child. God's plan is not some sort of spiritual mysticism, nor is it behavioristic legalism through a religious program of ritualistic steps. God's practical plan for us is a *relationship* with Himself, through Jesus Christ ruling as LORD over our motives, thoughts, words, actions, and feelings.

Just like any other practical problem-solving process, fixing "people-problems" simply involves *practicing a plan* that will overcome the *real causes* of the *problem*, in order to achieve the original *purpose*. In the case of "people-problems", the prime purpose of counseling is God's glory (*solī deo gloria*). God's goal for Christian counseling is to transform people and relationships into His mature character, so that when others see it they will be drawn to become a part of His family. The cornerstone of mature Christian character is an accurate, balanced self-perception that avoids two insidious

EXTREMES:

1. **SELF**-deprecation without the hope of Christ in you, the fullness of the Spirit and His fruit.
 2. **SELF** -esteem that eclipses the esteem of Christ as the only one worthy.
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Five Parts to the Process:

1. People (Socialization) (*manthano*)

- **God's counsel focuses on your *social* relationships with God & others.** All biblical counseling problems involve people in relationships with one another (God, you, angels, demons, parents, siblings, spouse, children, church members, coworkers, enemies ...). These relationships are orchestrated by God's grace, as a primary part of the "*Providential Pressures*" He uses to conform His children into the mature character of His Son Jesus.

(Gen 1-2; Gal 1:1-5; 5:13-15; Mat 22:36-40; Luke 9:23-26; Rom 8:28-30; James 1:2-8)

Who is involved in this particular people-problem?

In this problem, who is Jesus to you? Legend? Liar? Lunatic? LORD [Boss / Authority]?

In God's heavenly family (Father/Son/Spirit), how are authority & love balanced?

Why is God's Word (the Bible) sufficient for relationship problems?

What are your ranks, roles, and responsibilities in this relationship problem?

2. Purpose (Teaching) (*didaskalia*) - God's counsel *teaches* you how to glorify God & bless others during trials. Jesus said the primary goal is to glorify God the Father, by producing the fruit of close, intimate relationships with Him and one another. (Mat 22:36-40; John 13:34-35; Gal 5:22-25) The counseling goal is to L.E.A.D. others to restoration and maturity in Christ's character.

(Gen 1:26; 2:24-25; Gal 1:5; Eph 1:6; 3:10)

How does God's purpose compare to your personal purpose in this problem?

When people look at how you speak and act are they drawn to follow God?

What part of the Spirit's fruit (Jesus' maturity) is missing from you in this problem?

3. Problem (Convicting) (*elegchos*) - It *convicts* us that our core problem is a lack of His love ruling through us. Ever since the rebellion of Lucifer, Adam, and Eve, relationships between God and people have been broken. To solve these problems God's Way, you must understand the differences between fruit symptoms, temptations, and root causes. The root cause of relationship problems is always either ignorance or rebellion or both. For ignorance, you need the L. & E. of L.E.A.D. (Loving & Equipping). For rebellion, you need the A. & D. (Accountability & Discipline).

(Gen 3:1-13; Mat 15:19; Gal 1:6-7; 5:16; James 4; 1 John 2:15-16)

What are your symptoms in this people-problem? (feelings, behaviors, attitudes)

What circumstances and people tempt you in this specific struggle?

Which of the three branches in 1 John 2:16 produces most of your feelings and actions?

What root attitude causes the lack of God's sacrificial love in all of us?

How does ignorance of practical relationship skills also affect this people-problem?

Possibly the most important principle about the problem is the need to discern between symptoms, temptations, and causes. Most people confuse these three and then they waste their time merely trying to change circumstances or treat symptoms, but never really fix the root causes.

Three Dimensions of All Relationship Problems - Gal 5:16-25; James 1:13-15

- 1. Symptoms (fruit)** Either the fruit of Holy Spirit or the flesh, Joy or Depression, Peace or Anxiety, etc....
- 2. Temptations (influences)** Your spouse, kids, PMS, etc.... (Rom 8:28-29; Luk 9:23-26)
- 3. Causes (roots)** (Holy Spirit or Flesh - H.Self) (Body, toys, esteem- 1 John 2:16) (Painful Pursuit of Pleasure) James 4:1-9

For example, a husband might say: *"My wife, makes me miserable!"* or *"You won't make me blow up this time."*

But his statements are not really accurate, biblically. His wife might be very hurtful, but she can't stop the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace ...) from growing in his life. How he responds in attitude and action is his responsibility.

Note how the husband's "problem" of not reflecting the fruit of the Spirit looks when dissected biblically:

Symptoms: *Feeling miserable, bitter, depressed . . .*

Temptations: *Wife constantly criticizes, nags, and complains.*

Causes: *His attitude: "This is not fair, I deserve a better wife".*

* It's the heart attitude in response to temptations that produces symptoms of either the flesh or fruit of the Spirit.

(Please see the separate article on God's A.B.C.'s of J.O.Y.)

(Mat 15:19; John 15:1-13) I wish I could give credit to whomever came up with the acronym, J.O.Y., because it so accurately and concisely conveys the a godly attitude.

* J.O.Y = right heart attitude, to love Jesus 1st, Others 2nd, Yourself 3rd

* 1 John 2:15-17 = Three branches of a root of self-love.

(*Desire for physical pleasure, fun things, esteem from others.*) (See the article: "The Painful Pursuit of Pleasure")

4. Plan (Correcting) (epanorthosis)

- God's plan to *correct* the problem is a person, Jesus, not a program of rules.

The Greek term used here means to pick up a fallen person and point him in the right direction.

God, in Scripture, has given us profoundly practical strategies for overcoming causes and temptations of life problems, so that we can glorify Him by reflecting relationships of intimate oneness.

God's provision in Christ includes Christ's Cross, Spirit, Word, & Church Family.

The first step is always real faith, which means repentance & submission (James 2:19), not just intellectual acceptance of facts or emotional reaction to experiences. The demons believe all "about" Jesus, but they won't submit (believe "in" Him) as personal Lord.

The Good News is that God will accomplish His plan, in spite of us (Philip 1:6). (*Gen 3:14-19; John 15; Gal 2:20; 4:19; 5:22-25*)

Why is submissive faith to Jesus the key to overcoming the root problems for God's glory?

Use the A.B.C.'s of J.O.Y. sheet to plan how you will respond next time.

© **L.E.A.D. to Restoration & Maturity in Christ** (Mat 18:15-20; 28:18-20)- *Loving* (Mat 22:36-40; Joh 13:34-35; Rom 13:8-10; 1 Co 12-14; Gal 5:14; 1 Jo 3-4)

- *Equipping* (Rom 1:12; Col 2:2; 1 Th 3:1-2; 5:14; 2 Ti 3:15-17) *Teach, Convict, Correct, Train*

- *Accountability* (2 Tim 2:1-4; Titus 2:3-5) *Man to man, Woman to Woman*

- *Discipline* (Mat 18:15-20; 1 Co 5:9-13) *One to One, Two or More, Church, Public*

5. Practice (Training) (paideia) - God's counsel trains us to consistently walk under His Spirit's authority. In Gal 5:25, the term "walk" is stoicheo, which means to "march" under submission to an authority. It's not enough to just learn a plan, you must faithfully practice it until you get really good at it, especially until it becomes a solid habit pattern in your life. (Eph 4:20-24) Then people can see and enjoy God's glory through you! (Romans 8:28-29; Gal 5:16-25; Philip 2-4; Jam 1-4) (Gen 3:20-24; Gal 5:16-6:5)

Make a daily "Log List" from Matthew 7:1-5 to make sure you see things clearly.

Make a weekly "Put Off / Put On" chart to evaluate your ongoing need to change. (Eph 4:17-24)

Draw up a schedule Chart to Maintain priorities.
Use Church Accountability and Discipline as needed.

* The process is simple, not complicated. However, it's not easy. It's hard because you must trust God, God is the only one who knows what's in other people's hearts, and He's the only one who has the knowledge and power to change them. To do your part in God's process of solving relationship problems, you must submit to His will, and respond to the people and circumstances around you as His Word counsels.

* Ignorance is not only a lack of knowing the truth, but can also include lots of untrue and ineffective teachings that you received growing up, even from well-meaning yet biblically uninformed sources. Being ignorant of God's counsel is not deliberate sin, but it's still contrary to His truth (His Way), and it results in destruction (Prov 14:12).

The Heart of the Problem:

One of our six children, Michael, was born with severe heart defects, which required many difficult, risky, and painful heart surgeries. By the time Michael was seven years old, he was really struggling with fear, resentment, and depression. Often he would say things like, "I just wish I could die". Even though my wife, Linda, and I regularly shared God's principles of abundant life with him, his emotional symptoms got worse with every new surgery.

Then one day when he was seven, Michael called me into the boy's bedroom, and I could see that his whole countenance was different. His face looked joyful, peaceful, and he said, "Dad, I need to do something that I've never done. I've always been my own boss, and now I want to surrender to Jesus". The joy on his face revealed that deep down in his heart, God had already drawn him to make that decision of submissive faith. Mike just wanted me to confirm it for him. From that moment, he began to grow more and more in the character of Christ, the mature fruit of the Holy Spirit.

A few months later, he came to me with a puzzled look on his face. Then he asked one of the most difficult, yet important questions everyone should ask. "Dad, why did God choose me to have all of these heart surgeries"? At first, I started to give him a complicated theological answer. But I stopped and said, "*Mike, you know the Lord and His Word, so what do you think is the answer*". Michael thought for a moment and replied, "Well, Dad, I guess it's so I'll know how much I need Him". That answer was better than I've heard from most adults in the past 20 years of counseling. So I asked Mike if he could think of any other reasons. "Yes sir", he shared "I guess it's so that when we go to hospitals, we can tell more people about Jesus".

God allowed Michael's broken, physical heart and all of his pain and suffering to transform his spiritual heart. His sinful pride and stubbornness were broken until he cried out to God for salvation through submissive faith. In the same way, he has continued to grow into a humble, submissive vessel through which God's love can reach out to others. He's still a sinner like all of us, and often wrestles with the temptation to resentment and fear, knowing he has more heart surgeries coming. But, at least now he knows what to do. Ignorance is no longer His problem.

When Michael was on his way to his sixth heart surgery, he began to really understand what life's all about. As we drove along the highway, all of a sudden, he said: "Dad, I think I've learned what's most important in life. It's not toys, things, and being busy with fun activities. It's relationships with the people you love - especially God."

This is the heart and core of God's sufficient plan for overcoming "people-problems". On this foundation, any person or family can learn and apply the Bible's practical principles for forgiveness, communication, decision making, marriage, child training, etc. Yet without this foundation, any counseling efforts would be, as Jesus said in Matthew 7, like building your home on shifting, unstable sand. And when the storms and stresses of life come against a home or life built on shifting sand, it falls apart.