



# WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Studying God's Promises to Battle the Problems of Life

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# WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

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## INTRODUCTION

No one, no matter how faithful to God, is exempt from problems. If a person expects sunshine and roses for the Christian life, then disappointment will be the only reward. Thanks to sin and a sinful nature, humanity—Christians included—cannot escape the troubling circumstances and consequences filling the world.

Yet, a solution exists—not one to avoid life's challenges, but one to cultivate contentment, joy, and peace in the midst of whatever problems arise. *What's the Problem?* helps group members recognize the subtle work of Satan and false methods of “escape” and invites them to choose the real solution to life's problems. God's Word is bountiful in truth to bring perspective and victory to any predicament or crisis.

It is very important to get the word out for this study in every way possible. The following lessons titles and objectives are structured for use in church bulletins, newsletters, emails, text messages or Facebook groups.

### **Session 1: Dealing with the Difficult**

Group members will focus, not on the problems they face, but rather on the principles God gives in His Word to help solve life's difficulties.

### **Session 2: It's Personal**

Group members examine two of their most personal relationships—with God and themselves—to discover any misconceptions creating problems in their lives.

### **Session 3: Priceless**

Group members will understand how a non-biblical perspective of possessions and a rebellion against discipline leads to difficulties in life.

### **Session 4: Life Support**

Group members will study God's promise never to forsake them, no matter the sin, troubled circumstance, or life problem they face.

# DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULT

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

## Session One

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bibles
- Copies of student handouts
- Extra pens or pencils
- Note cards

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

Group members will focus, not on the problems they face, but rather on the principles God gives in His Word to help solve life's difficulties.

### CONNECT

To begin this first session, provide each class member with copies of the handout, "The Trouble I've Seen." Explain participants will not be asked to volunteer their answers to questions 2 and 3; thus, they can journal freely on the handout. Once everyone has completed the sheet, ask for volunteers to share their definition of the word *problem*. Segue into CONSIDER by saying: *According to www.dictionary.com, a problem is: "Any question or matter involving doubt, uncertainty, or difficulty; a question requiring a solution or discussion." Thus, based on that definition, our lives consist of an endless progression of problems—questions and doubts that often require answers we just don't have.*

### CONSIDER

Ask group members: *What are the main, overall problems plaguing people in your age range? How do people escape or fix these problems?* Surprisingly, the answers to this question are quite often what you would expect to hear from the youth group. How do we handle our problems?

- Substance abuse: grabbing the bottle for relief or escaping through pain pills and other—legal and illegal—medications.
- Sexual addictions: running to pornography, multiple sexual partners, obsessions over sex in marriage, masturbation, and other sexually-focused acts to find validation and fulfillment.
- Success and popularity: keeping up with "the Joneses" and being consumed by career to determine success, focusing on achievement and cushioned bank accounts, along with what brands of clothing to buy, restaurants to patron, vacations to take, etc.
- Emotional sabotage: suppressing feelings of failure, hate, frustration, worthlessness, hopelessness, anxiety, fear, and so on, only to have those emotional monsters manifested in physical ailments, relational stress, and life crisis.

Ask the group: *Why do some people, who are experiencing problems, run to God's Word? Why do some run away from God's Word? Does the presence of problems in one's life indicate God doesn't care about that person's happiness or is punishing him or her?* Explain your answer.



## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Write the verses from Proverbs 3:1-4 on note cards. (Note card #1 reads, "Proverbs 3:1-2; Note card #2 reads, "Proverbs 3:3-4.") Distribute these to volunteers to read aloud to the group.

Pass around a Bible concordance, flagging the entry for the word *life*. How often this word appears in Scripture! Challenge a group member (or more!) to do a study on the usage and frequency of this word in Scripture.



Yes, everyone has problems. But life's challenges are to be expected and are not abandonments or punishments from God. There is hope! God has provided in the Bible not only the story of salvation, but also advice and wisdom to help us face the problems of life.

Give each group member a copy of the handout, "Principles & Promises for Me." This handout can be used to take notes throughout the remainder of this session as well as the next meeting. Explain: *Most problems in life revolve around relationship trouble—whether that is with people or things. Scripture presents principles and promises to help us live in the confidence of God's love.*

### Proverbs 3:1-2, Problems With Authority

The writer of Proverbs (Solomon) used the first phrase of verse one, "My son," to communicate the image of the parent-child relationship. Of course, this relationship is one of authority. Verses throughout the Bible attest to the authority of parents. However, Solomon wasn't necessarily talking about an earthly father in this verse. Once you analyze the promises attached to this commandment for obedience, you realize that no earthly father could keep those kinds of promises. Only a Heavenly Father could be capable of fulfilling these promises.

Ask group members: *Why is authority an awful nine-lettered word to many? Why is recognizing and surrendering to God's authority a problem area? If a person bucks against authority, not only God's, but also the "chain of command" inherent in life, how will that affect him or her? What are the benefits of surrendering to authority (think of children or teenagers, then relate that to adults' relationship with authority)? Why is authority essential to a healthy life?*

The principle of this passage is—obey God; and the promise is found in verse 2—years of life and peace. Ask: *Practically speaking, how would obeying God result in longer life? How would obeying God result in peace?*

Of course, obeying the principles set forth in the Bible will literally extend your life, i.e. refraining from multiple sexual partners will keep you from sexually transmitted diseases, which can at best plague your health and at worst kill you. The same principle applies to avoiding substance abuse, murder, etc. These choices of obedience would also promote peace in a person's life. However, this promise of life and peace applies even deeper—to the state of our emotions. Ask: *How can obeying God in His commands—to avoid worry, to trust in His guidance, to relax in His salvation, or to fear not—result in internal (and eternal!) life and peace for the Christian?* Read the Bible passages below to discover more on this topic:

- John 10:7-11
- Romans 6:23
- Luke 9:23-25
- Luke 12:22-28
- John 6:35-39, 68; 14:6

### Proverbs 3:3-4, Problems With Others

Life exists in relationships with other people. Verse 3 lists two important qualities that should characterize appropriate relations with others. God requires His followers to extend to others what He has extended to them. Although various Bible translations word this verse differently, the idea is of showing a loving and merciful kindness and honesty.

Pass around a Bible concordance, flagging the entry for the word *truth*. Challenge a group member (or more!) to do a study on the usage and frequency of this word in Scripture.

Read Proverbs 3:3 in multiple translations to capture the gist of the verse. Ask group members: *How do these translations paint the overall picture of verse 3?*

“Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart.” –KJV

“Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.” –NIV

“Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart.” –NASB

“Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.” –ESV

The principle of verse 3 is—be merciful and truthful; and the promise resides in verse 4—harmony with God and people. Ask: *What does a loving and merciful kindness look like when practiced in a person’s life? Why is honesty important in relationships with others, especially in difficult relationships? What is it about mercy and truthfulness that promotes harmony?* Read the Bible verses below and discuss what they teach on this topic.

- Luke 6:31
- Matthew 5:43-48
- Psalm 43:3
- Ephesians 4:15, 25
- Proverbs 12:19
- John 8:32
- 1 Corinthians 13:6

## COMMIT

Share with group members about a time when you surrendered to authority and that experience brought life and peace to you. Also share about a situation where you resisted authority and it ended badly. Describe practical ways your relationships with others have been impacted by mercy and honesty (or the lack thereof!). Ask for group members to volunteer examples of these principles, in action.

Ask participants to write two applications on their first handout, “The Trouble I’ve Seen”:

- Describe your relationship with authority.
- If you had to describe your relationship to others with one word, what would it be?

Although participants will not reveal these answers to the group, challenge them to think through the questions, principles, and promises discussed in this session. Make these topics part of their regular Bible study and devotional time.

Before concluding this session, remind group members to hold on to handout, “Principles and Promises for Me” for next week’s meeting.

## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Understanding and Dealing With the Difficult

Session One

# Student Handout 1



## THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN

Answer the questions below. (You will be asked to volunteer your answer for question 1, but will not be asked to share your answers to questions 2 and 3.)

1. How would you define the word *problem*?

2. What three problems are you encountering in your life?

3. Which of these problems do you consider to be the worst? Why?

SAMPLE

# PRINCIPLES & PROMISES FOR ME

Beside each Bible passage, write the “relationship,” “principle,” and the “promise” found in Proverbs 3:1-12. Keep this handout for use throughout the study *What’s the Problem?*

Session One

## Student Handout 2

**Verse:**

**Relationship to:**

**Principle:**

**Promise:**

Proverbs 3:1-2

Proverbs 3:3-4

Proverbs 3:5-6

Proverbs 3:7-8

Proverbs 3:9-10

Proverbs 3:11-12

SAMPLE