

CHAPTER 13

Dealing With Problems

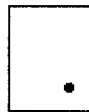
The Paper and the Spot The Wall and the Mouse Hole

God has given us specific information on how to handle the difficulties of life. All believers are surrounded by persons, places, events, situations and problems. As we live and move among people and problems, God has told us what we should be doing. In 1 Timothy 2:1 we learn that S _____, P _____, I _____ and giving of thanks should be made for all men:

1. **SUPPLICATIONS**--specific prayer for a specific need. I come to the Lord realizing my NEED and my INSUFFICIENCY. My own strength and my own wisdom and my own resources are *not* enough. I *need* the Lord Jesus. He is sufficient for every situation.
2. **PRAYERS**--coming to God in prayer realizing WHO HE IS. It involves a God-consciousness and a God-dependence. It involves being aware of God's Person and Presence and giving Him the reverence and respect that He demands. The believer is to always be God-conscious, not leaving God out of his thinking.
3. **INTERCESSIONS**--approaching God with boldness and confidence. The believer can barge into God's holy presence and meet with God in a very bold and confident way, without fear. In the middle of the problems and pressures of life, I can meet with an all-wise and loving God. "For *this* (whatever problem or difficulty I am facing) I have Jesus, and for this Jesus has me."

Instead of coming to God with our problem, we often get caught up with the problem and caught up in the problem. Just as with a tornado, we allow the problem to suck us up into itself and we are overwhelmed by it. We get *overly* and *excessively* concerned about someone (parent, boyfriend, girlfriend, teacher), about some place (home, work, school) or about something (a school exam, a problem at home, an illness, the loss of a friend, etc.). All of our efforts and energies are concentrated and focused on that one problem to the neglect of the whole situation.

Take a blank piece of white paper and on it put one small spot of ink:



The spot is quite easy to see on the white background. It stands right out. If you were to hold it up to someone and say, "What do you see?", he would probably say, "I see an ink spot!" But the spot is only one small part of that sheet of paper. There is much more than just a spot. The problem is that we tend to see only the spot and nothing else, and the little spot becomes bigger and bigger to us.

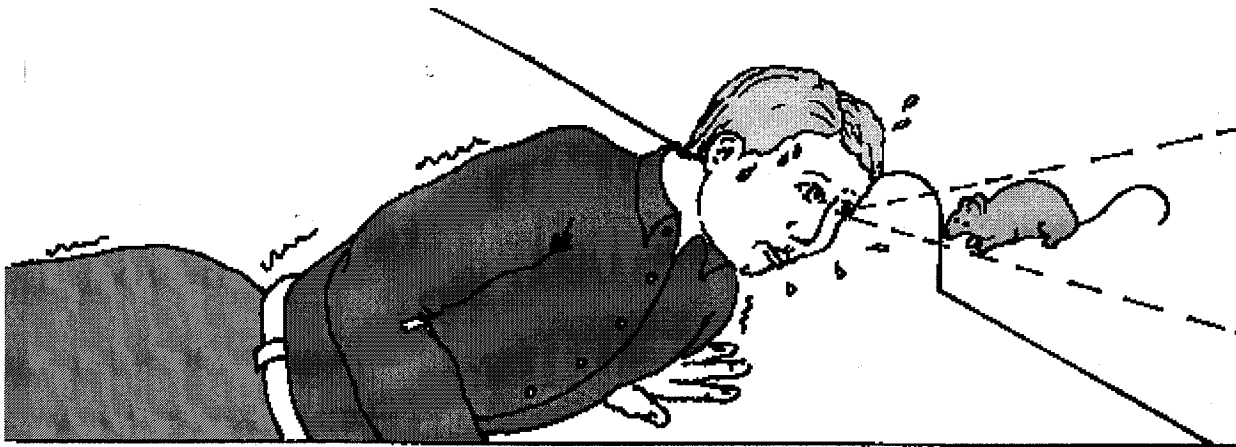
How many students are there in your English class? in your entire school? How does this compare (in terms of percentage) with the entire population of the world (how many billion? _____)? Is not this number a tiny speck compared to the whole?

Is there a problem in your home with your family? How many homes and families are there in the world? Was an unkind word spoken to you today? How does that compare with all the words spoken all around the world? Was an unfriendly look sent your way? What is that compared to all the many unpleasant looks worldwide? When we begin to see the whole picture, then our little problem is only a very tiny speck!

The problem is that I can so easily get all wrapped up with ME, MYSELF and I, and I forget that there is something more than ME, MYSELF and I. It is always "my school, my class, my homework, my teacher, my parents, my grandmother, my soap, my bed, my telephone call, my trip in the car, my _____ and my _____." The world is more than just ME! It is BIG and IMMENSE and your part of the whole is but a tiny little microscopic speck! Instead of looking at only one piece of the puzzle, we must learn to look at the WHOLE PICTURE, which is made up of thousands of pieces.

For example, you may receive a phone call which *to you* may seem like the most important event in the world! This phone call totally occupies your mind so that there is no room for anything else. It is all you think of and you lose your proper perspective. The whole world becomes ONE BIG PHONE CALL! If someone were to ask, "What's going on today in the world?" you would immediately cry out, "I RECEIVED A PHONE CALL!" A very **minor event** (compared to the whole) has now become a very **major event**, and that phone call becomes the only thing you see. We do this all the time with many different things.

Another way to look at this is to think of a little mouse hole at the base of a wall:



A person becomes overly concerned and worried about that one hole, and soon that is the only part of the wall he sees! The longer he looks and lingers (continues to look) the larger the hole becomes, and that little mouse becomes BIGGER and BIGGER. He loses his perspective and the closer he gets to the mouse, the bigger the mouse becomes (A GIANT RODENT!). Also, as his eyeball gets closer to the hole, soon all he sees is the hole and the "giant" mouse. He has lost his view of the whole, and the problem (or phone call, or whatever) has taken on giant dimensions.

What should I do, now that I face a giant mouse? Should I try to fight it? Should I fall before it in fear? Should I draw back from the mouse and take flight (run away from my problem)? When I draw back and withdraw, then . . .

1. I lose my *confidence* in God. My problem has become very big and my God has become very small.

2. I lose the *confession* of my lips. I can no longer say, "For this I have Jesus!" It is not on my lips and it is not in my heart. All I can say is, "My problem has me!"
3. I lose my peace and joy. Instead I worry and fear.
4. My physical health could suffer because even my physical system may be affected by how I handle or fail to handle my problems.

God meant us to face reality and solve problems. The spot on the paper and the mouse hole on the wall (and the mouse in the wall) are very real and must be faced. But the danger comes when we get too close to the problem and lose our perspective and fail to see the whole picture. My whole life *is not* one phone call, one teacher, one test, one twenty dollar bill, one weekend, etc. My situation, problem, event or crisis is only one tiny part of my life.

Often an event passes *in time* but not *in mind*. We cannot or will not stop thinking about it, and thus we are unprepared for the next moment of time. A boy buried his dead cat and then every day he dug it up to see how it was doing! We often do the same thing with yesterday's events and problems.

The Bible gives us various examples of people who became wrongly focused on one thing:

- 1) See **1 Kings 21:1-13**. What piece of property was King Ahab focused upon?
 _____ As king, he had so many possessions and privileges. Was it right for him to covet this one piece of land? _____ He lost sight of everything else he possessed, and became very S _____ (verse 5) because of this property which was all he could think about. Did his wicked wife come up with a plan? _____ What wicked deed was done in order to solve the problem (verses 10,13)? _____
- 2) See **2 Samuel 12:1-6**. Consider the rich man in Nathan's story. Did this man own plenty of sheep and lambs? _____ When a need arose to provide meat for a guest, whose lamb did he focus upon? _____ In what selfish way did he provide for his guest?

- 3) See **Genesis 3:1-6**. When Eve was tempted in the garden, what one thing did she focus upon?
 _____ Did the serpent want her to focus on this one thing? _____ In light of Genesis 2:16, did Eve lose sight of all the other trees in the garden? _____ Suppose a young person were told that he could play baseball, shoot baskets, go on a hike, go swimming, go fishing, go biking, but that he could not go on a boat ride. Would it be wise for this young person to think about the one thing that he could not do instead of appreciating all the many things he could do? _____ Do you know people who get upset about the things they are forbidden to do instead of enjoying the many things that they are free to do?
- 4) See **Judges 16:4-21**. Was Samson overly focused upon a woman? _____ Did this get him into trouble? _____ Can people today become too focused on another person and get in trouble?
- 5) See **Genesis 25:27-34**. After Esau came back from the field, what was his main focus?
 _____ What did he want more than anything else?
 _____ Can something seem to be very important at the time, but later we learn that it was not very important at all?

What is ONE THING that should be our main focus?

See Psalm 27:4

See Philippians 3:13

The Solution:

1. **I must not lose sight of God's overall purpose and program** (His overall work and working). Do not lose your overall perspective. Do not let the spot be everything. As much as possible try to see the whole wall, not just the mouse hole and the mouse. Try to see the whole picture, not just one piece of the puzzle, because by itself the one piece will not make any sense. See the event as only one event among million of events. See the person as only one person among millions of persons. See the place as only one place among millions of places. Look up in the sky, look out across the field and realize that what God is doing is vastly bigger than YOU! It involves a whole world and a whole universe and a whole eternity. Stay in tune and in harmony with God and with what He is doing.
2. **I must not lose sight of God's dealing with my own heart.** The God who is concerned about a whole world and a whole universe and a whole eternity is also concerned about me in a very personal way (see Matthew 10:29-31)! The God who has all the pieces of the puzzle also has my piece. God has a reason for the spot, for the person, for the problem and for the event.
3. **I must not lose sight of God's dealing with other people through me.** My little piece of the puzzle touches several other pieces. As I interact with people here and there, God wants to deal with others through me.

Consider Matthew 8:23-27. What does man want more, the calming of the sea, or the calming of the heart? _____ We often want God to fix the problems on the outside but not the problems on the inside. I want God to change my teacher or my friend, but not me! I want God to fix the job and the problem, but not my own heart! I want God to take care of everything on the outside so that I (with troubled waters on the inside) may be able to live with a calm sea but with a troubled heart. Notice Matthew 8:24. Was there a calm sea? _____ Was there a troubled heart? _____

Consider also Luke 10:38-42. Martha had a spot and a mouse hole. All she could see was that one spot! The *dinner meal* was so important! If this meal did not come out right, all would be lost! Jesus said to her (in essence), "No Martha, there is something far more important than dinner. This meal is *not* that important. I AM IMPORTANT! Be like Mary who has understood what the most important thing really is. Be like Mary who has her eyes off the spot and her ears open to Me!"

**MY BIG GOD IS
 QUITE ABLE TO TAKE
 CARE OF THAT LITTLE MOUSE!**

Is God bigger than any problem you have?