

Lesson 12

Problem Solving Skill

Mystery #4: How can we both get what we want?

I. Introduction

- a. The Bible is completely clear about how we are to **conduct** ourselves as we attempt to solve problems between ourselves and others:
1. We are to **love** at all times. 1 Cor 13:8 Love never fails. NIV
 2. We are to be **frank, open** and honest. James 5:12 but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. KJV
 3. We are to be **compassionate** and understanding. Rom 12:14-19 Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody. Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it."
 4. We are to seek to understand the viewpoints of the other, and to be **gracious** in the way we speak to them. 1 Peter 3:8-9 Summing up: Be agreeable, be sympathetic, be loving, be compassionate, be humble. That goes for all of you, no exceptions. No retaliation. No sharp-tongued sarcasm. Instead, bless — that's your job, to bless.
 5. We are to be **cooperative** and work for a mutually agreeable solution that satisfies the core concerns. Eph 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. NIV
 6. When all our efforts are **rebuffed** we are to pray for them, and to be longsuffering and forgiving. Matt 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; KJV

II. Scenario

- a. Event: Tracie is our daughter. She is a working single mother of three (17, 15, 10). At least once per month her job requires her to travel out of town **over night**, sometimes, as many as three consecutive nights. When ever she travels out of town Jenny and I spend the night at her house, supervise our grandchildren, prepare their meals and in general step into the parenting role until she returns home.
1. What makes this an important issue?
 2. Why do you think it is important for Jenny and Joe to talk about this issue?
 3. Why do you think it is important for Jenny and Joe to talk to Tracie about this issue?
- b. Jenny's **thoughts**, concerns and feelings: I enjoy my grandchildren and would do almost anything to support my daughter Tracie which means that I am willing to be inconvenienced when she asks me to be available for the kids at her house for a couple of days. Most often when Tracie leaves town I am also working at my part time job so I need Joe to be available to do the things that need to be done (chauffeur kids, cooking meals, supervising homework, etc.)
1. What areas of concern do you see in her narrative?
 2. If you had to prioritize, what are Jenny's core concerns?
 3. What would it sound like if you were showing empathy to Jenny?
- c. Joe's thoughts, concerns and **feelings**: I enjoy my grandkids and realize my daughter needs someone to come along side and be available when she can not be home. She has no one else who she can rely upon so we are it. I'm willing. However, I really don't like sleeping at her house because I do not sleep well there. We've tried a few times having the kids pack up and come to our house but that is more hassle for everyone. A few times, I left Jenny there at bed time and just went home to sleep in my own bed but that does not feel right to me.
1. What areas of concern do you see in Joe's narrative?
 2. If you had to prioritize, what are Joe's core concerns?
 3. What would it sound like if you were showing empathy to Joe?
- d. Thus far, we have not gone beyond expressing, showing empathy and discussion. We have not actually taken any steps to **solve** any problems.
1. From Jenny's perspective, what problems need to be addressed, or, whose behavior needs to be changed?
 2. From Joe's perspective, what problems need to be addressed, or, whose behavior needs to be changed?
- e. After Joe and Jenny take turns expressing and showing understanding and they both **feel understood**, they move on to the problem solving aspect.
- f. Their general agreement that meets **both** their core concerns is that: 1.) The children must be cared for; and, 2.) A good night's sleep is imperative.

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- g. The next step is to work out the **details**. This entails identifying who needs to do what, when where and how. Since sleep is Joe's imperative he figures out exactly what he needs to change to ensure acceptable sleep at Tracie's house.
- h. Jenny and Joe plan a follow up date to **evaluate** how well their problem solving plan has worked.
- i. They also plan for any foreseeable **contingencies** that would interfere with their accomplishment of the plan and how they will address those contingencies should they arise.
 - 1. What possible contingencies might arise?
 - 2. What is likely to happen to this plan if contingencies are not planned for and then contingencies arise?
- j. The final step is to make sure all this is in **writing** so that they both have reminders of what they have agreed to. This also serves as a symbolic commitment to work cooperatively to ensure that this problem remains solved.
 - 1. What should you do if your partner fails to keep the agreements that you reach?
 - 2. What is likely to happen if you do nothing?

III. Application

- a. What problems do you have in one of your relationships that are crying out for a solution?
- b. Select one problem that needs a solution in one of your relationships and follow the steps outlined above to bring it to resolution.