

Enigmas, Riddles and Problem Solving

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: 10 X

Text: Daniel 5:11-12, James 1:2-5 (NLT)

One of the things that sets those who are 10 X apart from others is their ability to deal with **difficult** and perplexing situations and people.

Daniel could solve **riddles**. **Proverbs 1:5-7** This means that he was able to deal with **complex** problems and situations that took time figuring out. Things that are hard to understand. A riddle is something that baffles or perplexes. These are things that require you to think them through and work through a myriad of issues, choices, timing and fit. A riddle is a saying or a situation that leaves most people stumped for an answer or a solution; much like King Solomon and the baby with two women who claimed to be his mother. Life is filled with these sorts of things that seem like you can never make a correct or good decision. Daniel could figure out what people were trying to say.

Daniel was able to explain an **enigma**. An enigma is a difficult problem involving people who don't agree and who don't like one another. It is a person or a thing or a situation that is mysterious, puzzling, hard to define and difficult to understand and to solve. Mystery applies to what cannot be fully understood by reason or less strictly to whatever resists or defies explanation. To explain an enigma means to **untie** the knot and to unravel. An enigma is something that defies logic and reason. There is no seemingly good explanation. There are things happening that don't make sense or add up. There seems to be no answer. Things are happening but no one is sure why or how. An enigma is a problem involving paradox or apparent contradiction. It is a puzzle or a problem that challenges our ingenuity for a solution.

Quotes about Problems

- ~ You can measure a person by the problems that they tackle. Do they always look for ones that are their own size; or do they understand it's not the size of the problem but the size of their God?
- ~ The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with, but whether it is the same problem that you keep having to deal with.
- ~ Every problem introduces you to yourself. It shows you how you think and what you are made of. Every problem helps you to know God, how He works and that He is faithful.
- ~ We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them.
- ~ If your only tool is a hammer then every problem looks like a nail.
- ~ Most of the problems in life have two reasons: we act without thinking or we keep thinking without acting.
- ~ If you choose to not deal with an issue, then you give up your right of control over the issue and it will select the path of least resistance.
- ~ We always hope for the easy fix: the one simple change that will erase a problem in a stroke. But few things in life work this way.
- ~ God didn't remove the Red Sea. He parted it. God doesn't always remove your problems, but He will make a way for you to get through them.

The number-one mistake most people make when encountering a problem is that they don't solve the problem before the problem. For many people the problem isn't the problem, it is their attitude about the problem. **Ephesians 3:20, Matthew 19:26**

The problem we must solve before our problem is one of attitude. Whenever we encounter a challenging situation, we have a choice - what attitude will we have about it. Most of us naturally see a problem as something negative, an obstacle, a pain in the neck, or even a disaster. Most people don't look at a problem and get excited. Most of us look at a problem and say, "Oh no!" and that's the problem.

A negative attitude toward a problem only makes it worse. That is because negative thinking is an amplifier; it takes small issues and increases their emotional weight. It can "make a mountain out of a molehill." When small problems get amplified, we can tend to become overwhelmed or even paralyzed. We don't know what to do, where to turn, whom to call on. This can create a downward spiral, in which our attitudes and our problems both get worse and worse. The only way to break that cycle is to choose a positive attitude at the onset of the problem.

The right attitude about our problems helps us in several ways:

- A good and positive attitude tempers our emotional response. Emotions have tremendous power. But casting a problem in a positive light at its outset can weaken a negative emotional response. By not seeing a problem as a disaster, we are more likely to stay calm. Instead of watching our fears run away with us, we can master our fears. The ability to keep a calm head in the face of a problem is the first step toward a good solution.
- A positive attitude contributes to creativity. How we define a problem makes a huge difference in our ability to solve it and find solutions. That's because seeing a problem as an opportunity does more than calm our emotions; it opens our eyes to options. And clarity about our options results in greater creativity. When we see a problem as just another fork in the road, we can see more clearly all of the possible routes that might lead to a solution. Creativity makes us a better problem-solver.
- A good attitude encourages us to take action. Think of a positive attitude as a momentum-builder. Positivity about the problem combats paralysis and gets us moving past fear. Creatively exploring options keeps us energized and making progress. With all of that forward momentum, the only thing left is to begin trying out solutions. By removing obstacles like fear or tunnel vision, a positive attitude clears the way for us to make decisions and act to solve the problem.
- When we begin to frame our problem as an opportunity we can feel better about the situation, see more possible solutions, and choose and act on the best one. When we solve the problem before the problem, we will be able to solve the actual problem in the best way possible.

Those who are 10 X understand some basic Problem-Solving Principles

- 1) Those who are 10 X have learned to **anticipate** problems. Problems are inevitable and those who are exceptional know that they are coming and expect them. **John 16:33**
Proverbs 27:12 (NKJV, NLT) Those who are 10 X don't treat problems as special they treat them as **normal**. This doesn't mean we live in paranoia but in reality. Those who expect the road to be easy will continually find themselves in trouble. If we keep our attitude positive but plan for the worst, we will find ourselves in a good position to solve the problems that come our way.

If you're working, expect problems. If you're dealing with family, expect problems. If you're just minding your own business and trying to relax, expect problems. If everything goes according to plan, then be pleasantly surprised. If it doesn't and you've planned accordingly, then you won't get so frustrated. A problem not anticipated is a problem. A problem anticipated is an opportunity.

- 2) Those who are 10 X accept the truth and **face it**. A key step in solving any problem is to recognize that it does in fact exist and deal with it. They identify the problem, clarify the problem (What is it? What does it look like? How big is it?) then address the problem (What can we do about it?)

We must not avoid our problems. Many people spend more time and energy avoiding a problem or going around a problem than investing in trying to solve them. Many people have the same problem because they ignore it hoping that it will go away.

People respond to problems in one of several ways:

- ❖ They **refuse** to accept them.
- ❖ They accept them and then **put up** with them.
- ❖ **Run** from them – they try to get away, but problems always follow.
- ❖ **Forget** about them – they put their head in the sand and they hope the problem will go away, but problems left alone only get worse.
- ❖ **Fight** them – they resist, but the problems still persist.
- ❖ **Face** them – they look at the problem realistically and work to make things better. People who face their problems understand that the first step in solving a problem is to begin.

- 3) Those who are 10 X take time to **evaluate** the problem. They take time to think about it and look it over. **John 6:5-9** Evaluation allows us to clearly see a problem and to get Jesus involved. If a serious problem doesn't cause us to pause and take stock, then we probably haven't evaluated it properly. That will create difficulties for us down the road, because if we have misjudged the size or scope of a problem and try to deal with it anyway, we will have to stop in the middle of trying to solve it, reevaluate, and start all over again.

Mike Leavitt, United States secretary of health and human services under President George W. Bush, says, “*There is a time in the life of every problem when it is big enough to see, yet small enough to solve.*”

- 4) Those who are 10 X know that it is ok to ask for help. First of all, we need to get Jesus involved. **Luke 11:9** Next get others involved.
Proverbs 11:14, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 None of us are as smart as all of us. We are better together. All of us need help to solve problems. Working together to solve problems brings us closer together and multiplies our abilities. We all see things from a different perspective. We complement our weaknesses and multiply our strengths.
- 5) Those who are 10 X understand that to FIX the problem we must simplify the problem. Handle one thing at a time. Never try to handle all the problems all at once. Make them line up for you one by one. Break each problem into manageable parts. Solve one part at a time. The key here is to keep it simple. What gets us into trouble is when we get overwhelmed by the sheer size or volume of our troubles and then just dabble at problem solving. If we are faced with lots of problems, we must make sure to solve the one we are working on before moving on to the next one. (How do you eat and Elephant? Answer: ONE bite at a time)
- 6) Those who are 10 X understand that there is always an answer and solution to every problem. God makes a way when there seems to be no way and He helps us to find a solution when we can't see an answer. **Luke 3:4-6** Tenacious people solve problems and trust God through them. Anyone can find the reasons things won't work. Those who are 10 X know that there is an answer and are grateful that God will lead them to find one. We can either focus on excuses or we can focus on solutions. Grenville Kleiser stated, “*To every problem there is already a solution whether you know what it is or not.*”
- 7) Those who are 10 X know that there is a lesson in every problem. Problems are not stop signs they are guidelines. Life is a journey with problems to solve, lessons to learn and most of all, experiences to enjoy. Problem solving is a process, sometimes the solutions work and sometimes they don't. That is not failure that is an education. Failure is quitting with a bad attitude or laying down what is our responsibility to handle.
- 8) There is an opportunity in every problem. The problems that we face will either defeat us or develop us depending on how we respond to them. A problem is a chance for us to do our best. **Luke 22:31-32**
It is after we have been sifted by our problems that we grow stronger, more confident and more dependent on God. Problems are an opportunity for us to become more like Jesus.