

# PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PROBLEMS

## Lesson – 9

### "The Problem of Facing Impossibilities"

#### INTRODUCTION:

- I. At one time or another, we've all faced situations which seemed impossible – where there seemed to be no way out.
  - A. Facing these kinds of challenges will either drive us TOWARD God, or drive us AWAY FROM God into feelings of bitter resentment, anger, hopelessness, and depression.
    1. However, no problem – not even those which seem to be impossible to solve – can destroy us unless we let them.
      - a. The reason we lose hope in those seemingly impossible situations is because we focus our attention more on the situation than we do on the One who can solve it.
        - (1). We let the impossibility of our situation consume us to the point where we become obsessed with it, and sure enough, it will drain the very life out of us.
  - B. This lesson is designed for those of you who are caught in the jaws of a seemingly impossible situation.

1. These come from a variety of circumstances.
  - a. A broken relationship.
  - b. A child who has, for all practical purposes, left the faith.
  - c. A deteriorating marriage relationship, or one that has already been shattered beyond repair by the unfaithfulness of a mate.
  - d. A medical report that comes back with the word "malignant."
  - e. Word that a close relative (perhaps a parent, or a brother or sister) is not expected to live.
  
- II. When facing these kinds of situations, the first thing we need to do is to turn to the Scriptures where we will find some much needed help.
  - A. I want us to look at 3 passages of Scripture that can help loosen the grip of impossible situations, and give us a new perspective for dealing with them.
    1. The first two passages are found in the 32<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the Old Testament book of Jeremiah (I'm reading from the NIV translation).
      - a. **Jeremiah 32:17** - *"Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you."* (NIV)
        - (1). The prophet Jeremiah was emphasizing the fact that the same Great, Almighty and Sovereign God that created

the heavens and the earth – can handle ANY problem that we may encounter.

(a). *"NOTHING is too hard"* for Him.

b. **Jeremiah 32:27** - *"I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?"* (NIV)

(1). This time the Lord Himself speaks, affirming the words of Jeremiah.

(a). *"Nothing IS too hard"* for Him.

(2). The word "anything" means just that – anything, even the situation you're now facing.

(3). In fact, read that verse once again and substitute the word "anything" with problem your facing.

(a). "I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is \_\_\_\_\_ too hard for me?"

2. Now let's turn to the New Testament to consider the third passage – it's found in the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of Luke.

a. **Luke 18:27** - *Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."* (NIV)

(1). You and I are limited in what WE can do to solve our problems.

(2). Even the BEST medical authorities the world has to offer can only do so much.

(3). But, where MAN'S power ends, the power of GOD continues.

B. There is simply no challenge we face that is bigger than God's strength and power.

1. Remember the story of Goliath?

a. He was a GIANT of a man, an Olympic-sized impossibility that put fear into the entire army of Israel – not ONE soldier had courage enough to stand up to him.

b. But in the end, a little shepherd boy by the name of David, with only a sling shot, a stone, and a heart full of faith and courage stepped up and overcame Israel's biggest obstacle.

c. He knew that, *"Things which are impossible with men are possible with God."*

## **BODY:**

I. I want us to turn to a familiar story in the Gospel of John, and see what we can learn from a lesson Jesus taught His disciples about how to handle a seemingly impossible situation. It's found in John chapter 6.

A. First, let's consider the setting.

1. John's account of this miracle begins with the words, "After these things..." (**v. 1**)
  - a. After WHAT things?
2. Here's the background.
  - a. Jesus had chosen His disciples and sent them out to preach on their own.
  - b. According to Matthew 10, they have gone around to every village in the area preaching the gospel of the kingdom – and now they had come back to Jesus, physically and emotionally exhausted.
3. Jesus knew they were all very tired, so He arranged for them to all get away from the crowd for a while.
  - a. **John 6:1-3** – *After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.*
  - b. Just imagine stretching out on a grassy mountainside, overlooking a peaceful lake, and being beside the Lord Himself.

4. The disciples had just begun to unwind in this incredible setting, when things suddenly changed.
  - a. **John 6:5a** – *Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him...*
5. The disciples didn't know what to do.
  - a. According to verse 10, the number was about 5,000, NOT COUNTING WOMEN AND CHILDREN!
  - b. So, it would probably be safe to say, a tidal wave of people, around 10,000 strong, came to join them.
  - d. To make matters worse, it's now dinner time, and all these people are hungry.
    - a. Here they were, in an isolated area, with no Safeway, Fred Meyer's or Roth's nearby (not to mention a Seven-Eleven), and they were looking into the faces of around 10,000 hungry people.
    - b. Now, that's an IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION!
    - c. But THAT'S EXACTLY HOW JESUS WANTED IT!
- B. Now, let's consider the test Jesus gave his disciples.
  1. The first to take the exam was Philip.

- a. **John 6:5b-6** – *He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.*
- b. The Lord knows the beginning and the end of every situation – and this one was no exception.
- c. Although the Lord knows the beginning and the end, He doesn't tell us what the end will be.
  - (1). Instead, He gives us the time between the beginning and the end to learn some valuable lessons of our own.
- d. Philip's response is the kind of response we would expect from someone like Philip.
  - (1). **John 6:7** – *Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."*
  - (2). Let's try to understand some things about Philip.
    - (a). This is the same man who will later say to the Lord, *"Just let us see God and we won't have any more questions."*
    - (b). He was the kind of person who had to see everything – he seemed to have a calculator-kind of mind.

- e. So Philip's response is exactly what we would expect – he looked at the people, and then he looked at the cash flow, got out his calculator, quickly calculated that nearly a year's earnings for one man (two hundred denarii) would not be enough money to buy enough bread to even give the people *"a little."*
- f. All Philip could see was the SIZE OF THE PROBLEM!
  - (1). However, he had become blind to the SIZE OF GOD!
- 2. The next disciple to take the test was Andrew – he was a little different from Philip, he didn't wait to be called on, he raised his hand.
  - a. **John 6:8-9** – *One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?"*
  - b. For a second there, it looked as though Andrew might have discovered the solution to the problem.
    - (1). He found a young boy who had brought along his lunch – five barley loaves and two small fish.
      - (a). At least, you've got to give Andrew credit for having ingenuity enough to volunteer some kid's lunch.
      - (b). Getting a young boy to give up his lunch is quite a feat!

- (2). So, when Andrew arrives with this small lunch, it almost appears as though he has faith in the Lord doing something with the loaves and fish to feed this massive crowd.
  - c. But Andrew failed the test too.
    - (1). Because, he sort of shrugs his shoulders and says, "*But what are they among so many.*"
  - d. Although Andrew was a hard worker – the kind of person who at least attempts to work out a solution to a problem – he eventually became discouraged by what appeared to be overwhelming odds (an IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION)!
- C. Clearly, the disciples of Jesus needed to learn something about how to handle impossible situations – and so, the Lord begins to patiently teach them.
  1. The first thing the Lord does is have the disciples make the crowd sit down.
    - a. **John 6:10** – *Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.*
  2. Next, He gets each one of the disciples personally involved in helping Him carry out a miracle.

- a. **John 6:11** – *And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.*
- b. To understand the full impact of what is happening, it's necessary to understand something about the loaves and the fish.
  - (1). The five barley loaves are not large loaves of bread, but rather five small pancake-like wafers that are hard and brittle.
  - (2). The two fish were not large salmons or two big-mouthed bass, but rather two small pickled fish, like sardines.
  - (3). Remember, it was lunch for a small boy!
3. Jesus took these brittle loaves and tiny fish in His hands and pulled off the impossible.
  - a. The disciples then had the job of distributing all this food to hundreds and thousands of people.
4. But that wasn't the end of the lesson.
  - a. **John 6:12-13** – *So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." Therefore they gathered them up, and filled*

*twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.*

- b. After everyone was filled, Jesus wanted his disciples to bring all the leftovers back.
  - (1). Did you notice something significant about the number of baskets (there were 12 baskets), and the number of disciples (there were also 12 disciples)?
  - (2). Each one of the disciples of Jesus had a basket of their own to carry back up the hill – a basket filled with leftovers!
- c. Try to picture Andrew and Philip carrying their baskets back!
  - (1). They probably couldn't get their eyes off all the leftover fish and barley loaves in their baskets!
- d. Philip and Andrew – one felt defeated by the mathematical impossibilities of the situation, and the other one felt defeated by the odds.
- e. But BOTH saw what Jesus could do MORE ABUNDANTLY THAN ANY OF THEM COULD DO WHEN FACED WITH AN IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION!

II. Let's make some personal application by turning to one last example in the Scriptures. It's found in the ninth chapter of the book of Mark.

A. This is the story of the disciples of Jesus who faced an impossible situation of being unable to cast out a demon.

1. **Mark 9:14-24** – *And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him.*

*And He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?"*

*Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not." He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me."*

*Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible*

*to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"*

- B. Like so many of us, this man had reached the end of his rope – there seemed no way out.
1. Many of us feel as though we've tried everything and have simply run out of solutions – just like the father in this story.
    - a. He wasn't real sure Jesus could help, after all Jesus' disciples couldn't do a thing.
    - b. So he says to Jesus, *"If you can do anything..." (v. 22)*
    - c. Do you see Jesus' response? "If YOU can believe!"
      - (1). It's as if Jesus was saying, "You really don't know Who you're talking to, do you?"
      - (2). It's like He was saying, "I CAN do anything IF YOU have faith enough to trust it's in keeping with My will and My Father's will."
    - d. That's why Jesus replied, *"All things are possible to him who believes."*
  2. So, what DOES God say to us in situations like this?
    - a. "All things are possible to him who WORRIES?"
    - b. "All things are possible to him who ATTEMPTS TO WORK IT OUT BY HIMSELF?"
      - (1). NO!

3. God says the same thing – *"All things are possible to him who believes!"*
- C. Sometimes OUR worst problem is that we try to fix our OWN problems.
1. Look at it this way.
    - a. If you had an expensive Rolex watch and it stopped running, would you take a screwdriver, pry it open and try to repair it yourself?
    - b. Certainly not! We would take it to an expert.
  2. In the same way, when WE try to fix an impossible situation, we often end up making matters much worse.
    - a. Instead, we need to turn those situations over to the One Expert Who is qualified to deal with them.
    - b. He's a Specialist in handling impossible situations.

## **CONCLUSION:**

- I. I don't know what kind of "Impossible Situation" you may be facing, but I do know one thing.
  - A. Jesus is the Specialist who can handle YOUR impossible situation.
    1. Our question to Him should never be, "IF YOU CAN," but rather "IF YOU WILL!"
      - a. Jesus has power to conquer ANY situation we may encounter – no matter HOW large and impassable it may seem.

- b. So, it's not a question of whether or not He has the power or strength to help us.
  - c. Our question should be whether or not what we are asking is in keeping with His will.
2. When we look at life's obstacles this way, nothing is really "Impossible."
- a. The Lord CAN solve the problem.
  - b. But He MAY choose NOT TO.
    - (1). That's the REAL obstacle we have to overcome – our acceptance of His will.
    - (2). The most difficult prayer for ANY of us to pray is, "Not MY will, but THINE be done."
- B. So, you and I aren't really facing an "Impossible Situation," we're facing a question of the Lord's will.
- 1. Can you accept whatever He decides?
    - a. Can you do what Paul told the Philippians to do?
      - (1). *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, WITH THANKSGIVING, let your requests be made known to God."* **(Philippians 4:6)**
    - b. Have you ever noticed something unique about this verse – Paul says we need to be thankful at the same time we let our requests be made known to God.

- c. Most of us are thankful AFTER we get our prayer answered – not BEFORE.
- d. But Paul says we need to ask the Lord for a solution to our situation, and thank Him IN ADVANCE for HOWEVER He chooses to solve it?

2. That's FAITH!

II. Unfortunately, Jesus can't solve situations for us if we don't have faith in Him – that's why Jesus told that father, *"If YOU can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."* **(Mark 9:23)**

A. But don't forget – Jesus told this man that all things are POSSIBLE, not ABSOLUTE!

- 1. The Lord MAY or MAY NOT answer your prayer the way you're hoping.
- 2. But He won't answer it AT ALL if you don't have faith and trust in Him and in His power.

B. Do you have faith in Jesus – the kind of faith that is demonstrated by your faithful obedience to Him?

- 1. If you're not a Christian...
- 2. If you are a Christian...