

Biblical Psychology 101

Facing Impossible Situations

Lesson Six

INTRODUCTION:

- I. At one time or another, we've all faced situations that seemed impossible – where there seemed to be no way out.
 - A. Depending on the depth of our faith, and the strength of our character, these kinds of challenges will either drive us toward God, or drive us away from God into feelings of bitter resentment, anger, hopelessness, and despair.
 1. However, no problem – no matter how impossible it may seem – can destroy us unless we let it.
 - a. The reason we lose hope in those seemingly impossible situations is because we focus more on the problem than we do on the One who can solve it.
 - b. 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. And so, the lesson this morning 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 failing marriage, or one that has already been shattered beyond repair by an unfaithful mate.
 - c. A child who has, for all practical purposes, left the faith.
 - d. A medical report that comes back containing the word "malignant."
 - e. Or hearing that a close relative (perhaps a parent, or a brother or sister) is not expected to live.
 - f. And the list goes on and on.

II. When we face these kinds of situations, we need to turn to the Scriptures for help.

A. And so, this morning as we continue our series "Biblical Psychology 101" we're going to do just that – we're going to turn to the Scriptures and see what God has to tell us about "Facing Impossible Situations."

1. 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.
2. The first two passages are found in Jeremiah chapter 32 (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 proclaimed 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 affirmed the words of Jeremiah by posing the question: *"IS anything too hard for me?"*

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

(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 (Insert your problem here) too hard for me?"

(b). The answer should be rather obvious, don't you think?

(c). Do you think the problem you're facing is too hard for the Lord to handle?

3. Now let's turn to the New Testament to consider the third passage – it's found in the 18th 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 to what we can do to solve our problems.

(2). Even the very best medical experts can only do so much.

(3). But, where man's power ends, God's power continues.

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

a. *"What is impossible with men is possible with God."*

BODY:

I. I want us to turn to a familiar story in the Gospel of John – a story we studied not long ago – but this time I want us to look at this event from a different perspective. 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 sent His disciples out in pairs to preach on their own.
 - b. According to Matthew chapter 10, they had gone to every village in the area preaching the gospel of the kingdom.
 - c. When they returned to report on everything that had happened Jesus could see they were all physically and emotionally exhausted.
3. So He arranged for them to 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.*
4. But, just as Jesus and His disciples began to unwind 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, the disciples saw what must have looked like a tidal wave of around 10,000 people coming to join them.
 - d. To make matters worse, it was dinner time (or supper time if you're from the south), and all these people were hungry.
6. So, here they were – in an isolated area looking into the faces of around 10,000 hungry people.
- a. Now, that's an impossible situation!
 - b. But that's exactly how Jesus wanted it!
7. As we move further into this story there's one thing I want you to keep in mind.
- a. The Lord knows how every situation will end even before it begins – and this was no exception.
 - b. Although the Lord knows the outcome of every impossible situation we face, He doesn't tell us.
 - c. Instead, He gives us time between the beginning and the end to learn some valuable lessons of our own.
- B. So, let's see what the Lord taught His disciples about "Facing Impossible Situations."

1. He began with Philip by giving him a little test.
 - 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. 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."*
 - c. Before we go any further, let's understand a few things about Philip.
 - (1). This is the same man who will later say to the Lord, *"Just show us the Father and we won't have any more questions."*
 - (2). Philip was a very pragmatic person – the kind of person who seems to have a calculator-kind-of-mind.
 - d. So Philip's response is exactly what we would expect.
 - (1). He looked at all the people, and then he looked at the balance in the check book and whipped out his calculator.

- (2). He quickly calculated that two hundred denarii (which is nearly a year's earnings for one man) would not be enough to buy even "*a little*" bread for the people.
 - e. Philip could easily see the size of the problem, but he had forgotten about the size of God!
2. The next disciple to take the test was Andrew.
- a. Unlike Philip, Andrew didn't wait to be called to take the exam, he volunteered an answer.
 - b. **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?"*
 - c. For a second, it looked as though Andrew might have discovered the solution to the problem.
 - (1). He found a young boy who brought along a lunch of five barley loaves and two small fish.
 - (2). And for a moment, it seemed that Andrew knew the Lord could do something with that small lunch and actually feed that massive crowd.
 - c. But, sadly, Andrew failed the test too.
 - (1). In the end, he sort of shrugged his shoulders and said, "*But what are they among so many.*"

- d. So, let's at least give Andrew credit for being the kind of person who tried to offer a solution to the problem.
 - e. Unfortunately, like so many of us, he eventually got discouraged when he faced what seemed 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 began to patiently teach them.
- 1. The first thing the Lord did was to do a little "crowd control."
 - 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 got each of the disciples personally involved in helping to 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.*
 - 3. To understand the full impact of what is happening, we need to understand something about the loaves and the fish.

- a. The five barley loaves are not large loaves of bread, but rather five small dollar-size, pancake-like tortillas.
 - b. And the two fish were not the trophy-size fish you would mount on your wall, but rather two small fish – probably pickled – fish that most fishermen today would use for bait.
 - c. Remember, this was lunch for a small boy!
4. Jesus took those small loaves and those tiny fish and pulled off the impossible.
- a. He then had the disciples distribute this food to all the people – thousands of them.
 - b. And each time they reached in the baskets to hand out barley loaves and fish, there were more barley loaves and fish.
5. 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 told his disciples to bring back all the leftovers.

(1). Did you notice something significant about the number of baskets? There were 12 baskets – the same number of disciples.

(2). Each disciple carried their own basket back up the hill – and each basket was filled with leftovers!

c. Try to picture Andrew and Philip!

(1). They probably couldn't get their eyes off all the leftover barley loaves in their baskets!

6. Philip and Andrew are just like many of us.

a. One was defeated by the mathematical and financial impossibilities.

b. And the other was defeated because he couldn't see any solution to the dilemma. He was overwhelmed by the sheer size of the problem

c. But both saw what Jesus could do with an impossible situation!

II. Now, let's make some personal application of all this by turning to one last example in the Scriptures. It's found in the ninth chapter of Mark.

A. This is the story when the disciples of Jesus faced an impossible situation of being powerless 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 to be no way out of his dilemma.
 - 1. He wasn't even sure Jesus could help. After all, the Lord's disciples couldn't do anything.
 - a. So he said to Jesus, *"If you can do anything..." (v. 22)*
 - b. "IF?" Are you serious? Do you really think it's a question of *"If you can do anything?"*
 - 2. And, did you catch what Jesus said in response? *"If you can believe!"*
 - a. It's as if Jesus was saying, "You really don't know Who you're talking to, do you?"
 - b. It's like He was saying, "I can do anything if you have faith enough to know I will only do what is in keeping with My will and My Father's will."
 - c. That's why Jesus replied, *"All things are possible to him who believes."*
- C. So, what does God say to us in situations like this?
 - 1. Does He say: "All things are possible to him who worries" or "all things are possible to him who tries to work it out by himself?"

- a. Not at all!
 2. Nor does He say, "All things will come to him who believes."
 3. During seemingly impossible situations the Lord simply says to us what He said to that man – *"All things are possible to him who believes!"*
- D. Sometimes our worst problem is we try to fix our own problems.
1. Look at it this way. Suppose you had an expensive Rolex watch like this one – which happens to retail for just over \$24,760 – and suppose it stopped running. Would you take a screwdriver, pry it open and try to repair it yourself?
 2. Certainly not! You would take it to an expert – someone who is an expert at repairing Rolex watches.
 3. In the same way, when we try to fix an impossible situation all by ourselves, it's like trying to repair our own Rolex - we end up making matters much worse.
 - a. Instead, we need to turn those situations over to the "Expert" who is qualified to deal with them.
 - b. Our God is an "Expert" at handling impossible situations. Nothing is too hard for Him.
 4. Never forget – *"All things are possible to him who believes!"*

CONCLUSION:

- I. I don't know what kind of "Impossible Situation" you might be facing, but I do know one thing.
 - A. Our God is a specialist at handling impossible situations.
 1. Our question to Him should never be, "If you can," but rather "If you will!"
 - a. The Lord has power to overcome any obstacle we encounter – no matter how large or impassable it may seem.
 - b. So, it's not a question of whether He has the power or the strength to help us.
 - c. Our question should be whether we're asking Him to help us achieve something that 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, but He may choose not to.
 - (1). That's the real obstacle we have to overcome – our inability to accept His will.
 - (2). The most difficult prayer for any of us to pray is, "Not my will, but Thyne be done."
 - B. So, you and I may not be facing an "Impossible Situation" after all.

1. Maybe we're asking the Lord to give us something that is not in keeping with His will.
 2. If that's the case, 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. Can you be thankful at the same time you let our requests be made known to God?
 - (1). Most of us are thankful after we get our prayer answered – not before.
 - c. 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?
 3. That's the kind of faith that will sustain us during even the most seemingly impossible situations.
- II. However, 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 trust in His power.

- B. Do you have faith in Jesus – the kind of faith that can only be demonstrated by faithful obedience?
 - 1. If you're not a Christian, you haven't even begun to demonstrate your faith in Christ.
 - a. But you can – right now, in fact.
 - b. You can come to Him in faith, repenting of your sins, and by being baptized into Him for the remission of all your past sins.
 - 2. And if you are a Christian, and yet have lost your faith along the way, and are in danger of turning back to the world, you can renew your faith in Christ.
 - a. Just come to Christ confessing what He already knows about you.
 - b. And let Jesus, your mediator, plead on your behalf to have your sins completely washed away once again by the blood He has already shed on the cross.