

## Training for the church (problem-solving)

(March 2012 revision of March 2004 original)

We serve Him in many ways and settings, wherever invited. Training imparts details about the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the Christian Life.

In Sikkim, a northeast India Himalayan state south of China, between Nepal and Bhutan, and north of Bangladesh, over 3,000 leaders have been trained in 3-4 day seminars since 1998. Friends here pray, and sometimes pay for food, lodging, attendees' local transportation, and local language resources to include Bibles, tracts, The Shepherd's Guide and message, sermon or training notes. \$15 still trains 1 leader in a 3-day seminar (because local churches are now providing something (nominal) for members to attend). Although some are illiterate and all are poor, faith there is pure, transparent and DYNAMIC. The Lord has added thousands and thousands of new believers since 1990. Many follow Christ because He heals illness, addictions, broken families, and frees from demonic oppression. How, now, to train so they will "know, grow and go?" As churches form, many problems surface because new believers from different backgrounds must learn to walk with Christ, and abandon former ways of settling disputes, and difficulties. Following seminars, children or grandchildren are tasked to read to illiterates, and ALL are encouraged to ask questions, discuss the Scriptures, and seek answers to their questions there. Thus, both literate and illiterate learn from the printed page.

A problem solving tool can be very helpful to those who have only known how to gossip about problems (is this YOUR experience?). One prayerful process He has had us share is:

### **RILCSAE the 7-part prayerful powerful problem-solving process**

Pray for on-going sensitivity

#### 1. **RECOGNIZE** THERE IS A PROBLEM

Pray for wisdom

Consider the following verses:

**Proverbs 18:13, 17** <sup>13</sup>He who answers before listening – that is his folly and his shame. and, <sup>17</sup>The first to present his case seems right, 'til another comes forward and questions him.

**Proverbs 26:17, 20, 22** <sup>17</sup> Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own. <sup>20</sup> Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down. <sup>22</sup>The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.

**Matthew 18:15-17** <sup>15</sup>“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. <sup>16</sup>But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ <sup>17</sup>If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

**1 Timothy 5:19-20** <sup>19</sup>Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup>Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

**1 Peter 4:8** <sup>8</sup>Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Pray again for wisdom

#### 2. **IDENTIFY**, or **DEFINE**, THE PROBLEM. What, exactly, is the major problem? There may be several problems, but what is the primary problem? Make a list all the problems associated with this matter.

Pray for insight

#### 3. **LIST** POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS (Make a list of every possible way each problem in this matter can be resolved, even if some of the ways don't appear wise or good to do.)

Pray for understanding

#### 4. **COMPARE** (evaluate) THE SOLUTIONS in your list. (If we do this, then what happens? If we do that, then what happens? If we sit and wait, what happens? If we do nothing, what happens? Conduct this sort of comparison thinking and talking, and write down each of the comparisons with their solutions. In all of this evaluation, be sure to ask “How will this solution honor the Name of the Lord?” You could even grade the solutions as to how positively or negatively they honor the Name of the Lord, for example: +10 to -10).

Pray for courage

#### 5. **SELECT** THE BEST SOLUTION (in light of the verses in 1. **RECOGNIZE**... above)

Pray for strength or endurance

6. **APPLY** SOLUTION WISELY and VIGOROUSLY

Pray for a continuing desire for God's resolution.

7. **EVALUATE** EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SOLUTION (after a little time, discuss what has been the result of the actions taken).

If there is need for improvement, in other words, if the problem has not been solved, return to step 1.

In 2 Corinthians 2:11 we read about forgiveness, with this great truth: *"... in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. (niv)*

Following is an actual problem-solving "hypothetical case" study:

"A church elder's wife was in the bazaar. While talking with a shop-owner, they saw a woman nearby. The shop-owner asked, 'Is that woman your new pastor's wife?' "

When she replied: "No," the shop-owner smiled and said, "Well, he was looking at her the last time he was in the market!"

Disturbed, the wife mentioned the conversation to her husband, at supper. Later, he asked other elders at their usual meeting: "Is something going on between pastor and one of our women?"

What should the elders do?

**Some discussion questions:**

1. Is there a problem? If so, what is it?
2. Read Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:19-20. Should the elder have done anything differently, considering these verses?
3. What problems can be caused by such a question at the elders' meeting?
4. If this had concerned regular members of the congregation, might this type of issue be handled differently? (*i.e.*, is special consideration given because of the leader's position?)
5. If YOU had been the elder, what would YOU have done?
6. Upon resolving this, what should the elders do next?
7. Could this become a witnessing opportunity to the bazaar shop-owner?

This hypothetical case is met with gales of laughter, raised eyebrows, knowing looks, and MANY suggested ideas about "the problem" and solutions. Later, in seminar evaluations, these leaders soberly praise the Lord for such a simple, helpful, tool to solve very real church problems.

What difficulties are in your church because of both intentional and thoughtless gossip?