



And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

**Isaiah 58:12**

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## Solving Problems with People

Each day, as we interact with others, our wants, desires, goals and needs come into conflict or harmony with them. Sometimes due to a conflict, situations arise between people that amount to more than some are able to bear or let go. For situations like these, the Lord directs us as to how we should handle the matter.

Proverbs 25:8-15 contains five important principles for problem resolution. It does not guarantee that by following these principles all problems with others will be resolved, but they will increase the likelihood of problem resolution and bring the blessing of peace instead of guilt by knowing that the problem was handled biblically.

### **Principle #1** - Go not forth hastily to strive...(vs. 8)

Verse eight gives us the first important principle, which is to act slowly. Go not forth hastily to strive is a great warning to those in the midst of a problem. Too often people address problems too quickly or unequipped and instead of solving the problem, they only intensify it. It would be best first to get all of the facts and make sure that a problem really exists. Only hearing one side of the story is just that: half of the story. Many great problems between people were created due to invalid accusations. The Bible warns us that there is little hope for those who are hasty in their words (Prov. 29:20). Make sure that you are acting and not reacting (Eph. 4:31). Another phase of acting slowly is to clearly define the problem. If you cannot correctly point out and explain the problem to yourself, you will definitely fail in communicating it to others.

### **Principle #2** - Debate thy cause with thy neighbor *himself*...(vs. 9-10)

When confronting people problems, it is important to remember the next principle: only deal with those who are already involved. The goal of problem solving is to deal with the problem and bring all involved back to a healthy relationship. If we go about as a talebearer and share the problem with others, we only intensify the problem and make it more difficult to bring resolution and restoration of the guilty involved as well as create additional problems to address. If you consider yourself a faithful believer who wants to aid others to spiritual victory, then you will heed the warning of Prov. 11:13: A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter. Matt. 18:15 instructs us that if we want to gain a brother, we are to discuss the matter with him alone. The believer who has love will bear all things (I Cor. 13:7). He bears all things by being silent. The Greek word used for “beareth” means “to put a roof over”. We truly are bearing all things when we keep the matter quiet and to ourselves.

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**Principle #3** – ...so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear...(vs. 11-13)

These verses clearly show us how to accomplish principle #3: confront for the purpose of reproof and restoration and not for retaliation or an attack. The phrase “fitly spoken” has a unique meaning. It comes from two words meaning “above” and “to revolve”. When confronting someone about their actions, many will go with the idea of wanting to say the right thing at the right time. Like most people, we could blast them about their wrong doing at the beginning of the conversation and do it in the name of “I just had to get it off of my chest”. However, the Lord wants us to look to him and speak words that are from above and at the right turning let the thoughts be known. Our words should be presented as if we were decorating a tree or helping a friend with an earring or piece of jewelry. If the one that we confront is yielded to the Lord, both parties will be blessed. The end result should be a refreshing of the soul. The context of the verse has to do with messengers and it applies to this situation because we are bringing a message of truth.

**Principle #4** - Whoso boasteth himself...

At first glance, this verse that is tucked in the middle of this passage seems to have nothing to offer for problem solving, but it gives us an important truth. It lets us know that when we are addressing a problem with another, the focus is on them and the problem and not ourselves. It is not about our feelings: even though they may have been hurt and are the motivating force behind the confrontation, and it is not about what has been done wrong to us. It is about confronting sin for the sake of restoring the sinner back into fellowship with God and ourselves. Countless times I have tried to help people who have been wronged and they could not get past themselves. For success in solving problems, keep focused on the problem.

**Principle #5** - By long forbearing is a prince persuaded...

This step—be patient—is probably the most important and the most over looked. It seems that we love when the Lord is patient and longsuffering with us (Num. 14:18; Psalm 86:15), but we are lax in reciprocating the same to others. He instructs us to be patient with all men (I Thess. 5:14; II Tim. 2:24) and also patient in our tribulation or affliction. It is good to reason that if through long forbearing a prince is persuaded, how much more it will take to persuade others.

There would be less trouble in our lives and in the church if people would heed the commandments of the Lord. The Lord promises to build those who obey his teaching and also to bless them. Matt. 7:24 likens him to a wise man who builds his house upon a rock and James 1:25 says that he will be blessed in his deed. It is never easy to act spiritual, but the Lord is our strength (Psalm 18:1-2) and our guide (Psalm 48:14; 73:24). Look to him and he will guide you (Psalm 25:9).