

December 2018

Frank W. Nelte

OUR PROBLEMS OFTEN HAVE SIMPLE ANSWERS

We live in a world that is both complex and also filled with problems. We have computers, and we have software to do countless things for us, from finding information on the internet to switching on appliances in our homes to sending spacecrafts into orbit. We can talk instantly to other people anywhere on the planet. We can watch live sporting events taking place in other countries.

And we also have wars and international conflicts and terrorist attacks. We have natural disasters that exact heavy tolls. There are disease epidemics and there is starvation; and there is worldwide water, air and soil pollution. There are many violent criminals in the world, with tens of thousands of people being murdered every year. **This world is plagued by problems** that for the most part we human beings have brought upon ourselves, and which **problems we are not able to resolve**, in spite of all our technological advances. Solutions to the world's problems somehow always seem to elude us.

We also have problems on the personal level: problems with other people, financial problems, marriage problems, health problems and job problems. Whole industries are aimed at helping us, for a fee, to resolve our problems: we have doctors and fitness trainers to resolve our health problems, we have lawyers to resolve our legal problems, and we have psychiatrists to resolve our mental and emotional problems.

Almost 20% of all adults in the USA have a mental illness or a significant mental problem in any given year ... and that involves in excess of 40 million people. Many will see a psychologist or a psychiatrist to seek help with their problems. We are familiar with the typical picture of a patient on a psychiatrist's couch once a week, for a year or more, in an effort to sort out the patient's problems. We feel a need to delve deeply into the patient's past, in order to seek solutions for his problems in the present.

It is often assumed that getting rid of mental problems must be a lengthy, drawn-out process. You couldn't possibly have a situation where you present your circumstances and your specific problems in 15-20 minutes to the psychologist/psychiatrist, and in the next 10 minutes the health professional then spells out your real problem, and presents to you the solution you need to implement, in order to eliminate your problem. All of that in just half an hour?

Why, nobody could possibly understand your problem in that short a time, and then offer you the correct solution, right? After all, in order to really understand your situation, they must understand what your childhood was like, and why you have done the things that you have done in your life, and the discrimination you were exposed to, the unfair treatment you have received, etc. Without such background information they are bound to misunderstand you and your problem, and therefore to misjudge you, right? **That's how many people seem to feel.**

When people let us down and don't fulfill their responsibilities, then they not uncommonly present us with lengthy explanations for their excuses. Before acknowledging responsibility, frequently they first want to set the stage and then explain the full context which resulted in them not doing what they should have done, or else in them doing something they should not have done. **Somehow the full context is supposed to be a mitigating factor** in their situation. And sometimes those things are indeed mitigating factors. At other times they are just convoluted excuses. This is something all of us have done at various times.

In our legal system, court cases can drag out for weeks and months and even years, before some kind of judgment is reached. And then in many cases the 12 jurors can't even agree on a unified verdict. Even in our Supreme Court the 9 justices fairly regularly don't reach unanimous verdicts for the cases that are brought to the Supreme Court. The issues are always assumed to be very complex, where the decision could go either way. And then in some cases one justice will write a lengthy "dissenting opinion" for the minority opinion of the Court.

It is all so complicated.

Now we, the people in God's Church, also have to deal with problems. Depending on the nature of our problems, sometimes we seek help with our problems from our pastor or from some other minister in the Church. In those situations it is not at all unusual for us to feel that our problems are also very complicated and involved. And sometimes that is indeed the case.

But there are also many other cases where the answers to our personal problems are very simple and straight-forward.

Don't misunderstand what I am saying. When I say that in many cases the answers to our problems are very simple, that does not mean that those answers are therefore also simple to implement, not at all.

Some simple answers may in fact be very difficult to implement. They may involve major challenges. But the degree of difficulty involved in implementing a correct answer to a problem doesn't make that correct answer more complicated or more difficult to understand.

So there are usually **two parts to sorting out our problems:**

First, we have to clearly understand what is the correct solution to our problems. Second, we have to evaluate what is required of us in order to implement the correct solution. Sometimes the implementation is very easy, and at other times the implementation may entail a major trial for us. But that (step 2) doesn't make the correct answer (step 1) more difficult to understand.

So sometimes the correct answers to our problems are easy to spell out, but difficult to implement. In those circumstances we are sometimes blinded by the difficulty involved in acting on the correct answer. Because of those difficulties, sometimes we may not recognize the simple answer, and therefore we may be looking in the wrong direction for answers to our problems.

Let's consider the biblical example of a man who had a major problem for which there was a very simple answer.

THE STORY OF NAAMAN

Let's look at the story of Naaman, who was the general of the Syrian army in the days of the Prophet Elisha. Naaman was a mighty man, but he also had one specific form of leprosy (2 Kings 5:1). He was a leper. (Comment: There are different types of leprosy. Today in our world there are more than 200,000 new cases of leprosy every year.)

To make a long story short, a slave girl told Naaman's wife that there was a prophet in Israel who could heal Naaman's leprosy (verse 3). When Naaman subsequently went to the king of Israel, Elisha then told the king of Israel to send Naaman to him (2 Kings 5:8). So Naaman then ended up coming to Elisha's house (verse 9).

So there was Naaman, the chief general of the Syrian army, with a contingent of his cavalry standing outside some undistinguished house, where an Israelite prophet lived. Being a dignitary, Naaman certainly expected the Israelite prophet to come out personally and meet him. But Elisha was not impressed with Naaman's high social status, and Elisha didn't even come out to speak to Naaman personally. Instead ...

And Elisha sent **a messenger** unto him, saying, **Go and wash in Jordan seven times**, and your flesh shall come again to you, and you shall be clean. (2 Kings 5:10)

So Elisha, who was inside the house, sent a messenger out of the house to speak to Naaman. Naaman recognized that Elisha wasn't even going to extend him the courtesy of speaking to him personally. **This was a put-down for the mighty general**, and he clearly recognized that. Furthermore, Elisha was not going to explain anything to Naaman, or to even try to reason with Naaman in some way. Instead Elisha gave Naaman **a very simple and direct instruction**:

"Wash seven times in the River Jordan, and your leprosy problem will be resolved."

Talk about a simple solution for a very complex problem!

In fact, this solution was so simple, that Naaman got upset and angry, and departed in a huff.

But **Naaman was wrath**, and went away, and said, Behold, **I thought, He will surely come out to me**, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. (2 Kings 5:11)

Naaman did exactly what most of us tend to do. Do you know what that is?

In his own mind **Naaman had decided in advance just how the problem should be resolved**. That's also what we tend to do when we have problems ... we picture how our problems should be resolved. That is fine when we ourselves are going to take action to resolve our own problems. But that is not fine when we approach God for help with our problems.

In Naaman's case the correct solution for his problem, the only possible solution for Naaman, wasn't something that would have occurred to Naaman in his wildest dreams. The only real solution for his leprosy was: **either you do exactly what this prophet of God is telling you to do, or your leprosy will stay with you to your dying day**. But Naaman had completely different ideas.

Naaman had in his mind "**the Hollywood version**" of how his leprosy should have been healed, dramatized with really impressive visuals. He expected the type of dramatic "show" that Satan's churches commonly put on with their rituals.

It is clear that Naaman was also quite miffed that Elisha hadn't actually come out to him. How could Elisha really understand Naaman's problem, when he hadn't even set eyes on Naaman?

Naaman's reaction here is fairly similar to some people today who become quite miffed at **a minister who is not interested in all the personal details that justify why they now have the problem that they have**. How can such a minister possibly have the correct solution to their problem? They need time to tell the minister the whole story, obviously their version of the story. And then, sometimes the minister doesn't even want to know their personal explanation?

With Elisha's seemingly rude response, Naaman went off fuming under his helmet.

Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? **So he turned and went away in a rage.** (2 Kings 5:12)

Clearly, Naaman did not like the solution God's prophet had given him. **That's like us sometimes not liking the solution God's ministers present to us.** But anyway, Naaman's servants in the most respectful ways calmed him down, and they reasoned with him.

And his servants came near, and spoke unto him, and said, My father, *if* the prophet had bid you *do some* great thing, would you not have done *it*? **how much rather then, when he says to you, Wash, and be clean?** (2 Kings 5:13)

The servants reasoned: the solution God's prophet offered you is so easy to do. What have you got to lose by doing what he told you to do?

The obvious answer here was: **you've got nothing whatsoever to lose** by carrying out the solution you were given by God's prophet. So Naaman relented and did what Elisha had told him to do. Naaman humbled himself.

Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: **and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.** (2 Kings 5:14)

What a simple solution to Naaman's very complex problem!

Now Naaman is astonished that his leprosy has been healed. And now he is no longer the pompous general looking down on this Israelite prophet. So now when he goes back to Elisha's house, Elisha actually comes out and speaks with Naaman directly. And now Naaman is extremely respectful and appreciative.

But the answer to Naaman's extremely complex problem (how and when had he become infected with leprosy, what type of leprosy did he actually have, etc.) had all along been quite simple: just carry out the simple solution God has presented to you through His prophet. **The solution was**, after all, **based on the premise that God is the One who heals us** of all our diseases (see Exodus 15:26).

Now the question arises: **why** had Elisha handled this situation in this way ... initially not even being willing to personally speak to Naaman? Elisha dealt with Naaman in this way because **Elisha discerned the man's real problem** ... and he discerned that problem without Naaman having to say a single word to Elisha.

Yes, Naaman had a real problem with leprosy. But that was only secondary. **The man's primary problem before God was his pride and his arrogance.** He was a victorious military leader, a conqueror. And he expected an insignificant people like the Israelites to acknowledge his powerful status; you know, kind of like Haman the Agagite expected the Jew Mordecai to "reverence" him (see Esther 3:2-5).

As long as anyone has pride, so long it will be impossible for that person to be healed by God. **God will never heal a proud person.** And neither will God help a proud person with any other problem.

Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished. (Proverbs 16:5)

It was because of Naaman's character attribute of pride that Elisha had to deal with Naaman in a way that would deflate his pride. It is self-evident that God will never heal someone who is "an abomination to

the LORD". Thus Naaman's only chance for being healed by God was for Naaman to be required to do something that would humble Naaman, something that would knock his pride out of him.

Naaman humbled himself and then God healed him.

ONE LESSON FOR US

So here is a lesson we very often overlook.

When we ourselves try to figure out the causes for our own problems, then sometimes we reach a correct conclusion. And sometimes we reach a completely wrong conclusion. That was the case with Naaman's own assessment of how his leprosy should have been healed. His own assessment was completely wrong.

Here is the point:

1) When we are able to figure out correctly the cause of our problems, then it means that we have in the process also humbled ourselves before God. If that process did not result in us **humbling ourselves before God**, then we haven't figured out the real cause of our problems.

2) But when we psycho-analyze our own situation and find that all kinds of circumstances worked against us, so that we now have the problems that we have, **then we have come up with the wrong solution!** We have in effect come up with the "Hollywood version" for the causes of our problems. And we have assuredly not humbled ourselves before the mighty hand of God.

The most important key for any of God's people to apply when we seek God's help with our problems is to humble ourselves before God. The first point in finding a solution to our problems is to put off all wrong emotions and wrong attitudes (pride, arrogance, vanity, rebelliousness, hard-heartedness, finding faults with other people, etc.), all the attitudes that absolutely block off from us any possibility of help from God.

That's one lesson we need to learn from Naaman.

So, the first correct key to solving our problems is always: to humble ourselves before God and to cast out all wrong emotions and attitudes.

Now is that a simple answer to our problems or not?

Yes, it is a simple answer!

For all those *things* has My hand made, and all those *things* have been, says the LORD: but **to this man will I look**, *even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word.* (Isaiah 66:2)

The three essential characteristics God mentions in this verse are:

1) "**Poor**" refers to a humble attitude, poor in spirit.

2) "**A contrite spirit**" refers to a repentant frame of mind.

3) "**Trembles at My word**" refers to a deep respect for everything God tells us in the Bible, not reading our own ideas into the Bible.

What does God mean with the expression "to this man will I look"? God means: this is the kind of man whose prayers I will answer; this is the kind of man whom I will help with his problems.

So what about us today?

In some regards it doesn't matter what the precise nature of our problem is, whether it is a health issue or a financial problem or a personal relationship problem, etc. With every problem that we have, **the very first thing we always need to do is**: examine our own attitude and frame of mind.

Do we still have the three attributes of Isaiah 66:2? Or are we proud ... self-righteous ... merciless ... resentful, etc.? Any of these wrong attitudes will cut us off from any help from God. And therefore any wrong attitudes on our part need to be dealt with first, before we even look at anything else.

One difficulty in this type of situation is that **we ourselves are usually the last ones to recognize these ungodly attitudes in ourselves**. Other people can recognize our pride and our self-righteousness long before we are willing to admit to these negative attributes. In those situations we also usually don't see the correct solutions to our problems.

It then requires someone else to point these things out to us. And in most of those cases **we are not particularly receptive when someone points out our wrong attitudes** as the major thing that needs to be changed, if we really want our problems to be resolved. But it always goes back to this basic point: unless we get rid of wrong attitudes (i.e. when wrong attitudes are involved) God is not going to help us with our problems.

To be quite clear: if Naaman had been on his own, he would not have been healed. His own mind had spontaneously rejected the correct solution to his problems. It required input from other people to get Naaman to even consider the correct solution. **How often have we rejected good advice because we were on our own?** It is extremely important that we receive outside input whenever we seek solutions for our major problems. Our minds need to consider different perspectives from our own, if we hope to find solutions to many of our problems. That's where seeking wise counsel comes into the picture.

Anyway, Isaiah's three essential characteristics needed to ensure God's help with all of our problems are restated in a slightly different way by the Prophet Micah.

MICAH CHAPTER 6

Let notice how this is presented in the Book of Micah.

Hear you, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and you strong foundations of the earth: for **the LORD has a controversy with his people**, and he will plead with Israel. (Micah 6:2)

When God has "a controversy" with people, then those people clearly have a major problem. The same would be true for us. If God had contention, strife or a dispute (meaning of the Hebrew word "riyb" in this verse) with you and with me, then we would likewise have a major problem on our hands. This is not the type of problem any of us would ever want to have, that God has a controversy with us.

The good news is that in this chapter God also provides "**the simple answer**" for how we may resolve such major disputes with God.

Now what is **the most common human response** to being confronted with a problem, when we have

the desire for a quick resolution? The most common human response to dealing with problems, if we are willing to acknowledge the problems, is to say:

"Okay, I'll pay for it. How much is it going to cost me?"

In our world ultimately almost all problems are brought down to monetary terms! That's what lawyers argue about most of the time -- money. How much will my client get, and how much of that will I get? **Money is viewed as the ultimate solution to all problems.** So if you have enough money, then most of the time you can pay your way out of your problems. This human approach to problem-solving is well known to God. So God addresses this carnal approach first.

Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, *and* bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with **burnt offerings**, with **calves** of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with **thousands of rams**, *or* with ten thousands of **rivers of oil**? shall I give **my firstborn** for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (Micah 6:6-7)

The whole sacrificial system was introduced by God in an attempt to provide a way to sort out problems between God and man.

The question then became: how much do I have to pay to absolve my guilt before God? And if money is not enough, how about a human sacrifice? These are the **worldly solutions** for our problems. But these solutions never really solve our problems. They miss the point because they don't recognize the real causes for our problems. Sacrifices never solve problems.

The correct answer is:

He hath showed you, O man, what *is* good; and what does the LORD require of you, but to **do justly**, and to **love mercy**, and to **walk humbly** with your God? (Micah 6:8)

We have problems because we don't "do justly" and we don't "love mercy" and we don't "walk humbly" before God. "To do justly" refers to **our actions** and our conduct. "To love mercy" and "to walk humbly" before God refer to **our attitudes** and how those attitudes translate into actions.

And once again, **this is a very simple answer to our problems.** There is nothing complicated about this answer. It doesn't matter whether we have valid excuses for our problems or not; **the answer is the same.**

The list of three points in Isaiah 66:2 and the list of three points in Micah 6:8 essentially say the same thing.

- 1) To be "poor in spirit" is the same as "walking humbly".
- 2) To have "a contrite spirit", a repentant frame of mind, entails "loving mercy", because mercy is what we received when we repented.
- 3) To "tremble at God's Word" results in "doing justly", because of the respect for God, and the fear of doing otherwise.

Let's consider each of the three points in Micah 6:8.

"To do justly" requires a knowledge and understanding of the laws of God. Before we can "do justly" we first of all have to know God's laws, and what those laws entail. We also have to know what God would

like us to do, in addition to the things we have to do.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we **keep his commandments**, and **do those things that are pleasing in his sight**. (1 John 3:22)

Doing the things that are pleasing in God's sight goes one step further than just keeping all of God's laws. If we do not **study** God's Word and if we do not **pray** to God on a regular basis, and also occasionally **fast** to draw closer to God, then we are not really doing the things that are pleasing in God's sight. And then we are not really "doing justly".

So "a simple question" to ask ourselves when we are searching for answers to our problems is: **do I maintain regular contact with God** through prayer, studying the Bible and occasional fasting? If we fall short in the answer to this question, then we also fall short in "doing justly"; and we will have discovered a part of the answer to our problems.

"**To love mercy**" is an attitude of mind. It is a willingness to forgive others who have wronged us in some way. It is an attitude of overlooking insults, and of not being easily provoked. It is a repentant frame of mind.

And forgive us our debts, **as we forgive** our debtors. (Matthew 6:12)

Does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is **not easily provoked**, thinks no evil; (1 Corinthians 13:5)

Great peace have they which love Your law: and **nothing shall offend them**. (Psalm 119:165)

One caution here is that we should not confuse an attitude of mercy with an attitude of condoning sins. **We are never to condone sins**, or to show acceptance of sins. That was a problem some of the people in Corinth had ... they condoned the commonly known sexual transgressions of one person in the congregation (see 1 Corinthians 5:1-2).

Here is something we need to understand:

While we are to be willing to forgive others who have wronged us, that forgiveness on our part does not really forgive their sins. Our action of forgiving them only opens the way for God to forgive us **our** sins. But their sins "against us" were in reality all along sins against God. And God will only forgive their sins against us, the sins we personally have already forgiven them, when those people genuinely repent. This is something King David understood very clearly.

Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when thou speak, *and* be clear when thou judge. (Psalm 51:4)

David wrote these words after he had committed adultery with Uriah's wife, and he then had Uriah killed to cover up the adultery. And ultimately those actions were sins against God. When David repented, then God forgave David's sins (see 2 Samuel 12:13). God's forgiveness in this situation was totally independent of whether Uriah will forgive David or not (i.e. in the second resurrection, if God chooses to let Uriah find out what happened before he died about 3000 years earlier. I personally doubt that this information will be revealed to Uriah ... or all of **our sins** will also have to be revealed to everyone else. Psalm 103:12 applies as much to King David as it applies to each one of us.)

The point for us is: we should forgive the people who transgress against us, so that God will likewise forgive our sins. But our forgiveness does not really remove their sins, if sins were involved in their

transgressions against us. Their sins will only be forgiven by God when they repent of their sins. The reverse situation is also true: God will forgive the sins of people who transgress against us when those people truly repent, **irrespective of whether we have forgiven them their trespasses against us or not.**

We don't really have the power to forgive sins, even when those sins are directed against us! Only God has the power to forgive sins!

The only thing that is achieved when we "forgive" other people their trespasses against us is that our conscience becomes free of holding grudges and harboring resentment, attitudes that, if they are not eliminated, can easily produce the seeds for developing bitterness. Forgiving other people their trespasses against us has a cleansing effect on our minds.

Forgiving others also has a very beneficial effect on the process when we seek to overcome our own problems. Overcoming our own problems involves removing a beam from our own eyes, while forgiving others their trespasses involves removing "motes" from their eyes (see Matthew 7:3-5). That is a helpful perspective for us to have in mind.

"To walk humbly with God" goes hand-in-hand with loving mercy. True humility goes a long way towards solving problems. True humility is an attitude that is teachable and willing to change. With true humility there is no problem that cannot be solved. As God stated it:

Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. **If you are willing and obedient,** you shall eat the good of the land: (Isaiah 1:18-19)

In these verses God says more or less the following:

"Okay, let's discuss this and sort it out. Though your problems are enormous, that can be sorted out, and they can all be removed. But they can **only** be removed if you are willing and obedient. With that attitude there is no problem that cannot be resolved."

Now the expression "willing and obedient" is a perfect description of a truly humble mind. And **without this attitude of real humility there is no problem that can be resolved.** It works both ways.

Let's also note that Micah said "to **walk** humbly". He didn't say "to **talk** humbly". True humility is identified much more accurately by our conduct, actions and behavior, than it is identified by our words. Both are required. True humility is evidenced by **the right speech plus the right actions** and right behavior. Humble speech on its own is of no value, just like faith without works is of no value (the principle of James 2:20).

Now some people sound extremely humble when you hear them speak. But their actions and their conduct present a totally different picture. We might say that such people "speak like sheep, but their actions are like wolves" (the principle of Matthew 7:15). We need to be on our guard so that we are not deceived by a counterfeit humility.

So whether we look at Isaiah 66:2 or whether we look at Micah 6:8, these points are always the first steps for solving all our problems. That is because these two verses summarize our "whole duty" towards God (see also Ecclesiastes 12:13). When this part of the equation is in order, then we are approaching our problems from a right foundation. And with that right foundation we can then focus on other points that may also be significant in our specific context.

GOD USES PROBLEMS

All problems have causes. **Some** of our problems have been caused by other people. In those cases we were the innocent victims. But **most** of our problems throughout our lives we ourselves have caused. In those cases we were the perpetrators and not the victims. We have caused those problems because we did not live our lives in accordance with the foundation of Isaiah 66:2 and Micah 6:8. We fell short.

That is true for all of us, including me and including you. We have all caused some of our own problems.

Now God uses problems. When we fall short and harbor wrong emotions and wrong attitudes, or we engage in wrong conduct, then we end up having problems. God's purpose for those problems is to force us to confront our wrong actions and our wrong attitudes, i.e. to deal with our wrong actions and our wrong attitudes, and to root those things out of our lives.

God's purpose for those problems is to help us to still attain unto salvation.

Let's notice something Moses said to the two-and-one-half tribes that settled east of the Jordan River. While this was addressed to specific tribes, the principle involved is timeless and it applies to all human beings.

But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD: **and be sure your sin will find you out.** (Numbers 32:23)

How do our sins "find us out"? **Our sins find us out by causing us problems!** The problems our sins bring upon us are in the self-caused category. They are the problems where we are not just innocent victims, but where we ourselves are the causes of the problems.

Problems we experience can have all kinds of causes, and they can have all kinds of solutions. But even when we feel that someone else is responsible for the problems we are experiencing, **it is always helpful** if we ask ourselves a series of basic questions. That series of questions will vary depending on the nature of the problems that are involved.

The following are helpful questions we might ask ourselves with any problem we might have. And they are all easy questions to ask.

- 1) Am I doing something, or have I done something, that caused this specific problem?
- 2) Do I harbor any feelings or attitudes that are contrary to Isaiah 66:2 and to Micah 6:8? Do I have any ungodly attributes and characteristics like pride, hatred, resentment, etc. **that impact on** my attitude towards the other people that are involved with my problem?
- 3) Have I let down in my regular contacts with God through prayer, Bible study and occasional fasting? Do I still have **daily contact** with God? Sadly, a very large number of people who attend the various churches of God today do not have daily contact with God.
- 4) Have I neglected to practice basic laws of health, neglect that led to, or perhaps contributed towards the health problems I now have?
- 5) Are my problems the result of selfish behavior on my part? Have I behaved in a self-willed way and ignored sound advice to not do whatever I might have done?

You get the idea? These are all questions directed at checking if there is a beam in our own eyes.

That's the approach God would want us to take, in first examining any and every problem we might experience.

Now I realize that some insecure souls will look at these questions and immediately conclude: it's really all my own fault. But that misses the point because that may not be correct.

We don't take the blame for other people's transgressions!

Jesus Christ is the only One who has done that, and who can do that. And Christ has paid the price "for other people's transgressions". But that's not something we can do, or should even try to do. God's standard is that "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son" (see Ezekiel 18:20).

So we need to honestly look at these questions. But that doesn't mean that we then cannot reach the objective conclusion (when appropriate): in this situation the fault lies with the other party, and I didn't actually do anything wrong. And **we should not be fearful about reaching this conclusion with a humble and teachable attitude**. There will be occasions when we have not done anything that might have caused the problem we experience. And we should be able to realistically and objectively reach that conclusion.

When that is the case, we might seek "a second opinion" from our pastor. Also keep in mind something we are told about Moses.

(Now **the man Moses was very meek, above all the men** which were upon the face of the earth.)
(Numbers 12:3)

From the biblical accounts it is quite clear that Moses was a very forceful man. Moses would most definitely not have qualified as "a meek man" in the eyes of the people who lived with him. They thought that he took too much upon himself, that he wanted all the glory. But then the world's standard for "meekness" is total garbage! The world's standard is a counterfeit!

It was the same with Jesus Christ. The Pharisees certainly did not think that Jesus Christ was "meek". Yet Jesus Christ very clearly said:

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; **for I am meek and lowly in heart**: and you shall find rest unto your souls. (Matthew 11:29)

That is a very powerful statement about Jesus Christ's meekness. And it also reveals the key criterion for establishing true meekness. That key criterion is not how we relate to other people, but **how we relate to God the Father**.

So the point is that in the eyes of God Moses was the meekest person alive at that time. **True meekness has to do with how we respond to Almighty God, not whether we speak in a soft voice or not**. Meek people can at the same time also be forceful people, like Moses was. But their attitude towards Almighty God in heaven is the determining criterion.

What this also tells us is this: Most of the people in our world that we think of as "meek" are in fact not meek at all! They are "not meek at all" because of their attitude towards the laws of God! Nobody whose mind has an "enmity against God" is in any way "meek", as far as God is concerned.

We need to understand that there are no unconverted "meek" people anywhere on earth. A mind that is still at enmity against God is not even remotely "meek". Outward appearances, like soft gentle speech

and a gentle way of conducting oneself, have nothing to do with real godly meekness.

So the point I wish to make is this:

When we are absolutely certain that a specific problem was caused by other people, and that we had no part in that cause, then we should not pretend that we are somehow also responsible for that problem. Moses, the meekest man alive at that time, assertively confronted the whole nation of Israel with the words "hear now you rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (see Numbers 20:10). This did not detract from Moses being meek before God.

There really is no conflict between being bold and being meek. A person's degree of meekness is decided **exclusively** by how that person responds to God in heaven. We are instructed to come "boldly" before God's throne of grace with our prayers for help (see Hebrews 4:16). So "being bold" and "being meek" are not mutually exclusive. These two states can co-exist. But that is not acceptable for the worldly standard for "meekness". And so this world falsely judges people who are "bold" as not being "meek".

So let's be sure that we never mistake "weakness" for "meekness".

And that's about all I wanted to address.

Now am I saying that all our problems have simple answers? No, that's not what I'm saying. There will undoubtedly be times when our problems are indeed quite complicated. But there will also be many times when simple answers will solve our problems. And it is when those answers are not to our liking, that then we might be inclined to look for more complicated answers.

Irrespective of the nature of our problems, we should always be willing to examine our own frame of mind by asking ourselves some basic questions. And there will assuredly be times when the answers to those basic questions will solve our problems. We always need to start off looking for simple answers to our problems before we assume that the answers have to be complex and convoluted.

When the answers to our problems become too complicated and too convoluted, it just opens up far too much space for us to justify ourselves, in those cases where we carry some or all of the blame for our problems. That is a major reason why the world seeks to always present complicated answers, to minimize the guilt and the responsibility of those who are really to blame for problems.

Many times the answers to our problems really are quite simple, just like the answer to Naaman's problem.

Frank W Nelte