

## Problems

By Dr. John C. Maxwell

In the comic strip, Peanuts, a hapless Charlie Brown occasionally would be stalked by ominous rainclouds. Although the rest of the sky would shine bright and blue, poor Chuck would be stuck under a dark cloud, getting doused by its showers. While his friends and neighbors enjoyed the beauty of the day, a drenched Charlie Brown would be a scowling onlooker.

The lingering raincloud seemed to suggest Charlie Brown's inability to break clear from his problems. A melancholy character, he was prone to fits of worry and self-doubt. He concocted problems where none existed and fretted about those which were real.

While we do not have to contend with perpetual drizzle like Charlie Brown, many of us live under the gloomy shadow of self-induced rainclouds. When life's twists and turns work against us, we retreat into a rotten attitude or heap blame on our surroundings. By doing so, we neglect to deal with our problems and only add to our misery.

### The Five Truths Leaders Understand about Problems

#### 1. They're unavoidable.

For the aspiring leader, problems may be the most faithful companions of all. The road to success is seldom paved smoothly, and is oftentimes under construction. Potholes and barricades abound. At every bend in the journey, a leader's vision must peer around obstacles and through formidable walls to foresee a positive future. Leaders who sidestep problems stunt their growth - they end up shallow and debilitated. The successful leader stares down problems and resourcefully addresses them.

#### 2. Perspective on the problem, rather than the problem itself, determines success or failure.

We see problems, not as they are, but as we are. That's why attitude plays such a crucial role in separating those who lead from those who follow. Alfred Armand Montapert said, "The majority see the obstacles; the few see the objectives; history records the successes of the latter, while oblivion is the reward of the former." Leaders look at problems from a healthy, self-confident vantage point.

##### A Wrong Perspective

Problems are unsolvable  
Problems are permanent  
Problems are not normal  
Problems make us bitter  
Problems control us  
Problems stop us

##### A Right Perspective

Problems are solvable  
Problems will pass  
Problems are natural  
Problems make us better  
Problems challenge us  
Problems stretch us

#### 3. There's a big difference between problem spotting and problem solving.

Anyone, even the fairly imperceptive, can identify problems, but few people have the initiative to tackle them. As novelist John Galsworthy observed, "Idealism increases in direct proportion to one's distance from the problem." As rule, don't voice complaint about a problem until you're 1) able to put forth a recommendation for solving it, and 2) willing to take an action to solve it.

#### **4. The size of the person is more important than the size of the problem.**

You can tell the caliber of a person by the amount of opposition it takes to discourage him or her. Joke writer Robert Orben says that he once saw an ad from an entertainer that read, "Lion tamer - wants tamer lion." Clearly, this performer wasn't looking for greatness but merely for something manageable. To lead at the highest level requires wrestling with problems seemingly beyond our ability to apprehend.

#### **5. Problems, responded to correctly, can propel us forward.**

Leaders are not discovered in the limelight; rather they are forged in the darkness under heat and pressure. Leaders gain respect on difficult terrain, after taking a few blows and being shaped by the problems they encounter. As a matter of fact, courage and valor go undetected until seen through the lens of adversity.

### **About**

John C. Maxwell is an internationally recognized leadership expert, speaker, and author who has sold over 16 million books. His organizations have trained more than 2 million leaders worldwide. Dr. Maxwell is the founder of EQUIP and INJOY Stewardship Services. Every year he speaks to Fortune 500 companies, international government leaders, and audiences as diverse as the United States Military Academy at West Point, the National Football League, and ambassadors at the United Nations. A *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Business Week* best-selling author, Maxwell was named the World's Top Leadership Guru by Leadershipgurus.net. He was also one of only 25 authors and artists named to Amazon.com's 10th Anniversary Hall of Fame. Three of his books, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, *Developing the Leader Within You*, and *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* have each sold over a million copies.

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