

God Helps with Solving Problems

Quarter 12 | Lesson 12 | Life Skills

1. **Connecting:** Play a game to develop problem-solving skills.
2. **Teaching:** Learn the importance of asking God for wisdom and practice solving problems (James 1:5; Proverbs 3:5–6).
3. **Responding:** Make a plan to solve real problems in the community.

SUPPLIES

- Bibles
- 5–10 small stones
- Supplies for the activity of your choice in the Teaching section (may include sticks, paper, and pencils)

Optional Supplies:

- Memory Verse Poster
- Pencils
- Student Pages

Before class, choose the problem-solving activities you will do with your students and collect the supplies you will need. See the section marked Optional in the Teaching section.

Teacher Devotion

*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!*
Romans 11:33

We are blessed to worship a wise God whose ways we cannot discover and whose judgment is always right. He is our helper in times of need, and He knows the direction our lives will go. We go to Him with our requests for comfort, healing, and guidance. We ask Him to meet our needs and heal our brokenness. We often ask Him to solve our problems, but we do not often praise Him for the rich gifts He has given us to solve problems with His help.

Do you have a problem that needs to be solved? Instead of asking God to solve it, ask Him to give you the wisdom to think of new solutions and the discernment to know what to do. Invite Him to do His work in you and through you. When your life is in the hands of the unsearchable God, He will transform your heart and mind to see new ways to use the riches He has given you. Praise Him for His goodness—and follow Him as you search for truth and solutions.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Play a game to develop problem-solving skills.

Greet the teens as they arrive. Secretly give some of them the small stones and tell them not to let others know that they have the stones.

When you are ready to begin the lesson, ask the whole class the following question.

- **What have we learned about problem-solving?**

Allow 4–5 teens to share their answers. Be sure they mention that God is a perfect problem solver, that creative thinking helps to solve problems, and that asking questions helps to solve problems. You may want to remind them of some of the other helpful information they have learned about thinking creatively and asking good questions.

Now we have a problem to solve. I secretly gave some of you a small item when you arrived. You will need to think creatively and ask questions to discover who has these secret items and what the secret items are. If you have 1 of the secret items, you will need to try to discover who else has the secret items. You will do this by asking questions and thinking creatively. When I say to begin, you may walk around and ask each other questions and try to solve this problem. Any person who is asked a question must answer truthfully. After a few minutes, I will ask if anyone knows what the secret items are and who has them.

Give the teens 3–4 minutes to do this activity. Then allow 2–3 teens to share their guesses. After a few students have shared their guesses, tell the class what the secret items were and who had them. Then gather the class for discussion.

- **Which of the problem-solving skills helped you to solve this problem?**
- **What other problem-solving skills did you use to figure out who had the secret items?**
- **Are there other things that could have helped you to solve the problem? If so, what?**

You are all becoming great problems solvers, and I believe that you can use your skills to solve some important problems. But what do you think you should do when you face a problem you cannot solve? Let's talk more about what we can do when we need help solving problems.

2. Teaching: Learn the importance of asking God for wisdom and practice solving problems (James 1:5; Proverbs 3:5–6).

As we use our intelligence and creative thinking to solve problems, it is always important to remember that our human understanding is limited. Though we can use our brains to solve problems and help ourselves and others, we do not have enough wisdom to solve every problem. Many problems require us to ask for help.

Allow 2–3 teens to share their answers to each of these questions.

- **What kinds of problems do you think you might need help solving?**
- **Who are some people you can ask for help with solving problems?**
- **What characteristics do these people have that would make them helpful with solving problems?**

Here are some questions you can ask yourself as you decide who may be able to help you to solve problems.

- Is the person trustworthy?
- Is the person an expert or does she have information about the situation or the problem that you do not have?
- Is the person objective? Can he help to solve the problem without becoming too influenced by his own opinions or by taking sides?
- Is the person interested in helping you to solve the problem?

Teacher Tip: Asking for help may be difficult for teens who have experienced trauma. They may feel it makes them too vulnerable, or they may be too willing to ask for help and do not think about relying on their own abilities to solve their problems. Help them to understand that they can ask for help from people they trust. Remind them that they can always ask God for help. His wisdom helps in any situation.

There are many people in our community who can help with solving problems. We can ask those we trust for advice, such as family members, friends, and church leaders. We can ask experts who know more about the problems we need to solve, such as asking a doctor for advice about a medical problem. We can ask people who are wise and give good advice. We can also ask others who are facing similar problems. However, the very best source of wisdom in any situation is God, and He will give us wisdom when we ask for it. Listen to what the Bible tells us about this.

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

James 1:5

- What does this verse teach us about God and His wisdom?

God gives wisdom generously to all who ask. He does so without finding fault, meaning that He does not judge those who ask Him for wisdom.

God promises to give us wisdom if we ask Him, and that is an important reason to ask for His help when we are solving problems. Another reason to ask for God's help is that He has told us that we should not rely completely on our human understanding. Listen to what the Bible teaches us about this:

If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5–6

- Why do you think this verse teaches us that we should not “lean on our own understanding?”

Allow 2–3 teens to share their ideas.

It is important to use the wisdom God has given us to solve problems. But we should never place our own understanding above God's. God's wisdom is greater than our own, so His ways will always be better.

Let's use everything we have learned to solve some problems.

The remaining part of the Teaching section gives the students opportunities to practice problem solving using the skills they have learned. Choose the activities you feel are best for your teens and do as many as you have time to complete. Leave about 15 minutes for the Responding section at the end of the lesson.

Divide the teens into groups of 4–5 to do these activities.

It is important that some of the teens are able to successfully solve a problem before you move on to the next one. This helps them to learn perseverance and resilience and helps them to learn to be hopeful even when faced with a difficult problem. So allow as much time as you need for each activity. Then allow 2–3 groups to share their answers with the whole class before you choose another problem to solve.

Teacher Tip: Some of your teens may have excellent problem-solving skills. If you notice that 1 of the groups has a few strong problem solvers, rearrange the groups so that each group has at least 1 student who can guide the others in the problem-solving process.

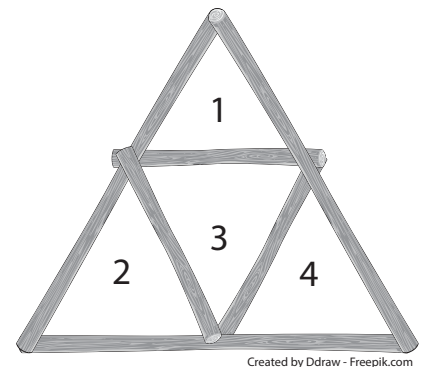
Problem 1: Give each group 6 sticks. All the sticks should be about the same length. Share the following instructions.

Work together as a team to use the 6 sticks I gave you to create 4 triangles of equal size. Remember to think creatively and ask questions!

Allow the teens to begin to work on the problem. If they are struggling to think of a way to solve the problem, suggest that they think about answers to the following question:

- **Are there ways to make to use the same sticks to make more than 1 triangle? If so, how?**

The answer to this problem is to create a pyramid, as shown here. This kind of problem helps teens to realize that the easiest way to do something is not always the best way!



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Problem 2: There are no supplies necessary for this activity, but it might be helpful for each group to have a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Share the following instructions:

I will give you 5 numbers. Work with your group to create a math problem that uses all of the numbers and is mathematically correct. You may add, subtract, multiply, or divide to make the math problem work. The numbers are 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Remember to think creatively and ask questions!

If the groups have difficulty thinking of possible solutions, suggest that they combine numbers to make new numbers. For example, 2 and 3 together are 23. They can also use different mathematical operations in 1 equation.

There are multiple answers to this problem. This helps teens to understand that many problems have more than 1 correct answer!

Problem 3: No supplies are needed for this activity. Read the following situation aloud. Then allow the teens to discuss the situation with their groups.

Situation: You have 3 boxes of fruit. The first is labelled "Bananas." The second is labelled "Pineapple." The third is labelled "Bananas and Pineapple." You know that all of the labels are incorrect, and you need to label them all correctly. You may look inside of only 1 box to decide how to correctly label the boxes. Which box will you choose?

The solution to this problem is to look into the box labelled “Bananas and Pineapples.” If you find a banana, you will know it is the box that should be labelled “Bananas” because it has a banana in it. Then you will change the label on the “Bananas” box to “Pineapples” because you will know that it cannot contain only bananas and it is labelled incorrectly. You will change the label on the last box to “Bananas and Pineapples” because it is the only option left.

If you find a pineapple, you would follow the same process, substituting “Pineapple” for “Banana.”

This kind of problem helps teens to understand that sometimes problems need to be solved in multiple steps!

Problem 4: You will need a long rope, tape, or some other item you can use to draw a boundary on the floor or ground. You will also need a large, cleared area to do the activity.

Draw a boundary that is large enough for the whole class to stand in. They should have enough room to stand, but they should be standing close together. Have them all stand in the space, and give the following instructions:

Imagine this space is a boat, and it is sinking. You must stay in the part of the boat that is above the water. However, as the boat sinks, that space will get smaller and smaller.

Draw a new, smaller boundary that forces the teens to stand closer together.

As the boat sinks, you will need to use your problem-solving skills to make sure everyone can stay in the boat. Remember to think creatively and ask questions!

Continue to make the “boat” smaller and smaller until the teens can no longer remain in it. As the space gets smaller, encourage them to think creatively and to think about different ways to solve the problem, such as standing on 1 foot, standing on each other’s feet, or sitting on each other’s shoulders.

The problem does not have a correct answer, but it does encourage the teens to continue to think of new ways to solve the problem. This kind of problem helps the teens to understand that sometimes problems require new solutions over time. It also helps them to realize that it is helpful to try many different solutions when solving a problem.

Problem 5: No supplies are needed for this activity.

Read the following situation aloud. Then allow the teens to discuss the situation with their groups.

Situation: Your friend’s mother lost her job, and her family has been without income for nearly a month. Your friend’s family ran out of food yesterday, and she told you that her little sister cried all evening because of her hunger. When your friend went out early in the morning to look for a job, she passed by a market stall. It was filled with food, but the shopkeeper was not there. She took a bunch of bananas and some bread and went home to share them with her mother and sister. Your friend is concerned about what she has done, and she has asked you for advice. What advice would you give to your friend?

Teacher Tip: Make sure the teens understand that it is important to ask for help in difficult situations. They should always carefully and prayerfully offer advice and solutions to others. Giving unwise advice that has not been carefully considered and prayed about may cause harm to others or to their reputations. Remind them to ask God for wisdom and discernment in difficult situations.

Have the teens find partners. Give the pairs about 5 minutes to decide what advice to give to the friend. Then allow 3–4 teens to share their advice with the whole class. If the students have trouble thinking of ways to solve the problem, suggest the following questions.

- What are the important questions to think about when giving your friend advice?
- What are some creative ways you can think to help your friend solve her problem?
- Whom could you ask for help to solve this problem?
- Would it be important to ask God for help solving a problem like this one? Why or why not?

After a few teens have shared their advice for the friend, ask the whole class the following questions. Allow 2–3 teens to share their answers for each question.

- Which advice do you think was best? Why?
- Are there other things to consider or other ideas that could help us to give better advice?

There is no correct answer for this problem, but all of the teens' solutions should show that they have thought about the best interests of the friend and what is right according to the Bible. This helps the teens to realize that they can use problem-solving skills to help them to solve their everyday problems!

After you have finished the chosen problem-solving activities, have the teens sit in their usual places for discussion.

You used your creativity and problem-solving skills to solve these problems, and you came up with some great solutions. You can use these skills to help yourself and to help others. You also have the opportunity to positively influence the opinions of others through the things you say and do and the ways you solve problems. When you do this, you can bring honour to God.

3. Responding: Make a plan to solve real problems in the community.

We have many wonderful opportunities to use our intelligence to solve problems. The Bible tells us that we should help and serve others, and solving problems is a good way to do that. But we should never consider human understanding more important than God's wisdom. When we do, we may make poor decisions or solve problems in ways that hurt others instead of helping them. The Bible tells us never to be overconfident about human ideas. Listen to this verse:

"Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 9:23–24

- What does this verse teach us about human thinking?

Allow 2–3 teens to share their answers.

Our brains are amazing gifts from God, and we should use them well. But we should never forget that God gave us our amazing brains, and we should always use them to serve Him and grow closer to Him. We should always use our creative thinking and problem-solving skills for God's purposes.

One of those purposes may be serving others. Let's think about how we can use our skills to solve problems at our church or in our community.

- **What problems do we have in our church and our community?**
- **What possible solutions can we think of?**
- **How can we use those solutions to solve the problem?**

Guide the teens in solving a real problem in your church or community. Encourage them to think creatively, ask questions, and ask for help. If possible, make a plan to implement your solution and try to solve the problem. As they work on solving the problem, remind them to ask God for wisdom and guidance to help them in the process.

Give the teens up to 10 minutes to do this.

Optional: If you are using the Student Pages, the teens can do this activity on their pages.

Then close with a blessing based on Proverbs 3:5–6:

Blessing: May you trust in the Lord with all your heart, and may your life reflect His understanding. May you honour Him in all you do, and may you use your creativity and intelligence to serve Him.

Family Connection: Encourage the teens to ask their family members, “What is the most important thing a person can learn?” They can then share that human intelligence is important, but when we ask God for wisdom, we can serve others by solving problems and bring glory to God.

Lead the students in singing this quarter’s song, if possible. “Mighty God” by Elevation Worship:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAhkYoWYxAY>