

Chapter 12:

Rooting Out Evil and Fixing Our World

We observe many people already acting to fix their world in some way, whether or not they know that God blessed them with authority and directed them to subdue their world, and whether or not they have confidence that their work will do any good. God and the Bible encourage and support such efforts, and we too encourage, and possibly support them.

Seeing the needs – so much is broken ...
accepting responsibility – so much needs to be done ...
receiving direction – from our great and wise God ...
we go forward.

What could we fix?

If we are responsible and can be blamed for a situation, then we must have the authority and ability to fix it. So we ask, “What is broken?” “What types of problems are we responsible to fix, and what might we do to fix them?”

Some examples from the Bible:

- ♦ Do the right thing: From God, Cain knew the right thing to do, before and after he offered an unacceptable sacrifice. Cain’s ensuing actions were bad; Cain worsened his problem and his life (Genesis 4).
- ♦ Be selfless: When Abram and his nephew Lot prospered, their life together became cramped. Abram was extremely generous with Lot, and God made even more promises to the father of faith (Genesis 13).
- ♦ Trust God ... Don’t fight: Abraham’s son Isaac dug two wells, but local herdsmen claimed them. He responded by moving further and digging a third well. It was uncontested and he praised God. God then confirmed to Isaac his place in the promises that He had made to the descendants of his father (Genesis 26).
- ♦ Humility helps: Jacob ‘took’ from his older twin, Esau, both the birthright and the blessing due the firstborn. Esau wanted revenge, but when they met 20 years later, Jacob was humble and Esau had plenty – all was well (Genesis 25,27,28,31,32).
- ♦ Do the right thing – even if it seems to create personal hardship: While doing well, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and put into prison

by Potiphar. Yet, continuing to grow in being his best, he was suddenly and unexpectedly exalted to be 2nd in command over Egypt (Genesis 37,39-41).

- ♦ Know God's way: A 40-year old Moses had the right goal, but the wrong method. He fled far into Sinai when his murder of an oppressive, Egyptian taskmaster did not lead to Israel's deliverance out of Egypt (Exodus 2).
- ♦ Believe God – not circumstances: David cared for the sheep, while the rest of the family sacrificed with Samuel. He delivered food to his brothers in the army, and was reprimanded for asking why Goliath was allowed to defame Israel. David trusted God and ignored objections; David was the one to defeat Goliath and to be anointed by Samuel (I Samuel 16,17).
- ♦ Trust God ... Don't compromise: Daniel, a young trainee in Babylon, was required to eat a 'defiling' diet. He asked for a test period to eat only 'pure' foods, after which he and three friends received an exemption (Daniel 1).
- ♦ God's work – God's way: While working for King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah had a concern, saw a problem, saw a solution, and waited for God's direction. When God saw that he was ready, the king was also ready. Nehemiah led in rebuilding the entire wall and gates of Jerusalem – in 52 days (Nehemiah 1,2,6). Stunning!
- ♦ Trust God ... Be bold: Queen Esther refused to play it safe in the palace. After days of prayer and fasting, she approached the king and changed the course of a kingdom (Esther 2-8).
- ♦ Trust God for the Impossible: When Gabriel announced to Mary that Jesus had been conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit, she believed the impossible word, endured the shame of her impossible pregnancy, and gave birth to Jesus (Luke 1).
- ♦ Trust God – No fear: Jesus faced serious opposition during his public ministry. Whether an intent to push him off a cliff (Luke 4), or to stone him (John 8,10), Jesus faced them being "meek and humble in heart" (Matthew 11:29); Jesus was not harmed until God made him sin for us.
- ♦ Trust God – Do the right thing: Onesimus, a runaway slave, met Paul and believed. Paul then sent him back, with a letter telling his believing master, Philemon, also to do the right thing (Philemon 1).

This is a small sampling of problems faced and either fixed or worsened by people in the Bible. Two in this list improperly addressed the problem they faced: Cain, by rebelling and whining, and Moses by killing and fleeing – four of the many counter-productive ways to deal with life's challenges. Fortunately, many people throughout history have fixed, at least in part, the problems they faced – with trust in God, with meekness and humility, with diligence and effort, with courage and faith, and without blame or revenge.

The Bible, always honest and true, usually depicts its characters as both good and bad examples. We easily relate to this, and learn from their experiences. When we face our own challenges and encounter our own problems, we follow God's direction and go forward with God's wisdom. We walk by faith, step by step, and do not waver. With an ever increasing impact, we fix more than we thought possible.

As we address the needs in our world, like Nehemiah, we humbly listen to our God, Who prepares the way and tunes hearts. We trust Him. God goes before us in many ways – seen and unseen. He guides clearly, gives wisdom, and provides sufficiently, so we follow Him. With God, the objective is always good and the process is always truth-based; following God we know that we are seeking the right objective in the right way.

And we progress. We will see one matter resolved – which will bless our lives and world – and then another. As Daniel went from a 'pure' diet to an effective, executive position, we are encouraged to hear God's further direction, both general and specific, and to move ahead with Him to fix another problem, and then another ... His Word lightens both the next step and the path ahead.

Remembering the big picture, we understand that our life and world is impacted by much that is outside our control ... but God knows, and like Joseph, we trust Him and do not sulk; we do our best in undeserved difficulty. God knows what He has been doing for His purposes, and how they have progressed throughout the ages. So we trust Him and proceed, and expect our lives to be impacted also by some of the good that God has been working ... and continues to work.

We will not be able to meet some needs directly. Unlike with Esther, most of us do not have direct access to authorities over 'big institutions' like the government or some businesses, which impact large parts of society or culture. When we notice things that are not right, and sense an urgency ... we pray. We see that correction is needed, and talk to God about it. We seek Him to know how He is leading us. God may guide us to people, to resources, or to an effort we can join. And we pray. As God works in like-minded hearts, we become ready to work with others, even with some who may not know Him; we go forward to fix or to correct an evil, and then another ... to make our world better.

Facing and Opposing Evil

Often, to fix what is broken, we will face evil ... but we do not fear it, or run from it, or react recklessly against it. Powerful evil can break into – and break – our world, so we pause to receive God's perspective. As we notice the evil, or potential evil, that could mess up part of our world, we act in ways to eliminate or to reduce some sources of that evil ... for which we must have wisdom from God.

As God's servants, we relate to Him to see more of what He sees, which sometimes is an evil that we should confront. Against that evil we take our stand, at least individually, and oppose it as directed. The clear principle described in Chapter 11 of Book 1 is that God fights the evildoers. We, however, love our enemies, and bless and do good to those cursing and hating us. As God leads, we pray for evildoers to repent – not to oppose God or His people.

Opposing evil is a big job. As God leads, some possible activities are:

1. We start where we are.
2. We establish our impact with agreement.
3. We shine the light and expose evil.
4. We intercede against evil.

1. We start where we are.

Where evil has invaded our personal or home lives, we have authority. Sometimes the curse of evil changes to blessing when wrong choices and habits change to right ones. This may involve reconciled relationships. Again, God's guidance is crucial for us to know what to face and how to fix it.

In I Samuel 1 and 2, before Israel had a king, Hannah had difficulties at home. She was one of the two wives of Elkanah – there was allowance for this in that early culture of Israel. Hannah was infertile, and her situation was worsened by the other wife, who bore children and often belittled Hannah as an inferior woman and wife. (Did Hannah need to forgive?)

Elkanah's expressions of love did not help Hannah, so she pleaded with God ... even in the temple the priest at first misjudged her passion, but then blessed her. God remembered and visited Hannah; she bore three sons and two daughters. She had committed her firstborn, Samuel, to the Lord.

As with Hannah, we need the Almighty God to remember us where we are, and to visit us with His loving care and supply. We can and we will fix the world close to us.

2. We establish our impact with agreement.

It is step by step with God. Sometimes we will see things outside our world that challenge parts of our world ... and need fixing. We seek God for what we can do to help push that evil back. God will direct us to action. (Evil in any of its manifestations should be on the defense ... and retreating as we go forward with God.)

As we face evil outside our direct authority, we will need wisdom ... first from God. We certainly pray against that evil we see, as in #4 below, and we look for help, including resources or people to whom God directs us. Maybe some have direct authority over those areas.

We need agreement with all who join together in opposition to evil. Whether or not our task is simple to see, we hope to have the same objectives, the same path to the goal, and even agreement on the resources and people needed as we proceed. Standing in the way of agreement are strife, pride, stubbornness, bitterness, envy, selfishness, etc. Fewer people agreeing are better than many people working together, but not agreeing. The group will know if it moves forward with peace, trust, mercy, pure motives, etc. Often, we narrow our focus to oppose efforts that are clearly anti-God (abortion ...). Being united, we do the right thing in the right way to oppose evil and its manifestations.

Queen Esther is a good example. When her uncle, Mordecai, told her of an evil (Haman's plot) that would put the very existence of her people at risk, she hesitated ... if she did not have the King's favor, her position and influence – maybe also her life – would be lost. When Mordecai convinced her not to be silent, Esther gathered her friends for prayer and fasting, and asked Mordecai to do the same. She needed wisdom, courage, and favor to intercede for her people, and against the evil Haman. The evil intentions were clear and the need was urgent, both of which helped all to agree. They spent three days in fasting concerning this threat; the result: this growing evil was defeated dramatically, and over time, quite deeply rooted out of an entire kingdom.

We pray together, sometimes first to attain agreement, but eventually, as with Esther, we pray for safety and success against the evil that we face. When Esther and 'the team' faced and defeated evil, it significantly affected a large empire with its people and subject lands. Few evils that we face will impact that much of the world, but God is great, and He hates evil too. He will hear and act for us, especially when we trust Him in agreement.

3. We shine the light and expose evil.

This means we have the light ... the light of truth, the light of goodness, the light of integrity, and more. It is easy to see what happens here. Lies are ugly, and so are corruption, collusion, and cheating. When God directs us to shine our lights, it sends all evil-doers scurrying for hiding places. These evils look like they have great authority and support ... but they are afraid of the light.

It often seems that they have resources to make the 'light-shiners' pay, but truth and goodness and integrity win. Not only this, but we have the real authority. We minimize casualties when we follow God and do battle in His armor. Also, we have God's support ... we have no reason to fear retaliation.

The Bible has some negative examples ... retaliation against 'light-shiners'. II Chronicles 24-26 has the account of three successive 'good' kings of Judah, who were warned about departing from God later in their reigns. Each king

refused the advice, and one had the prophet killed. Jehoiakim, a bad king who reigned when Babylon was conquering Judah, personally killed a prophet (Jeremiah 26). Sadly, in II Chronicles 16, near the end of his reign, the good king Asa imprisoned the prophet Hanani, but happily, Asa's son, King Jehoshaphat, accepted a reprimand spoken by Jehu, Hanani's son, and King Jehoshaphat then strengthened his commitment to God (II Chronicles 19).

Other positive examples in the Bible include, the huge city of Nineveh, which repented before God when Jonah only prophesied its doom – no more and no less than God told Him (Jonah 3). Also, in Acts 17, God's enemies complained that God's servants had *"turned the world upside down."*

The light always threatens the darkness of evil, and some of God's servants have dispelled it, without knowing about the authority delegated in Genesis 1. Now we know that the 'might' of evil has no direct authority; now we are more confident in our God than in evil, so we determine to shine the light where we are. Some may be employed in a place of entrenched evil – e.g. in government or in a large business – and need God's clear knowledge and wisdom and direction on how to shine the light ... reckless acts are not good.

As God directs, we also expose evil by telling the truth, or challenge it by living in integrity. We also need courage and protection. Our circumstances may allow access and opportunity to clearly document the evil for all to see. Our light-shining could threaten – uncovering concealed agendas or algorithms, unmasking subversive programs or propagandas – so we need God at every point. Exposing darkness is not personal ... we shine the light at God's direction ... He knows best. If, at God's direction, we all shined the light where we are, how much evil in our world would run and hide?

4. We intercede against evil.

God not only fights evil, but He also should be the one to fight evildoers. When we encounter evil, our duty is to love and to bless the flesh and blood people who are acting evil. We want them to see the goodness of our God which leads to repentance. We do what we can as God leads, but since God fights them, we do not give in to evil in any form. David begins Psalm 35:1-3, by pleading with God to draw out His spear in front of his persecutors and fight for him, to take hold of shield and buckler, to stand and defend him, and to speak encouragement to his soul. God can handle the fighting.

Clearing evil out of our world begins where we are. We see evil in the light of the Bigness of our great God. We also notice in the Bible how 'mercilessly' our good and gracious God can and does deal with unrepentant evil. He will be especially engaged against the evil that is determined to oppose His people and to oppress

the helpless. So we pray in faith. The Psalms help with many truths showing that God deals with unrepentant evildoers as only He can. We believe and sing and pray these truths.

- ♦ God, in **Psalm 2**, laughs at the futility of nations and kings that oppose Him. Being angry and displeased with them, He makes their situation miserable, and sends His Son to break them and to dash them in pieces.
- ♦ The Psalmist does not fear multitudes speaking against him in **Psalm 3** because he knows that God exalts him. He also calls upon God to break the cheek and the teeth of the ungodly, but trusts God to deliver and to bless His people.
- ♦ In **Psalm 7**, God judges the righteous, but God is always angry with the wicked one and, if he does not repent, God will cause the wicked to fall into the very trap he sets, and to be struck by the very evil intended for others. Amen!
- ♦ While God is a refuge for the oppressed in **Psalm 9**, He turns their enemies back; He rebukes the ungodly; He destroys the wicked; He causes them to fall into the pit they dig – the very trap they set for the oppressed, catches them.
- ♦ **Psalm 10** closes by saying that God's actions for the oppressed and against the oppressors are designed so that no human on earth ever oppresses again.
- ♦ In **Psalm 11**, the Lord judges the righteous, but hates the wicked and the violent. Their portion from God includes snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest.
- ♦ In **Psalm 18**, we are courageous, knowing that God helps: I pursued ... I overtook ... I wounded my enemies. God strengthened me ... subdued my enemies under me ... gave me their necks. There was none to save them.
- ♦ In **Psalm 34**, the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off any memory of them. The righteous are entirely delivered, but evil itself slays the wicked, and those who hate the righteous shall be desolate. Amen!
- ♦ **Psalm 35** is prolific here. Evildoers devise harm toward those who are at peace; they rejoice when the good have trouble; they repay with evil, even for the good they receive; they speak falsely against the righteous and seek their soul. But the Psalmist calls upon God to plead his cause, to defend him with shield, to fight against those fighting him, to send angels before and behind those fighting him: they can neither advance nor retreat; to throw them into shame, confusion, and dishonor, and to cause them to fall into the very destruction that they plan for others. Again, their evil plan catches themselves.
- ♦ **Psalm 37** brings much together. God's servants are not to fret or worry because of evildoers and their apparent or temporary success. Rest in the Lord and wait for Him with patience and meekness (as Jesus did, as Joseph and David also did), without anger or wrath. Evildoers shall be cut off; the wicked shall be removed from their place; the Lord will break the arms of those who aim weapons at the upright. Evil-doers are doomed.