

Storytellers Dick Bergman, Doris Metzger, and Janet Stahl. Read also Colossians 1:12-23. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

What do you do when you have a dilemma? Where do you turn when you have a problem? I suppose it depends on the problem. A problem with your hair is an easy fix, but a problem with your mother-in-law is a different story.

Where would we turn as a church if we discovered a problem? What if it was a collective problem in the community? What if it was a national concern? Where would we turn?

It's not always an easy answer. But we have a lot of places to turn. I googled, "Where do you turn if you have a problem?" I got 2,220,000 results—in thirty-seven seconds.

See, it's not that hard to find a solution!

Israel had a problem. It was Samuel's sons. He had appointed them judges. But typically, judgeship was not hereditary and they just did not have the knack. So hear the story of Israel's demand for a king: (If you are reading this, read 1 Sam 8)

This story is about a very special and unique group of people. Out of all the people groups of the world, God decided to establish this special, unique people who would be His own. It began with Abraham, one man who believed God, and out of his family grew this nation.

It would be through the channel of these people that God would reach out to the rest of the world and bless the world.

It would be through the channel of these people that God, through Jesus Christ, would deal with what was wrong in the world and redeem people.

They were his own. He said things about them like "you are the apple of my eye." He gave them His special laws to help them live successfully and insisted that they not adopt the gods of the surrounding nations, who were not gods at all. He had made them. He was establishing them in the land by driving out nations before them, little by little. That was after he rescued them from bondage in Egypt.

Here's how Moses described it:

"The LORD's own portion was his people, (he called them) Jacob his allotted share. He sustained them in a desert land, in a howling wilderness waste; he shielded them, cared for them, guarded them as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young; as it spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinions, the LORD alone guided them; no foreign god was with them" (Deut. 32:9-12).

Thus they were unique and because they had Him, they were different from the surrounding nations. So this is what they asked for:

"Give us a king, so that we may be like other nations" (1 Sam 8:20).

Samuel was right—it was kind of a slap in the face.

What do you do with disobedient children who forgot the care that you gave them? Well, like God, you may warn them, and then, if you are a smart parent, you let the consequences fall. You do not retaliate, manipulate, or try to control them, but you do not shield them from reality.

Do you remember the four children in the story of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*? They entered the land of Narnia and got right in the middle of a battle between two leaders of two kingdoms, Aslan against an evil witch, who took control by casting a spell of a continuous winter on Narnia, and oppressing its people. Now Aslan had the greater power to unfreeze Narnia and return it to the state in which it was meant to be, but it would take a battle.

The children learn of prophecies from Aslan's people that state that when four children sit on the throne of another castle, the witch will be destroyed. They commit themselves to Aslan and to the side of good.

But one of the children, Edmund, sneaks away. He had seen the White Witch and her castle. It looks really great to him. He meets the White witch and she bewitches him by giving him his favorite candy. She lies that she will make him king of her castle. Thinking this is all he could ever wish for, he believes her and follows her.

This news saddens Aslan; nevertheless, each child is free to decide, just like you are free to decide who and what you will follow; just like Israel asked for a king like other nations.

Edmund has great hopes upon arriving at the witch's castle. But the witch, instead of embracing him took him hostage, and plans his murder to prevent Aslan's prophecy from coming true. She takes Edmund in her sleigh, giving him no coat, and no food. Horrified, he watches her turn Narnia's citizens into stone.

Edmund began to regret his decision and suddenly he was overcome with desire to be back with his brother and sisters. But it wasn't that easy. "Tie him to a tree," the witch shouts, and he hears sounds of a knife being sharpened. Terrified, he wonders how he will get out of this predicament.

Consequences turned his attention to reality, and Edmund began to see the need for the greater king, the wiser king, the good king. And Aslan would rescue him; but it would be at great cost.

How clear is your vision of the real King? Do you see God as a legitimate resource for you, or do you seek answers to your problems in a million places besides God?

God gives us the freedom to decide; He does not coerce His people. He has grace. But God also lets the natural consequences fall.

Speaking of kings, God's plan was to bring the Real King through Israel who can bring the stability we long for; stability we won't find in "the kings of the nations." It takes much more than a human being or an earthly nation to administer real justice, and God knew that.

Isn't that what God warned the people about? The leaders of Israel were worried about two unjust judges. They sought the right thing, but in the wrong place. An earthly king would enslave them, if they turned to him for all their answers.

God only can provide the Real King. Are you seeking after how others do things? Or are you looking up to God's King?

God's King is quite wise:

"He is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth."

So He knows quite a lot.

"He made the things we can see and the things we can't see-- such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together."

He's kind of top notch when it comes to capability.

"Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body."

So He can most likely guide us very well.

"He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself."

He sounds like an outstanding one to follow; definitely trustworthy.

"God made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross" (Col 1:15-20).

God has a plan to supply us with this Real King. Do you want to simply google the world for help instead?

Today we will baptize five children. Their baptisms are a symbol of their faith in Jesus Christ, whom they proclaim King of their life. During life they will have circumstances which will require them to choose between following after everyone else, or clinging to their Real King.

You are their leaders. Are you pointing them to the Real King?

He's the One. You belong to Him. He's with you in both your mistakes and your triumphs in order to help you become "holy and blameless as you stand before him . . . But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from this assurance." (Col 1:22b-23)

AMEN