# Problems & Creative Solutions

### Give the child alive to the first woman and in no wise slay it; she is the mother thereof. (1 Kings 3:27)

**One of the most valuable things people can learn in this life is how to get people to agree with them -- how to sell their ideas to others. Louis Pasteur, the great French scientist, devised a unique approach for accomplishing this end. When presenting a new theory to his associates, even though he himself was positive of its rightness, he would always begin by arguing against it. A new assistant, puzzled by hearing Pasteur arguing against his own theories, questioned him about it. “Let me give you a valuable lesson,” replied Pasteur, “that it has taken me a lifetime to learn. It is this: never try to prove to the other person that you are right. Rather, always present your arguments in such a manner as to do your best to prove that you are wrong. “When you follow this approach, especially when you are sure you are right, invariably the other person will pick up the evidence and, more convincingly than anyone else could possibly do it, bring together indisputable evidence on behalf of your cause and prove to himself and to the world that your stand was from the very beginning the correct one.” (Bits & Pieces)  
The sign read “ANTIQUES” so the couple had to stop. But when they stepped inside the neat home they saw no items for sale. “We are the antiques,” the two little old ladies in the home explained. “We get lonely, and thought that would be a good way to get some people to stop. We usually offer them tea and have a nice chat. We've made a lot of friends that way.” (Spirit in Action newsletter)**

**A lady gave her pastor an apple pie. He took it home, cut it, took a bite, and immediately spit it out. It was so terrible he threw it out the window. The next Sunday the lady who gave him the pie was the first in line to greet him. She said, “How did you like the pie?” Cheerfully, he replied, “I tell you a pie like that doesn't stay around our house very long.” (Clyde Murdock, in Funny Stuff, p. 150)  
The hot pepper people have a new market -- makers of boat paint. It's now confirmed barnacles won't stick to hulls coated with hot-pepper spiked paint. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Three pastors got together for coffee one day and found all their churches had bat-infestation problems. “I got so mad,” said one, “I took a shotgun and fired at them. It made holes in the ceiling, but did nothing to the bats.” “I tried trapping them alive,” said the second. “Then I drove 50 miles before releasing them, but they beat me back to the church.” “I haven't had any more problems,” said the third. “What did you do?" asked the others, amazed. “I simply baptized and confirmed them,” he replied. “I haven't seen them since.” (Steve Allison, in Reader's Digest)**

**Mechanic to customer: “I'm afraid you have more of a problem than I anticipated. Your battery needs a new car.” (Bob Travis, in the Ontario, California, Report)**

**One parent never argues with his kids when they come home from the store with the newest in bizarre clothing. He just says he likes it and they take it back in the morning. (Delia Sellers, in Abundant Living magazine)**

**Then there was seven-year-old Susie, whose problem was simply that the braided string belt had been pulled out of her pajama bottoms. “How on earth," she wondered, “can I ever thread it back through again?” She put the problem out of her conscious mind. A short time later, as she was getting an ice cube out of the freezer, an idea suddenly hit her. She could wet the belt, freeze it in a circle, then guide it through the pajama opening. It worked! (David Lynch, in Reader's Digest)  
  
Police in a mid-western city were stumped. A fast-moving burglary team kept breaking into clothing stores, stripping the garment racks like hungry piranhas and slipping away before police could respond to the alarm systems. Was there any way to stop them -- or at least slow them down? Suddenly, one detective had an idea. “Alternate your hanger hooks,” he told the city's merchants. “Turn one toward the wall, and the next toward the aisle--all the way down the rack.” When the next alarm went off, police caught the hapless thieves still removing garments one at a time. (David Lynch, in Reader's Digest)**

**Camels eat weeds that cows won't. Thus, an overgrazed pasture gone to weeds can be cleaned out, so grass will grow again, by running in a few camels. That's what is done on federal rangeland near Las Cruces, NM. (L. M. Boyd)**

**The best way to clean a frying pan that has burned food cemented to the bottom is to let it soak in soapy water for several days and then, when nobody is looking, throw it in the garbage. (Dave Berry, In Miami Herald)**

**During his career, director Alan Schneider had to deal with some difficult stars. A lead actress in one of his plays “started coming to rehearsals late -- nothing said, no excuses,” he wrote in his autobiography, Entrances. “Finally, I blew my stack in front of the entire cast. She was never late again. She also never did anything the way I wanted. I had won my battle but lost the war. Two years later, while having a bit of trouble with an unpunctual leading lady in another show, I asked the advice of actor-director George Abbott. “What can I do short of bawling her out?” Simple,’ Abbott said. ‘Just start rehearsals with the understudy.’ Which is what I've done ever since. It always works.” (Viking Penguin)**

**By keeping his cool, state trooper Keith Miller captured some escapees. It seems that nearly 80 cattle managed to find a way out of their pasture, endangering passing motorists in the Jonesville, Michigan, area. Trooper Miller just drove his car into a field, turned on his loudspeaker and began bawling like a calf. Sure enough, the cows moseyed into the field and clustered around his car. (The Christian Science Monitor)  
The crocodile is one of few animals in the world which deliberately and regularly attacks human beings. In places where crocodiles are considered sacred and are fed or in lakes that swarm with fish, they almost never attack. But wherever the crocodile's natural prey has been largely depleted, it soon acquires a taste for human flesh. (Gordon Gaskill, in The Living World of Nature, p. 180)  
  
“How are you and your roommate solving the dish-washing problem?” I asked my son, now the proud renter of his first apartment. I had visions of his kitchen stacked with hundreds of dirty dishes. “No problem,” he answered. “Matt and I worked out an agreement – whoever uses the last plate has to open a new package.” (Marlene J. Davis, in Reader’s Digest)**

**Don't wash this shirt any more, Mommy. It's getting hard to read. (Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)  
  
If you want to get into the habit of drinking plain water -- as so many doctors advise -- you might try eating a dill pickle chip before each glassful. That makes the water taste sweeter. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Some birds lay pear-shaped eggs. Especially cliff-nesting birds. Clever rascals! Their eggs roll in circles, so not off the cliffs. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Use different tools to solve a problem than what was used to create it.  
We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them. *(Albert Einstein)*  
A student went to the college psychiatrist and said, “I'll never be able to trust my parents again after the low, deceitful, sneaky thing they just did to me.” The psychiatrist asked, “What did they do?” The kid said, “I asked them to send me $600 for a set of encyclopedias --and they sent me the encyclopedias!” (Clyde Murdock)**

**Four high-school boys, afflicted with spring fever, skipped morning classes. After lunch, they reported to the teacher that their car had had a flat tire. Much to their relief, she smiled and said: “Well, you missed a test this morning, so take seats apart from one another and get out your notebooks.” Still smiling, she waited for them to settle down. Then she said, “First question: Which tire was flat?” (Bits & Pieces)**

**Basque farmers in the Pyrenees Mountains use flying saucers to catch pigeons! The bird-catchers wait in mountainside perches for flocks of migrating pigeons, then sail saucer-shaped paddles called zimbelas just ahead of the flock. The birds mistake the zimbelas for hawks and dive toward earth, only to be caught in huge nets stretched across the valley below. The Basques then ship the pigeons to markets in France, where the birds are considered a delicacy. (Denver P. Tarle, in A Treasury of Trivia, p. 79)**

**During Matt Simon's first year as head football coach at the University of North Texas in Denton, the team was one of the smallest and slowest in the Southland Conference. When the McNeese State team took the field for a pre-game warm-up, the UNT players were totally intimidated by the size of their opponents from Louisiana. But in the locker room before the game, Simon gave his team a rousing speech, and they literally stormed onto the field, eager to play. Later, an alumnus asked Simon what he had said to motivate his players. The coach confessed, “I simply told them that the last 11 guys out this locker-room door to the field had to start the game.” (Eric Jackson, in Reader's Digest)**

**Some years ago an enterprising American established, somewhere in a remote section of Central America, an unusual business: a four-leaf clover farm. Growing conditions were ideal. He raised fine, large clovers which he was able to market in a variety of ways – to florists, manufacturers of novelties, etc. However, at the height of his success his employees, a group of young women, presented him with an unusual labor problem. They weren’t protesting the wages or the hours, it was just that they seemed to have nothing to do with the money they earned. The American racked his brains until he hit upon a brilliant solution. He sent for a Sears, Roebuck catalog and gave it to the women, explaining to them that they could use the money he paid them to buy many of the fabulous articles shown in the pictures. It wasn’t long before his problem was solved; they were eager to earn more money. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**A friend of mine told me she knows someone who, when company is coming and the house is a mess, takes out her old get-well cards and places them on the mantel. (Diane Ziegler, in Reader's Digest)**

**Good week for: Small government, after the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in wildfire-prone Simi Valley, California, was given a protective firebreak by a team of 356 goats, which devoured the surrounding undergrowth. The goats do a "tremendous job," said library spokeswoman, Melissa Giller. (*The Week magazine, May 21, 2021)***

**If we come to view ourselves as working for an external reward, we will no longer find the activity worth doing in its own right. There is an old joke that illustrates this. An elderly man, harassed by the taunts of the neighborhood children, devised a scheme. He offered to pay them a dollar each if they would return on Tuesday and yell their insults again. The children did so eagerly and received the money. Then he told them he would pay only 25 cents on Wednesday. When they returned, insulted him again and collected their quarters, he informed them that Thursday's rate would be just a penny. “Forget it,” they said -- and never taunted him again. (Alfie Kohn, in Boston Globe)  
  
Animals give off body heat. It's claimed you can actually heat your greenhouse with coops of chickens and hutches of rabbits. (L. M. Boyd)**

**We hide all our valuables in the bathroom. With three teenagers in the family, there’s no way a burglar is going to get in there. (Robert Orben)**

**A woman wearing blue jeans and a T-shirt entered a supermarket in Florida. The day was hot and humid. She went directly to the ice cream bin, selected a couple of chocolate covered bars, then with a glance around to make sure no one was watching, tucked the two bars in her waistband and pulled the floppy T-shirt over them. She had made one mistake: the manager of the store had observed every move she made. He watched her return to the front of the store, skirt the checkout counters, and go out the front door. He caught up with her at her car in the parking lot. “Hello,” he said smiling. “I’m the manager of the supermarket you were just in, and I’m conducting a customer survey. I wonder if I could ask you a few questions?” “Uh, sure,” said the flustered woman. The man then pulled a questionnaire from his pocket and proceeded to ask the woman what she thought of the store, the service, the employees, etc. As the minutes went by, the heat took its toll on the ice cream bars. Unable to do anything about the melting ice cream running down her legs and soaking the front of her T-shirt, the woman fidgeted nervously. Finally, when the manager was pretty sure most of the ice cream had melted, as evidenced by the mess down the front of her clothes, he thanked her politely and returned to the store. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**I see that the insurance industry is going to spend $90 million on a three-year advertising campaign to counter negative publicity. Frankly, lowering their rates by $90 million might counter it just as well. (Bill Flick, 1989)**

**A contributor to the “Dear Abby” column writes: “We foolishly loaned $5000 to a relative without any kind of IOU. Instead of asking him for one after he had the money, my wife wrote, inquiring when we could expect a partial payment on the $7500 he owed us. Quick as a flash, we received a letter from him advising us that he did not owe us $7500 -- it was only $5000. Mission accomplished! We had it in writing.” (Abigail Van Buren, Universal Press Syndicate)**

**A factory worker found that production was being hampered by the tardiness of his people returning from the lunch hour. When the whistle blew few were at their machines. He posted a sign by the suggestion box offering a cash reward for the best answer to this question: “What should we do to insure that every man will be inside the factory when the whistle blows?” Many suggestions were submitted and one was selected which solved the problem. But the manager, a man with a sense of humor, liked this one best, though he could not use it: “Let the last man in blow the whistle.” *(Bits & Pieces)*  
  
I have six locks on my door all in a row. When I go out, I lock every other one. I figure no matter how long somebody stands there picking the locks, they are always locking three. (Elayne Boosler, in Reader's Digest)**

**A young lad with very long hair walked into a barber shop, sat down and began looking through the magazines. Eventually, the barber beckoned to him, “Next!” “Oh, I don't want anything,” the boy said. “No haircut?” replied the barber. “Then why did you come in?” “My mother is looking for me,” the long-haired lad answered, “and I don't think she'll look in here.” (Clyde Murdock, in Funny Stuff, p. 98)  
While my husband was delivering mail on his route, he noticed how many mailboxes had been knocked down or damaged, apparently as a result of careless driving or vandalism. Then he came upon an old mailbox in mint condition. He couldn't figure out why until he dropped off the mail and pulled away. Glancing in his rear-view mirror, he saw an elderly woman walk to the post, pull it out of the ground, heave it onto her shoulder and walk merrily up her driveway. (Joann Lesniewski)  
 After I took office as mayor of a small Kentucky city, an unfortunate incident precipitated some hateful phone calls to my home. One night while I was conducting a city-council meeting, my wife answered the phone. “Is this the home of Bert May, the mayor?” a woman's voice asked. When my wife explained that I was at a meeting and would return her call if she left a name and number, the caller said, “That's confidential. This is his girlfriend.” My wife, knowing this was all a ruse, calmly responded, “Lady, if you don't leave your name and number, he won't know which one to call back.” (Bert May, in Reader's Digest)**

**There is always an easy solution to every human problem -- neat, plausible and wrong. (H. L. Mencken)**

**As a visiting preacher, D. L. Moody was warned that some of the congregation usually left before the end of the sermon. When he rose to begin his sermon, he announced, “I am going to speak to two classes of people this morning; first to the sinners, then to the saints.” He proceeded to address the “sinners” for a while, and then said they could leave. For once, every member of the congregation stayed to the end of the sermon. (Viola Walden, in Sword of the Lord)**

**Here's a suggestion for parents who become naturally worried when their youngsters are away from home, either at camp or college, and neglect to write. Send the child your usual letter and add this postscript: “Hope you can use the $50.00 I am enclosing.” (Clyde Murdock, in Funny Stuff, p. 96)**

**The trick to figuring out “new diseases” is less a matter of identifying bizarre killer germs than one of isolating the features of modern life and the environment that have given old microbes new power. (Michael Rogers, in Reader's Digest)**

**A New Yorker came across a variation on the basic “No Radio” sign in the window of a parked car: “I'm not going to lie to you. I do have a radio, but it's broken. Actually, it's stuck on one station -- WQXR. So unless you like classical music, it doesn't make sense for you to break into my car. I am planning to get the radio fixed, maybe even add a tape player. I'll keep you posted.” (Jim Witkin, in Reader's Digest)**

**To get employees to work on time, a Michigan company provides 45 parking spaces for 50 cars. (Bits & Pieces)**

**For many years Monterey, a California coast town, was a pelican’s paradise. As the fisherman cleaned their fish, they flung the offal to the pelicans, and the birds grew fat, lazy and contented. Eventually, however, the offal was utilized and there were no snacks for the pelicans. When the change came the pelicans made no effort to fish for themselves. They waited around, grew gaunt and thin. Many starved to death. They had forgotten how to fish for themselves. The problem was solved by importing new pelicans from the south, birds accustomed to foraging for themselves. They were placed among their starving cousins, and the newcomers immediately started catching fish. Before long, the hungry pelicans followed suit, and the famine was ended. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**A man I know spent an hour trying to rescue his young son's pet frog from the bottom of a narrow shaft on their property. He used a long stick, then a rope with a loop at the end, then an open-ended can on a string. Nothing worked, and he finally gave up. Minutes later, his five-year-old son appeared at the front door -- with the frog! The boy had hit on the idea of flooding the shaft with a garden hose and floating the frog to the surface. (David Lynch, in Reader's Digest)**

**An old storekeeper, who was also the community's postmaster, was a real go-getter. He had no helper, and when he had to leave his store to meet the mail train, he was tormented by thoughts of tourists stopping for gas and soft drinks, and finding him gone and his store closed. Finally he hit upon a shrewd solution. He printed a sign in bold letters that explained everything during his enforced absences: “Back in 15 minutes – Already been gone 10.” (Bits & Pieces)**

**We solved the problem of poor attendance at our club's annual meeting by posting this notice: CLUB MEETING TODAY TO ELECT NEW OFFICERS -- YOU NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN. (Craig R. Baird, in Reader's Digest)**

**As a professional clown, I entertain groups at parties and company picnics. Once, an inebriated guest began heckling me in the middle of a performance, disrupting my act. Trying to ignore him wasn't working, so I used a different tactic. Slipping my arm around his shoulder, I looked him in the eye and said, “Mister, I get paid to dress up and make a fool of myself -- what's your excuse?” He said not another word. (Nancy-Jo Wright, in Reader's Digest)  
  
Our dog had ten puppies, and we were trying to find good homes for them. After several unsuccessful attempts, we came up with an idea. All the pups were put in a little red wagon with a sign reading, “Hot Dogs -- 25 Cents Each.” Kids, puppies and wagon joined a town parade. Our last minute “entry” won first-place prize in the parade, and all ten puppies were sold. (Judy Hutchison, in Reader's Digest)  
Jack Kemp, former pro-football player, asked how he went about getting re-elected as a Congressman from Buffalo, N.Y., replied, “I told the people that if they didn't elect me I'd come back as quarterback for the Buffalo Bills.” (Reader's Digest)**

**For several years a lawyer and a doctor had regularly played golf together. They were evenly matched, and there was a keen sense of rivalry. Then one spring the lawyer’s game suddenly improved so much that the doctor was losing regularly. The doctor’s efforts to improve his own game were unsuccessful, but finally he came up with an idea. At a bookstore, he picked out three how-to-play-golf texts, and sent them to the lawyer for a birthday present. It wasn’t long before they were evenly matched again. (Bits & Pieces)**

**The best way to remember your wife's birthday is to forget it once. (Delia Sellers, in Abundant Living magazine)**

**Standing in front of a boutique, I noticed an impatient-looking young man approach a very attractive woman. “Would you mind talking to me for a few minutes?” he asked her. “Why?” she countered suspiciously. “My wife has been in this shop for a long time,” the man explained. “But I know she'll come right out if she sees me talking to you.” His wife joined him almost immediately. (E. C. Forbes, Jr., in Reader's Digest)**

**Steven Spielberg, the Oscar-winning motion picture director, was a skinny, non-athletic student. As a 13-year-old, he became the target of harassment by many of his bigger classmates. One bully gave him grief all year. When the class played football as part of the physical education program, he would knock Spielberg down, push his face in the dirt and give him a bloody nose. One day Spielberg said to the bully, “Listen, I'm thinking of making an 8 mm movie about fighting the Nazis and I want you to play this war hero.” The bully laughed in his face. Later, however, he said he was interested. He was a big 14-year-old and Spielberg told him he looked like John Wayne. He outfitted the bully in a helmet, fatigues, and a backpack and cast him as a heroic squad leader. From then on, the bully was Spielberg's best friend. (Bits & Pieces)  
A mother was complaining to her friend that her two young sons were constantly squabbling over the division of things around the house. “I'm at my wit's end,” she sighed. “That's a simple problem,” said her friend. “Just appoint one of them to always do the dividing, and allow the other first choice.” (Bits & Pieces)  
  
Years ago, a large statue of Christ was erected high in the Andes on the border between Argentina and Chile. Called “Christ of the Andes,” the statue symbolizes a pledge between the two countries that as long as the statue stands, there will be peace between Chile and Argentina. Shortly after the statue was erected, the Chileans began to protest that they had been slighted--the statue had its back turned to Chile. Just when tempers were at their highest in Chile, a Chilean newspaperman saved the day. In an editorial that not only satisfied the people but made them laugh, he simply said, “The people of Argentina need more watching over than the Chileans.” (Bits & Pieces)**

**One enterprising mother solved the problem of getting her year-old infant to swallow a pill. She put first the pill, then the baby, on the playpen floor. True to the ways of small children, he promptly popped the pill into his mouth and gulped it down. *(Bits & Pieces)*  
 A factory manager found that production was being hampered by the tardiness of his people returning from the lunch hour. When the whistle blew few were at their machines. He posted a sign by the suggestion box offering a cash award for the best answer to this question: “What should we do to ensure that every man will be inside the factory when the whistle blows?” Many suggestions were submitted, and the one that was selected solved the problem. But the manager, a man with a sense of humor, liked this one best, though he could not use it: “Let the last man in blow the whistle.” (Bits & Pieces)  
The famous French artist Maurice Utrillo began painting at the age of 17 as therapy for his adolescent alcoholism. (Paul Stirling Hagerman, in It's a Weird World, p. 67)**

**A neighbor has the solution to the tomato problem. Cut down your tomato plants and the worms will starve to death. (Bits & Pieces)**

**Newscaster Paul Harvey reported recently that communities are replacing certain electric traffic signals with standard red painted stop signs. Their studies show motorists tend to speed up to cross an intersection rather than slow down in preparation to stop. There have been fewer accidents at the intersections where the octagon stop signs are installed and a significant dollar savings to the communities. The stop sign costs less and is less expensive to maintain. (Trust Hall Insurance)**

**Three engineers and three MBAs are traveling by train to a conference. At the station, the three MBAs each buy tickets and the three engineers buy only a single ticket. “How are three people going to travel on only one ticket?” asks an MBA. “Watch and you'll see,” says an engineer. They board the train. The MBAs take their seats but all three engineers cram into a bathroom and close the door. Shortly after the train has departed, the conductor comes around. He knocks on the bathroom door and says, “Ticket, please.” The door opens just a crack and a single arm emerges with a ticket in hand. The conductor takes it and moves on. The MBAs see this and agree it was a clever idea. So after the conference, the MBAs decide to copy the engineers on the return trip. When they get to the station, they buy a single ticket. To their astonishment, the engineers don't buy a ticket at all. “How are you going to travel without a ticket?” asks one perplexed MBA. “Watch and you'll see,” answers an engineer. When they board the train, the three MBAs cram into a bathroom and the three engineers cram into another. The train departs. Shortly afterward, one of the engineers leaves his bathroom and walks over to the bathroom where the MBAs are hiding. He knocks on the door and says, “Ticket, please.” (Rocky Mountain News)**

**When Mark Twain got his first newspaper job, his editor insisted that Twain was responsible for the truth and integrity of everything he wrote. Unless he could prove the validity of every piece of information in his reports, they would not be published. For his first assignment, he was sent to report on a prominent social event. This is the report he filed: “A woman giving the name of Mrs. James Perkins, reported to be one of the society leaders of this city, is said to have given what is purported to be a party yesterday for a number of alleged ladies. The hostess claims to be the wife of a reputed attorney.”(King Duncan/Angela Akers, in Amusing Grace, p. 415)**

**A small Indiana college was having trouble getting students to use the sidewalks instead of walking across the newly planted grass. After trying many different signs, the administration finally found one that worked. The successful sign read: THIS GRASS IS FERTILIZED ORGANICALLY. (Rebecca Blake, in Reader's Digest)**

**In 214 B.C., a powerful Roman force attacked the city of Syracuse, the home of Archimedes, the great mathematician and astronomer. To hold off the Roman legions, the Greek inventor devised one ingenious weapon after another. Among these weapons was the catapult, which sent a ton of stones flying as far as 600 feet. But Archimedes' most ingenious contraption was an arrangement of mirrors that directed the concentrated rays of the sun on the Roman ships and set them ablaze. (James Meyers, in Mammoth Book of Trivia, p. 128)**

**Never try to guess your wife's size. Just buy her anything marked “PETITE” and hold on to the receipt. (Comedy Letter)**

**Not long ago, when I was pushing my wife's stalled car with my own, our bumpers locked. With a strong friend, I tried to bounce the bumpers loose. No go. Next I tried a jack. That didn't work either. Then my wife suggested backing my car up on the curb and leaving her smaller car at street level. Eureka! The cars immediately sprang apart. (David Lynch, in Reader's Digest)**

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***