

Filling Pitfalls with Truth © Rev. Stephen D. Shields 2002

While driving in an unfamiliar rural area on a dirt road, a man approached what appeared to be a large mud puddle. Proceeding through it, he quickly learned that it was a deep mud hole into which his car sunk to the frame.

Within moments, a farmer approached on his tractor. "For ten bucks, I'll pull you out of there," he offered.

"All right," the driver agreed.

After the farmer pocketed the money, he said, "You know, your is the tenth car I've rescued today."

"Wow," the driver said. "When do you have time to work your land — at night?"

"No," the farmer replied, "Night is when I refill this hole with water!"

That farmer was setting a trap — a pitfall for travelers.

Life is filled with pitfalls: perfectionism, a demand that everyone to like you, the

temptation to be a "control freak," indulging in a lifestyle of self-pity, processing life to a mathematical equation, feeling that nothing will ever go right, feeling helpless, blaming others, obsessing about things you should give to God, avoiding problems by acting irresponsibly.

These truths are designed to help us avoid these pitfalls by filling the mud puddle with truth from God's Word.

- I. **PITFALL: Perfectionism (The tendency to be a perfectionist regarding one's self and others.)**
 - A. TRUTH: Perfection is a phantom (Ecclesiastes 7:20)
 - B. TRUTH: Perfectionism is destructive (Matthew 23)
 - C. TRUTH: God does not demand perfection (Philippians 3:10-14; Romans 5:8)
- II. **PITFALL: Approval and Love Hunger (The tendency to feel that everyone must love you and approve of you.)**
 - A. TRUTH: Some people won't love us (John 3:20; 15:18-21; 17:14; Matthew 10:22; Luke 6:27)
 - B. TRUTH: People often dislike others because of jealousy (Matthew 27:15-18;)
 - C. TRUTH: Our first responsibility is to God (Colossians 3:23; Acts 4:1-3, 18-20)
 - D. TRUTH: God's love and approval is all we need (Romans 8:31-39)
- III. **PITFALL: Control Freak (The tendency to feel you must control people and events around you.)**
 - A. TRUTH: Most things are outside your control (Matthew 9:36-38)
 - B. TRUTH: Trying to control others is great arrogance (James 4:13-16)
 - C. TRUTH: Only God is in complete control (Isaiah 14:12-15)
- IV. **PITFALL: Self-pity (The tendency to believe your life is harder than it should be.)**
 - A. TRUTH: Suffering is part of life (1 Peter 4:12)
 - B. TRUTH: My suffering is small in light of eternity (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)
 - C. TRUTH: My suffering is not unique (1 Corinthians 10:13)
 - D. TRUTH: There is a reward for suffering well (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
- V. **PITFALL: The Mathematical Pitfall (The tendency to demand life should be fair.)**
 - A. TRUTH: It' s a blessing that life is not fair (Genesis 2:15-17)
 - B. TRUTH: Sometimes troubles are gifts (Philippians 1:29-30)
 - C. TRUTH: God' s math is not our math (Psalm 73)
- VI. **PITFALL: Pessimistic Fatalism (The tendency to believe things are bad and they cannot change.)**
 - A. TRUTH: There is value in the past (James 1:22-25)
 - B. TRUTH: You can let go of the past (Philippians 3:13-14)
 - C. TRUTH: You can be set free from the past (John 8:31-36)
- VII. **PITFALL: Helplessness (The tendency to feel that you are at the mercy of your feelings; that you can't help but do certain things because you feel that you must.)**
 - A. TRUTH: I can choose how to react to events that occur in my life (Joshua 24:14-15)
 - B. TRUTH: I can have victories in the midst of disappoints in my life (Philippians 4:11-13)
 - C. TRUTH: Applying God's word brings wise choices (Matthew 4:1-11; Ephesians 5:3; Nehemiah 8:10; Psalm 119:9,11)
- VIII. **PITFALL: Blaming (The tendency to blame others for the bad things that happen in our lives.)**
 - A. TRUTH: There is value in confessing your sins to a human being (James 5:14-16)
 - B. TRUTH: You are responsible for your own actions (Genesis 4:7)
 - C. TRUTH: You can only learn from your failures if you are willing to own them (Proverbs 15:32-33)
- IX. **PITFALL: Obsessing (The tendency to obsess about something that we feel has the potential to cause us harm or loss.)**
 - A. TRUTH: God is good (Nahum 1:7)
 - B. TRUTH: God is powerful (Genesis 17:1,2; Philippians 4:19)
 - C. TRUTH: God is trustworthy (Numbers 23:19)
- X. **PITFALL: Problem Avoidance (The tendency to believe if you ignore or avoid problems, they will go away.)**
 - A. TRUTH: Fear is to be faced (2 Timothy 1:2-12)
 - B. TRUTH: Problems should be taken to God (Psalm 22:1-2)
 - C. TRUTH: God-led action is good action (James 1:5-6)
- XI. **PITFALL: Extremism (The tendency to live a life in the extremes, without moderation.)**
 - A. TRUTH: Avoiding extremes brings blessing (Ecclesiastes 10:16-17)
 - B. TRUTH: It is right to live a life of godly moderation
 1. Moderation should mark the way we relate with one another (1 Timothy 2:8)
 2. Moderation should mark the way we portray ourselves (1 Timothy 2:9-10)
 3. Moderation should define our lives (Proverbs 25:16)