

STREET SMART OR LIVING WISELY

Life With God In Recovery

RELAPSE PREVENTION: Street Smart or Living Wisely



“Anyone who listens to My teaching and obeys Me is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against the house, it won’t collapse, because it is built on rock”. (Matthew 7:24-25 NLT)

To live wisely in recovery requires the development of a spirit of humility that says, “I don’t know what is best for me in this situation but I’m willing to learn, to think new thoughts and practice new behaviours. In the Bible, God has revealed the way to a good life. Anything that contradicts the principles written there is flawed reasoning which we would do well to ignore.

For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He grants a treasure of common sense to the honest. He is a shield to those who walk with integrity. He guards the paths of the just and protects those who are faithful to him. Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair, and you will find the right way to go. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy. (Proverbs 2:6-10 NLT)

When we were in our addiction we made poor choices and walked down paths that caused us and others around us pain and harm. We picked up a lot of “street smarts” as we tried to figure out ways to deal with circumstances. We were considered smart when we managed to lie our way out of trouble. It did not matter to us whether we blamed or criticized those around us as long as we got ourselves “off the hook”. We thought we were smart, or the person who helped us was smart, when we outwitted any person who was trying to hold us accountable.

We felt smart when we managed to get in and out of a store and shoplift without getting caught or ripped someone off without them knowing it was us. In the legal system, we looked for loopholes to help us “beat the rap” rather than looking at truth and dealing with the consequences of our actions. These “street smarts” are things we’ve relied upon in the past but they are certainly not a foundation for wholesome, healthy living in recovery.

Wisdom will save you from evil people, from those whose words are twisted. These men turn from the right way to walk down dark paths. They take pleasure in doing wrong, and they enjoy the twisted ways of evil. Their actions are crooked, and their ways are wrong. (Proverbs 2:12-15 NLT)

We bring many “street smarts” into recovery with us. They are still in evidence when we compare ourselves to others and decide we’re not so bad because others are doing worse things than we are. We gossip and feel important because we know something others don’t know. We feel pretty good about ourselves when we counterattack with a smart remark someone who challenges us. We use degrading words which embarrass or victimize a person or an ethnic group. Any of these practices are evidence that we’ve left wisdom behind and settled for “street smart” behaviour.

The Bible tells us: ***An honest witness tells the truth; a false witness tells lies. Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing. Truthful words stand the test of time, but lies are soon exposed.*** (Proverbs 12:17-19 NLT)

We’re often not long in recovery when we notice that “street smart” thinking is filtering back into our thoughts. We try to convince ourselves that life in addiction “wasn’t so bad.” Things are not changing quickly enough for us so we tell ourselves that there are too many challenges, and not enough help, and so we need to find a way to do what works for us. These familiar, but twisted ideas roll around in our head challenging the truth that is still fresh and unfamiliar. If we give our old thoughts much attention, we’ll soon find ourselves discontented and well on the way to relapse. A safe and solid life in recovery requires that, with God’s help, we learn to think and act in new ways and develop a wise heart.

The naive believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps. The wise are careful and avoid evil, but fools become excited and overconfident. Short-tempered people make stupid mistakes, and schemers are hated. (Proverbs 14:15-17 CEB)

God’s plan is that we replace our fallen ways of being “street smart” with kind ways that are guided by His wisdom. ***Respect and obey the Lord! This is the first step to wisdom and good sense.*** (Psalm 111:10 CEV)

Wise people seek advice from others who walk with God and whose desire is to see God’s way of life come into every moment of every day. Allowing themselves to stray into areas forbidden by God’s word is a certain path to relapse. ***Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.*** (Proverbs 13:20 NLT)

We don’t need advice from people who sound like us and speak things we want to hear. We need to listen to people who are not afraid to contradict our dysfunctional

thinking and tell us the truth which may be difficult to hear, but necessary for experiencing a new way of life.

Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2 NLT)

When we accept Jesus as Saviour we receive new life and God’s Holy Spirit comes to live in us. He gives us a clear understanding of God’s Word, and the power to put it into practice in our lives. Being wise can be judged by whether we surrender our lives to follow those principles or just read and then ignore what is written.

But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. He won’t draw attention to himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said. (John 16:13 MSG)

“Street smarts” took us to the end of a dead end road. Applying God’s wisdom will give us a full and satisfying life.

Grow a wise heart—you’ll do yourself a favor; keep a clear head—you’ll find a good life. (Proverbs 19:8 MSG)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How will I change my thinking and actions in order that I am guided by wisdom rather than “street smarts?”
2. Where do I seek wisdom today?
3. Where does God say the source of wisdom is found?

Heavenly Father, You are an awesome God who has provided everything I need to live life to the full. My desire is to stop all my former “street smart” ways which have contributed to who I am today. I ask for discernment to recognize and the courage to change those things that keep me in bondage to my past. Help me to live wisely in recovery and seek to know your principles for living life to the full. Lord, Your word says I will do myself a favour if I grow a wise heart, please help me to do so for I no longer want street smart ways to govern my life. I am grateful that You care for me. AMEN