

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY

Daily Meditations



SEPTEMBER 2019



These meditations are available online
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*Partners in Hope Recovery Society
is a Christian community
outreach organization
offering hope, support, and healing
through Jesus Christ
to victims of
harmful circumstances and dependencies,
as they reclaim the gift of their life.*

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JUST FOR TODAY

Just for today I will try to live in conscious contact with God praying only for knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out.

Just for today I will strengthen my mind. I will take a few minutes to read and meditate on God's word, seeking God's perspective for my life today. I will take note of one helpful thing God is saying to me and seek to behave accordingly.

Just for today I will be joyful, optimistic, and grateful. I will take time to notice the gifts in me, in others, and in my surroundings and let the rest go.

Just for today I will adjust myself to what is and not try to adjust everything else to my desires. I will trust that God is working all things for good in my life.

Just for today I will be agreeable. I will not criticize, not find fault, and not try to improve or control anybody except myself. I will pray blessing on one person with whom I struggle to relate.

Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself to relax and enjoy all that God is giving me.

Just for today I will be unafraid, believing that as I trust in God with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding, He will lead me along a good path.

Just for today I will seek to serve others with kindness, doing what is right, and walking humbly with God.

***For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus,
so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:10 NLT***



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How To Enjoy New Life With God In Recovery

God created us to have a wonderful life. In love, God planned for us and carefully put us together. God has always been calling out to us to enter into a relationship of love with Him. He doesn't force us but He invites us. Many of us have learned what a painful and confusing wreck our lives become when we try to live independently from God. Today is a good day to begin to live the full and rich life God intended for us. Nothing in our past can keep us from this life, if we want it and choose for it.

The 12-Steps remind us that our lives are unmanageable without the loving care of God and that we can get to know and come to believe that He is a power greater than ourselves. As we turn our will and our lives over to God's care, we find a solid foundation upon which to build a new life.

When we confess our sin and brokenness to God, repent and turn towards God, He gives us new life. When we invite God to come into our lives we find that He is ready and waiting for us. A simple prayer like the following, offered sincerely, establishes this new relationship with God that will last forever.

God, my life is unmanageable without you. You created me to live in relationship with you. There really is no good way to live on my own. Forgive me for not including you. I turn from my independent ways and surrender my will and my life to you. Thank you Jesus for dying on the cross for my sins and making a way for me to have new life and be filled up with Your Holy Spirit. Come into my heart and wash me clean. Teach me to do your will. Transform my way of thinking. Strengthen me to obey You in all I do. Amen

If you prayed that prayer sincerely from your heart, God forgives you and receives you. God makes you His son or daughter. God wants to show you how to live well and give you strength to do that every day. We would love to provide you with some information to support you as you move forward in your journey with God. Please contact us. You'll find our contact information on the front cover of this booklet.

SOME AREAS OF ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCY

For a variety of reasons, many of us have an underlying structure of disorder that is damaging us and others. We invite God to show us the truth about ourselves so we can personally receive God's forgiveness to set us free and healing to make us strong.

<p>SUBSTANCE ADDICTIONS:</p> <p>Alcohol Caffeine Injected or smoked substances such as: Crack, Crystal Meth, Heroin Marijuana Prescription Medications Sugar Tobacco</p>	<p>BEHAVIOUR ADDICTIONS:</p> <p>Anger/Rage/Bullying Cutting Crime Eating Disorders: Bulimia, Anorexia, Binging, Obesity Gambling Hoarding Sex/Pornography Verbal Abuse: Gossip, Lying, Accusing Blaming, Condemning Violence (physical, verbal, cyber)</p>
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PRAYER FOR HEALING AND RESTORATION

Loving God, Thank You for rescuing us from the dark power of Satan and bringing us into loving relationship with Your Son, Jesus. We ask for wisdom and understanding from Your Spirit in order to live as people who honour You. Heal us. Make us new. Make us strong followers of Christ. Root us deeply in Your love. We place our trust in Your power that can do far more in us than we dare ask or imagine. Amen.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2019

SUNDAY PSALM – A CALM AND QUIET HEART FOR TODAY

As we begin this day, is our heart quiet or is it upset and anxious? One of the greatest gifts we receive in turning our will and life over to the care of God is the peace of mind and heart we will experience. Whatever may be causing us to be irritated or uneasy, God promises that if we ask Him, He will be with us and help us sort through it.

Lord, I don't feel proud. I don't see myself as better than others. I am not thinking about doing great things or reaching impossible goals. No, right now I am calm and quiet, like a child after nursing, content in its mother's arms. Israel, trust in the Lord. Trust in him now and forever!
 (Psalm 131:1-3 ERV)

We get bothered by restlessness and dissatisfaction when we are living in pride. We think we need to be better than the next person in order to be okay. We think we need the approval and attention of others in order to have worth. The pleasure of life with God in recovery is, we can simply be the valued person God created us to be and have our own personality when using the gifts we have been given. The result of this way of living will be contentment, joy, and satisfaction.

What a wonderful picture the Bible uses to describe this. A baby doesn't have to do anything in order to be loved and enjoyed by its mother. The baby doesn't know how to find food for itself or how to change its own diaper. It isn't worried about what it's going to do to earn a living and provide for its needs. All it knows is that its mother is providing food, care, cuddling, clean clothes, maybe a lullaby, and love that goes deeper than words could tell.

God created us to be the person we are with the talents, gifts, and even the limitations we have. God knows all about what's going on in our inner world and in our circumstances. God loves us beyond what words could ever tell. God has provision for all our needs. We are simply asked to come to God and trust Him. It's not complicated!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to come close to You and lean on Your strength and wisdom. Help me to trust that with You all my challenges can be faced, and I can experience peace and contentment knowing that I have cast all my cares on You. Thank you. Amen

One of the greatest gifts we receive in turning our will and life over to the care of God is the peace of mind and heart we will experience.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2019

NOTES

LEARNING HOW TO GIVE UP HARD LABOUR

Today is Labour Day and tomorrow many students, and some of us, return to places of education for a new season of learning and maturing. Coming out of addiction is like coming out of hard labour and the school of “hard knocks.” Trouble found many of us and then we added to it by our own doings.

Thank God for these new days of work and learning that can be challenging but do not need to be overwhelming. Jesus used a farming picture to help people understand what this means.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30 NIV)

Thank God for these new days of work and learning that can be challenging but do not need to be overwhelming.

In the same way that an ox wasn't born to just graze in the fields, we don't come into recovery to do nothing. Oxen had many tasks they could perform: plowing, hauling, tramping seed to thresh it, turning a wheel to grind grain or send water along irrigation lines. The food supply of many relied upon the good work of oxen.

God created us for good works, but He knew that just like the oxen we need to learn about various things we are not familiar with. When plowing, two oxen would be fitted with a heavy wooden yoke settled on their necks and then a plough could be attached. An older ox was paired with a younger one to both carry a heavier load and keep the younger one in line, so the job would get done.

Jesus takes the heavy burden of sin from us and promises to guide us into a wonderful life of purpose and meaning. We can't get there on our own, though. We need to be united with Jesus so that when He moves, we move. When He stops, we stop. Jesus promises that if we stay close to Him, we will know a gentle and humble way that, even though it's work, will be restful rather than overwhelming. This is life as God intended.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for this new season of learning and work. Help me to move at the pace You set and follow the direction You give. Forgive me for the times I make life so much more difficult by trying to do things my way. Amen

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

DEVELOPING INTEGRITY

Integrity is one of the most valued character qualities a person can have. A person of integrity has strong moral and ethical principles. They are known to be honest regardless of their circumstances or the company they are keeping or when alone with no one watching. What you see on the outside is the same person they are on the inside.

May integrity and honesty protect me, for I put my hope in you. (Psalm 25:21 NLT)

Integrity is a character quality developed in a person who has been living according to the Word of God. A person with integrity can stand with confidence before God.

***Integrity
is built
over time
as we
diligently
apply
God's
teachings
to the
choices
we make.***

I know that you are pleased with me, for my enemy does not triumph over me. Because of my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever. (Psalm 41:11-12 NIV)

People of integrity have the peace of a clear conscience. When we live according to the Word of God, we experience a deep inner peace knowing that we have not violated our conscience by doing wrong. We are confident that when someone examines us, we will be proven innocent. In contrast, when our lives lack moral wholeness, we live in constant fear of being “found out” as frauds. People of integrity are not perfect. We occasionally make mistakes and sin, but we do not cover up our offences. We confess them and deal with any consequences that arise.

Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out. (Proverbs 10:9 NIV)

Men and women of integrity can be depended upon. People look to them with trust and respect. Neighbours speak highly of them and they are helpful in their community or place of work. Integrity is built over time as we diligently apply God's teachings to the choices we make.

Prayer: Loving God, Help me to consider the impact of my actions and behaviour on those around me. My desire is to love and care for others as You faithfully love and care for me. Help me to follow Your principles in all my affairs and to become a person of integrity. Amen

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2019

TOGETHER WITH GOD

God is always with me. I need never face my problems alone. Together with God, any difficulty can be worked out and overcome.

For too long we've tried to overcome problems on our own. We were correct when we admitted that much of what was going on in us and around us was too complicated for us to sort out. Where we went wrong was to let fear and insecurity overwhelm us and then turn to anger and addiction to avoid the problems we were encountering. Our new life with God in recovery offers us hope that, together with God, any difficulty can be worked out and overcome. That's the key – with God. How do we put this principle into practice in all our affairs?

The Lord himself will go ahead of you. He will be with you. He will never leave you. He'll never desert you. So, don't be afraid. Don't lose hope. (Deuteronomy 31:8 NIRV)

God has unlimited power and He makes it available to us. Before the world was created God had each of us in mind with a good plan for our lives. Now that we are making ourselves available to His will, He is ready to show us that good plan. He will also help us overcome any and all obstacles as we seek to live out His plan in all our affairs. We may not know all the details, but God does. We may think our problems will never end, but God will not allow us to go through trials one second longer than necessary to fulfill His purposes. We can trust His good heart towards us.

God, you are the one who saves us. We will trust in you. Then we won't be afraid. Lord, you are the one who gives us strength. You are the one who keeps us safe. Lord, you have saved us. (Isaiah 12:2 NIRV)

We are responsible, with God's help, to faithfully work on problems until we see that the job is done. Some problems will be resolved quickly, and others will take some consistent work over a period of time. God will continue to give us strength and direction for each step. Our challenge is to trust Him and obey.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I don't like problems and I quickly get fearful when I face challenges. Help me to trust today that together with You any difficulty can be worked out and overcome. Amen

***Together
with God,
any
difficulty
can be
worked
out and
overcome.***

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2019

WOUNDS

Part of being human is experiencing some wounding. It may be a scraped knee from falling, a burned finger from touching something hot, or a variety of other things that injure us. These skin wounds often need cleaning, application of a medicinal salve, a bandage, and time to heal.

We also may experience wounding in our souls that comes from betrayal, rejection, abuse, sin, disappointment, and regret. Although we might tell others and try to convince ourselves that we are not wounded, fear and anger, self-hatred and inability to forgive, addiction and anxiety, are all evidence of the hidden wounds in our soul. Living successfully in recovery has a lot to do with identifying and taking care of our wounds.

**Heal me,
Lord,
and I
will be
healed;
save me
and I
will be
saved.
(Jeremiah
17:14 NIV)**

He himself [Jesus] bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24 NIV)

Jesus cared so much for the wounds He knew we would experience that He suffered and died for us on the cross. His death and resurrection and our trust in Him opens the way for us to find freedom from every wound.

Just as physical wounds need to be cleaned in order to heal, so our hearts need cleansing and the healing that only Jesus can bring. God will wash us clean from our sin if we ask. After a skin wound is cleaned, an antiseptic salve is applied to stop germs spreading. When we read the Bible and fill our hearts with who God says we are, our souls find protection from the damage of the evil one's lies. We put a bandage on a wound

to protect it, changing it as often as necessary until new skin covers the wound. Similarly, we must look after our souls as we heal because the devil is anxious to bring more lies and harm.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 John 1:9; Psalm 107:20; 1 Peter 5:8 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for caring about my wounds. Cleanse me, heal me, protect me from the evil one. I trust You to make me whole. Amen

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2019

SUNDAY PSALM – A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

Shout for joy to the Lord, everyone on earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. Come to him with songs of joy. Know that the Lord is God. He made us, and we belong to him. We are his people. We are the sheep belonging to his flock. Give thanks as you enter the gates of his temple. Give praise as you enter its courtyards. Give thanks to him and praise his name. The Lord is good. His faithful love continues forever. It will last for all time to come. (Psalm 100:1-5 NIRV)

What does it take to make a community sing, shout, and celebrate together? Winning a national or international sports championship certainly fits the bill. In today's Psalm we have a picture of a community filled with joy but there's no sports event. They are remembering the goodness of the God who created them and so much more. They are celebrating the wonderful truth that they belong to God. They are praising God and acknowledging that He cares, protects and provides shelter for them, along with everything else that comes with "belonging."

We see lots of good things around us but there's something that goes much deeper within us when we experience ourselves loved and having a sense of belonging. We can enter in and be part of something good and safe. We can know the safety and peace that comes from the assurance that someone "has our back." That's what the community is celebrating.

Are we celebrating? Do we know that not only has God created us, but He has made a way for us to belong? Have we received forgiveness and new life by trusting in what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross? Are we coming close to God today with confidence because we believe and are trusting that when Jesus washed us clean from our sin, guilt and shame had to go too? Our God loves us and will always be good to us. One question remains for each of us. Will we stand on the sidelines and just watch the community celebrate or will we join in? Will we come joyfully to God with thanks that our sins are forgiven and, confident in His love and goodness, hold onto hope for the future?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I'm so glad that You and I have today together. I've needed the love You give for so long. As I surrender my will and life into Your care help me to trust that You "have my back". Help me to look beyond myself and really notice and celebrate Your generous goodness and mercy all day long. Amen

**Know
that the
Lord is
God. He
made us,
and we
belong
to him.**

*Psalm 100:3
NIRV*

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2019

CHANGING LEAVES

It's autumn. The temperature has cooled. The sun sets earlier. The leaves are changing colour and falling to the ground. Autumn breezes blow and the multi-coloured leaves are sprinkled across the lawn and the sidewalk. Things are changing. A new season is upon us.

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. (Ecclesiastes 3:1 NIV)

The focus has shifted from summer fun and recreation to the responsibilities of education or employment. That can bring pressure and anxiety for some of us. The colder and wetter weather brings many extra challenges for folks who live in vulnerable circumstances.

In the middle of change it's so good to know that some things are constant and reliable.

Change is difficult for most of us because the known always seems easier to deal with than the unknown. In the middle of change it's good to know that some things are constant and reliable. The love of Jesus for us never changes. His presence with us, his forgiveness offered to us, and His commitment to giving us a life that is rich and filled with peace and joy is faithfully offered to us.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ...The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. (Hebrews 13:8, Psalm 33:11 NIV)

Changing seasons are no surprise and no challenge to God who holds all time and seasons in His hands. Long before we were born God had a wonderful life planned for us – a life lived in His tender love and goodness. As we consult with God, He will gladly make His plan known to us in this new season.

I am sure that your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life and I will live in the house of the Lord forever. (Psalm 23:6 NIRV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, As I notice change around me, help me to settle my heart with the assurance that Your goodness and love never change. Fill me with Your wisdom and power so I can fulfill the plan You have for me to serve You and bless others. Amen

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2019

WORKING FOR RECONCILIATION WITH CARE

Honesty, balance, and realism are essential tools to keep at hand as we sort out and rebuild relationships.

She [Wisdom] will guide you down delightful paths; all her ways are satisfying. Wisdom is a tree of life to those who embrace her; happy are those who hold her tightly. (Proverbs 3:17-18 NLT)

Nothing takes more sensitivity and care than dealing with people with whom we have had painful experiences. It doesn't matter if it's close family members or acquaintances, whether the injury happened a decade ago or ten minutes ago, we need to take great care and walk with humility as we work towards reconciliation.

If we find ourselves leaning towards self-justification, we may find it useful to remember ***"Do to others as you would like them to do to you."*** (Luke 6:31 NLT)

As we seek Him, God will teach us the truth about our lives, past, present, and future. Humility says we have much to learn. Our part is to identify and do the work of cleaning our side of the street and then patiently walk in forgiveness until the other party is ready for more. This is the willingness to take responsibility for the harm we have caused and the desire to make amends to which the steps call us.

Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace. (Luke 1:78-79 NLT)

When the time is right, and with a prayerful attitude of seeking God to heal the people we have harmed, we can be confident that God will guide us safely on the pathway to peace and restoration with others.

Prayer: Gracious God, Thank you for your unending love and forgiveness. Please help me to sort my motives as well as my actions as I do the work of restoring relationship with those I have harmed. Help me to be teachable and humble. Holy Spirit, please give me courage and discernment as step by step You guide me on the pathway of peace and love towards others. Amen

Honesty, balance, and realism are essential tools to keep at hand as we sort out and rebuild relationships.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2019

BRING ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS TO GOD

Often in relationships where one or both parties are in some form of addiction, physical or emotional abuse exists. Abuse in some instances is not readily recognized because the abuser strengthens his or her power over the abused by telling them that they “love” them. The abused person then becomes confused and is often made to think that they are the cause of the problem.

Don't envy evil people or desire their company. For their hearts plot violence, and their words always stir up trouble. (Proverbs 24:1-2 NLT)

Like any addiction, it takes time to understand why we allow ourselves to be enslaved by what is harmful to us.

All abuse has a major impact on both the abuser and the person being abused. Both parties will have good times and bad times as they stay in the toxic relationship. The relationship, however, will not get better, it will get worse. Both are captive to the evil that surrounds them.

Do you think that I like to see wicked people die? says the Sovereign Lord. Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live. (Ezekiel 18:23 NLT)

When we come into recovery and admit that we are powerless over our dependencies, these dependencies may include attachment to an abusive person or being one who is powerless to stop abusing. Like any addiction, it takes time to understand why we allow ourselves to be enslaved by what is harmful to us.

As we walk in God's ways and seek help to break the chains that have bound us to the evils of abuse, we will be strengthened by God's trustworthy love to comfort and help us move from its bondage.

Don't offer the parts of your body to serve sin. Don't use your bodies to do evil, but offer yourselves to God, as people who have died and now live. Offer the parts of your body to God to be used for doing good. (Romans 6:13 ERV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess that I have been enslaved by the corruption associated with abuse. Help me to turn away from this evil and get the help I need. I receive Your healing love and care and give every part of myself to You to do what is right. Amen

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2019

EXPRESSING APPRECIATION

When we tell someone how much we appreciate who they are or what they did for us we are lifting them up and valuing their service. This can't help but strengthen our relationships and work towards ongoing co-operation. Since we are encouraging others, we even build ourselves up in the process.

It is good to praise the Lord. God Most High, it is good to praise your name. It is good to sing about your love in the morning and about your faithfulness at night. Lord, you make us very happy because of what you did. I gladly sing about it. (Psalm 92:1-2, 4 ERV)

Expressing appreciation begins with our relationship with God. All we are and have comes from Him. The day before us is a fresh opportunity to experience all the good things God has planned for us. Beginning the day in God's presence, remembering His love and forgiveness and His promises to us, is a strong foundation on which to build a successful day. It also puts us in a positive mindset as we focus on God rather than ourselves. We are ready to be guided by Him.

We also know that being with others in this life is better than being alone. How much do we appreciate someone who notices what we do and compliments and thanks us for our time and effort? Most of us find it very encouraging and heart-warming. One of the most valued gifts we can give someone is to take time to be aware of what they do for us, or on behalf of others, and let them know how much we appreciate them and their efforts.

Love each other in a way that makes you feel close like brothers and sisters. And give each other more honor than you give yourself. Recognize the value of those who work hard among you—those who, as followers of the Lord, care for you and tell you how to live. Show them the highest respect and love because of the work they do. (Romans 12:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 ERV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for this day and for the people who walk alongside me. Help me to have eyes to see and a heart to appreciate what You and they are doing for me and with me. Help me to build others up by taking time to express my appreciation. Amen

When we tell someone how much we appreciate who they are or what they did for us we are lifting them up and valuing their service.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2019

LIVING THE GOOD LIFE

We are strengthened to stay free of our addictions because God is guiding us and supporting us each step of the way. Each experience of God's faithfulness to us deepens our trust and stability as we learn and grow. We share with others and practice God's principles in all our affairs because this is the proven way to experience life at its best.

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
(Lamentations 3:22-23 NIV)

***Having had
a spiritual
awakening
as the result
of these
steps, ...
practice
these
principles in
all our
affairs***

We will know a deeply rooted sense of well-being when we understand that it is "progress not perfection" that we seek. Our lives will be lived in the awareness that God is with us. We will notice the desire to honour God's will in all we do and say growing stronger. Consistently living this way and truthfully telling our story may encourage others who are trapped in the pit of their addiction. Perhaps as they identify with us and the place we were at when we came into recovery, they may be inspired to turn their own lives around.

Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important. I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. (Galatians 6:2-3, John 13:34; 15:13 NLT)

As we practice these principles in all our affairs, we will find ourselves drawing closer to God, and the peace and serenity of His love and grace will envelop our entire being. We will think and feel differently and find positive new ways to behave because we are being guided by the Holy Spirit. This is the good life the 12 Steps speak of and help us walk in.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for bringing me out of darkness into your wonderful light. Help me, to walk in the light of your presence. Help me to shine for you as I gently and humbly share with others how You have changed my life. Amen

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2019

NOT AS I WOULD HAVE IT

The full version of the Serenity Prayer said at most recovery gatherings contains the words, "*Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it*". Jesus left heaven, where He was known, affirmed, and praised, and came to earth in human flesh to save the world from the power of sin. His environment here was certainly not as He would have it. Jesus was despised and rejected by those who ought to have known who He was. To protect their status and way of living, these people bore false witness against Jesus and handed Him over to be mocked, tortured, and killed by oppressive rulers.

People looked down on him. They didn't accept him. He knew all about pain and suffering. He was like someone people turn their faces away from. We looked down on him. We didn't have any respect for him. (Isaiah 53:3 NIRV)

Even though Jesus suffered many things, He chose not to judge the people who treated Him harshly. He knew every person – not just those suffering from addiction – was in bondage, and He had come to set them free. How do we respond to those who are rude to us and do not treat us kindly? Do we see them, as Jesus does, as people God loves who have not yet been set free? This world may not be as we would like it and people may not treat us as we would like, but we can make it better by telling others – "normies" as well as fellow addicts – about Jesus, His love for them, and His power and willingness to set them free, just like He did for us.

I'm sending you off to open the eyes of the outsiders so they can see the difference between dark and light, and choose light, see the difference between Satan and God, and choose God. I'm sending you off to present my offer of sins forgiven, and a place in the family, inviting them into the company of those who begin real living by believing in me. (Acts 26:17-18 MSG)

Next time we pray the Serenity Prayer, let's truly desire to be more like Jesus in the way we respond to others.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I want to be like You and take this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it. Help me to accept the things I cannot change and give me the courage to change the things I can. Amen

***"Taking,
as Jesus
did, this
sinful
world as
it is, not
as I
would
have it."***

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2019

SUNDAY PSALM – BALANCING WORK AND REST

Life in recovery without God is just not worth it. The Bible speaks truthfully about this. It says we are "wasting our time." No matter how hard we work at it, if we are not building this new life in recovery with God, we will weaken, and things will fall apart.

If it is not the Lord who builds a house, the builders are wasting their time. If it is not the Lord who watches over the city, the guards are wasting their time. It is a waste of time to get up early and stay up late, trying to make a living. The Lord provides for those he loves, even while they are sleeping. (Psalm 127:1-2 ERV)

If we are not building this new life in recovery with God, we will weaken, and things will fall apart.

God is not against us doing our part to rebuild. He's not encouraging us to be lazy and neglectful of daily responsibilities. God has given us many gifts and abilities and He delights in us developing and using them for creative and productive purposes. But we all need proper rest and times of relaxing and letting go of the work of the day. Recovery is about finding and maintaining a healthy balance and active trust in God that He is with us, watching over us, and doing those things that we cannot do for ourselves.

The forces of evil and addiction that are seeking to destroy us are far more powerful than we are. For example, the Big Book reminds us that *"we deal with alcohol — cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power — that One is God. May you find Him now!"* (How It Works) We can't prepare for every challenge that will come our way and every trigger that will appear seemingly from out of nowhere. But we can get in the habit of living one moment at a time with God, seeking His guidance, receiving His peace, and trusting His protection as we go about our daily activities and as we lie down to rest at night.

The amazing promise God makes to us in today's Bible verses is that He provides for us even while we are sleeping. God knows our limits, plans for our rest, and gets everything ready for a fresh new day while we sleep. We are loved. We are cared for. We have everything we need to succeed in life and recovery today.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to have faith in the truth of Your word and trust You to help me live a healthy balanced life of work and rest. Amen

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2019

THRIVING IN TOUGH TIMES

Mother Teresa got it right when she said, "A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love." Joy is a gift from God. Joy results when we surrender every part of our lives to God and entrust every detail to His care. Joy bursts forth when we know we have no confidence in ourselves or anything else, but wholeheartedly trust in the Lord. Joy is a sign that a person is thriving rather than just surviving.

Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him! (Psalm 34:8 NLT)

It's up to us to call on God when we are in trouble so that we can move beyond surviving to thriving. Even in times of illness or hardship, God is our refuge and strength. Giving up on God should never be an option. God invites us to depend on Him and rest in the ultimate security that He provides for all our needs. People are joyful when they follow the principles written in the Scriptures and live a life of integrity.

God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. Be still and know that I am God! (Psalm 46:1,10a NLT)

We can fill our hearts and minds with the hope of this new way of life even though it may currently seem impossible for us to achieve. If we resolve to seek Him in all our ways, God will make everything beautiful in His time.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV)

We often get discouraged when things don't work out as we think they should. At times like these we need to ask ourselves, "How is God teaching me to thrive in this situation?" As we trust God and obey His word, God assures us that He is with us and is working for good in everything that concerns us. God's desire for us is that we would thrive and not simply survive.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know that Your desire for me is to thrive and be filled with joy and purpose. Help me to follow your principles and listen for Your guidance when times are tough. You are my hope for a blessed life in which I thrive and not just survive. Amen

Joy is a sign that a person is thriving rather than just surviving.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2019

A SOLUTION FOR OUR GUILT

We feel guilty for all sorts of reasons. When we were running wild in our addiction, we were not even aware of the harm we were causing. It was only when we woke up in recovery and began to look at our lives that we saw and understood how destructive our way of living had been. This awareness often fills us with overwhelming guilt. When we disobey God's principles and harm ourselves and others, we should feel guilt, but God has a solution for it.

God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through him. Christ didn't have any sin. But God made him become sin for us. So we can be made right with God because of what Christ has done for us. (John 3:17, 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIRV)

***God has
a
solution
for our
guilt.***

God wants us to be honest about the wreck we've made of our lives and in His great love and forgiveness is waiting for us turn away from the continuing harm. God wants us to repent of our rebellion and live free from sin. God forgives. God washes clean. God brings about restoration. This is the only way we will ever deal properly with guilt. We are wise if we stop and consider what the Holy Spirit is saying about the consequences of continuing rebellious actions.

We have been set free because of what Christ has done. Because he bled and died our sins have been forgiven. We have been set free because God's grace is so rich. (Ephesians 1:7 NIRV)

The evil one will try to tell us that we can't be forgiven for some of the things we have done. That's a lie! Sometimes we'll think we should be behaving better than what we are – trying to live up to some perfectionistic standard – and feel guilt when we miss the mark. God knows we are frail humans. God wants us to become new creations as He journeys with us. He will teach us how to live life to the full. Today we have a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge our guilt, accept forgiveness freely given through Jesus, and be blessed and built up in Him to be a blessing to others.

Prayer: Gracious God, When I do wrong, help me to quickly repent and receive forgiveness. When the evil one seeks to discourage me by false accusation, help me to stand firm on Your word and challenge my thoughts with the truth that, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Amen

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2019

REACTING TO STRESS

Stress has become a universal problem and many medical professionals consider it an underlying cause of numerous health issues. In our personal lives, pressure and stress can come from a variety of sources: family trouble, financial difficulty, job pressure, health issues and other factors.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NIV)

There are many reactions to everyday stresses. Some people try to flee the problem in the hope that the irritation will go away. Some internalize the pressure, seeking to suppress it. Others crumble emotionally, giving way to despair and depression or addictive behaviour.

One of the best responses we can have to stress is to pray. This one seems obvious, but sometimes it's harder than it seems. Praying requires us to focus on who God is and what God is doing rather than obsessing on the problem.

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. (Philippians 4:6 NLT)

God will never permit circumstances to break or shatter us. He knows our limitations and will not allow us to be overloaded beyond what we can bear. Rather, He seeks to use our stressful times as opportunities for us to gain His perspective, lean on His strength, and develop perseverance with which to endure life's ups and downs.

Prayer: Loving God, Thank You for always being there. When my life has lots of stressful events and some days feel overwhelming, I invite You to come and strengthen me in the midst of my circumstances. Help me to see things from Your perspective. Help me to rest in Your promise to make a way through each situation, even when I think there is no way. Lord, in stressful times, help me to draw close to You and choose to trust and honour You in everything I say and do. Amen

***One of
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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2019

IMPATIENCE

For some of us, a lifestyle in addiction grew out of our frustration with negative events in our life. The absence of another's care for our well-being made us feel vulnerable in our social life and in our community. We became impatient and rebellious because of the way we were treated and either stuffed our feelings or became angry and exploded when things were not as we would have them.

Don't say, "I'll get even with you for the wrong you did to me!" Wait for the Lord, and he will make things right for you. (Proverbs 20:22 NIRV)

A patient person is very smart. A quick-tempered person makes stupid mistakes.

Proverbs 14:29 ERV

When we gave our will and life over to the care of God, we learned that God loved us so much that He gave His son Jesus to pay the debt we owed for our sin. Our relationship with God was restored and we were adopted as His beloved children. The Bible tells us that God is love, and that love is patient and kind. As we experience the undeserved love of God for us, we will repent and get rid of all the bitterness and resentment that is fueling our impatience with those around us.

We get our new life from the Spirit, so we should follow the Spirit. We must not feel proud and boast about ourselves. We must not cause trouble for each other or be jealous of each other. (Galatians 5:25-26 ERV)

Pride also fuels our impatience. We think others should respect us as we deserve, and yet we often do not treat others with the respect they deserve. We get impatient with those who are seeking to help us when they don't meet our time schedule. We get impatient when God does not immediately answer our prayers and begin to obsess on

going back to our old ways. We stress and complain because we consider our needs are more important than the needs of others.

God has a plan for us that is meaningful, purposeful and joyful. Let's get rid of our impatience and trust that God's timing is perfect, and that He will do for us and through us those things He has planned.

Prayer: Loving God, Forgive my impatience with people and events. Help me to see You at work in my life to fulfill those good and perfect plans You have for me. Amen

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2019

RATIONALIZING

We are experts at rationalizing – attempting to excuse, minimize, or justify our bad behaviour. We rationalize because we don't want the inconvenience or embarrassment the truth might bring. We rationalize when we are still angry with someone and want to justify our resentment. God's word paints a very clear picture about this poisonous mixture of truth and lies.

If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar. His word is not in us. Suppose someone claims to love God but hates a brother or sister. Then they are a liar. They don't love their brother or sister, whom they have seen. So they can't love God, whom they haven't seen. (1 John 1:10, 4:20 NIRV)

We need to seek God to awaken us to the harmful choices we are making. He knows the poison stored in the roots of our destructive actions and reactions. He knows and understands the actual impact of all the events that make up our lives – good and bad. There may be traumatic events in our past to which we still have emotional links and the resulting fear translates into our rationalization. God wants to heal our wounds and set us free from the false belief the evil one attached to those memories. Are we willing to be healed?

God's love goes deeper than any painful, shameful action in our past. For all sin that has resulted from rationalizing our behaviour, there is instant, total, and completely undeserved forgiveness. This is the way God's truth begins to come alive in us – we speak truth to our hearts and minds and choose that truth over rationalization. When we surrender our imperfect understanding of ourselves and our past behaviour to God and ask for help, He will reveal the root cause of our confused conduct and show us the best way forward.

...Don't let anyone lead you astray. The person who does what is right is holy, just as Christ is holy. The person who does what is sinful belongs to the devil. (1 John 3:7-8a NIRV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Forgive me for the times I have rationalized my thoughts in order to excuse my unwillingness to do the right thing. I ask You to give me wisdom and the courage to examine my thoughts and actions in accordance with Your word. Help me to get rid of the roots of bitterness and fear which support my rebellion. Help me to walk in truth in the light of Your presence. Amen

God's love goes deeper than any painful, shameful action in our past.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2019

SUNDAY PSALM – THE POWER OF A GLIMMER OF HOPE

My guilt overwhelms me—it is a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and stink because of my foolish sins. I am bent over and racked with pain. All day long I walk around filled with grief. A raging fever burns within me, and my health is broken. I am exhausted and completely crushed. My groans come from an anguished heart. (Psalm 38:4-8 NLT)

This is a pretty graphic picture of someone who has sunk low in their addiction and been trapped there for some time. Our inner pain and guilt are heavy. Our physical bodies are a mess. Our health is broken. We're filled with grief over all we've lost. Exhaustion overwhelms us. The anguish of what has been, what could have been, and what will never be, fills our minds.

The kindness of God seeps into our dark minds and we begin to long for something more than we currently experience.

You know what I long for, Lord; you hear my every sigh. My heart beats wildly, my strength fails, and I am going blind. My loved ones and friends stay away, fearing my disease. Even my own family stands at a distance. Meanwhile, my enemies lay traps to kill me. Those who wish me harm make plans to ruin me. (Psalm 38:9-12a NLT)

Somehow, even though we felt abandoned by our loved ones and were filled with fear about what our enemies might do to us, a new thought came. Who knows why? Did someone offer a prayer on our behalf that God would make Himself known to us? Did we remember something we heard in a meeting in some soup kitchen when we could hardly stay awake? Did we remember something from a childhood Sunday School experience? Who knows how, but the kindness of God seeped into our dark minds and we began to long for something

more than we currently experienced. How amazing is it that God met us in that dark state and has brought us to this day in recovery? The job isn't finished but we have another day to go forward in the care of God.

For I am waiting for you, O Lord. You must answer for me, O Lord my God. ... I confess my sins; I am deeply sorry for what I have done. Come quickly to help me, O Lord my savior. (Psalm 38:15, 18, 22 NLT)

Prayer: Loving God, I'm so grateful for all you've done for me. I can't do life on my own. Today I choose for You and for life with You. How could I do otherwise? Amen

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

A GOOD REPUTATION

Just seeing the words "good reputation" brings a wry smile to those of us who have lived with something quite different for various periods of our life. A life in addiction gives us a reputation, for sure, but it's usually not a good one.

A good reputation is better than expensive pleasures. Choose a good reputation over great riches; being held in high esteem is better than silver or gold. (Ecclesiastes 7:1 ERV; Proverbs 22:1 NLT)

Life with God in recovery brings the amazing opportunity of walking with our head held high and living in such a way that others are blessed by our presence in their lives. They share stories that include reports of our example and support for them. Others hear the stories, form a favorable impression of us, and we become persons who have a good reputation.

What does it take to be a person with a good reputation? We need to be people of our word. When we make a promise, we need to keep it, even when it is inconvenient. When we say we'll be somewhere, we need to get there. When we say we'll do it, we need to follow through.

Lord, who can live in your sacred tent? Who can stay on your holy mountain? Anyone who lives without blame and does what is right. They speak the truth from their heart. They keep their promises even when it hurts. They do not change their mind. (Psalm 15:1-2, 4b NIRV)

Too often in the past we were willing to bend and do whatever we thought it took to be accepted and admired. Now we choose to live as a person who follows God's standards and do what is right, regardless of popular opinion. When people know our principles and that we hold consistently to them, we become safe and steady people to be around. We are respected and trusted – people with a good reputation.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that I can leave my past reputation behind and one day at a time build a new life of integrity and faithfulness. Help me to speak and make promises carefully and be a person of my word. Help me to be more like Jesus in all my ways. Amen

To be a person of good reputation we follow God's standards and do what is right regardless of popular opinion.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2019

TAKING A LOOK AT MY LIFE TODAY

It's a useful practice to take regular inventory of our lives. It helps us maintain spiritual, emotional, and relational health.

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it. Exercise daily in God—no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever.
(James 1:22, 25 NLT, 1 Timothy 4:7-8 MSG)

Regularly taking inventory helps keep us on the path as we work out God's good plan for our lives.

SPOT CHECK INVENTORY: In each situation where we begin to experience things not going well, we need to pause and note what's right and what's wrong. What are we feeling? What's going on beneath the feeling? What are we expecting? What is God's direction in what is going on? Are we living the Golden Rule in this moment, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you?"

DAILY INVENTORY: At the end of each day we talk with God about the events of our day and listen for His encouragement, His correction, and His instruction. Where we need forgiving, we ask for and receive it from God. Where we notice our good intentions, good thoughts, good actions, we note them and give thanks.

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand. (Psalm 37:23-24 NIV)

God has a plan for our lives which will bring meaning and joy. As we plot our course, God will direct our steps and we will be enriched by goodness and love through each step of the journey. Regularly taking inventory helps keep us on the path as we work out God's good plan for our lives.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to see myself as you see me. Help me to rejoice in what is going well and promptly admit what needs to be confessed and changed. Thank you for being with me in every circumstance and for teaching me Your principles for living life well. Amen

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2019

DEALING WITH INSULTS AND LIES

Jesus always spoke the truth. He encouraged people to follow Him because He is the way, the truth, and the life. He said some things that are very difficult to do and do not seem to fit into the category of comfort and encouragement.

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:9 NIV)

Does Jesus really mean this? We see examples of situations like road rage and know that quick-flash anger lives in most of us and can be triggered very quickly. Isn't it enough that we don't act violently in response to what others say and do or spread vicious rumors about them to others? Not only does the Bible teach us to not react and return evil for evil but it challenges us even further when we are taught to find a way to bless the one who is speaking badly about us.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. (Matthew 5:11 NIV)

As Jesus hung on the cross, He blessed and forgave those who put Him there, even while they were busy mocking Him and making fun of Him. Jesus knew it was better to focus His actions on fulfilling what God wanted Him to do rather than be distracted by the sinful words or behaviours of others.

While it may be a challenge, it is true that God will help us when we choose to stop the cycle of insults with kindness. This does not mean that we smile while our fists are clenched. It does mean that we give up the desire for revenge. We let God speak truth to our hearts and give us peace within so the insults and evil lies of others wash off us like oil on a non-stick pan surface. When we do this, we can then ask others to tell us what their problem is and listen long as they offer an explanation. Sometimes it is the right thing to simply walk away in peace and pray a blessing on the wounded angry person.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I can't imagine not insulting someone back when they insult me but I'm willing to do things Your way. With Your help I will do my best to bless someone who, either in the past or even today, speaks evil to me or about me. Remove all lies from my mind and heal my wounded heart and help me to see myself and others as You see them. Amen.

We are taught to find a way to bless the one who is speaking badly about us.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2019

JUST FOR TODAY – WALK HUMBLY

Just for today I will seek to serve others with kindness, doing what is right, and walking humbly with God.

The Lord has shown you what is good. He has told you what he requires of you. You must act with justice. You must love to show mercy and you must be humble as you live in the sight of your God. (Micah 6:8 NIRV)

As we choose life with God in recovery we will often come to a place of challenge where we want to do what we want to do rather than what God is telling us to do. Perhaps we are having fun and it would be inconvenient to stop and listen to a person who needs to share or needs help with something. We'd rather let someone else do it this time. We hear the quiet voice in our head saying, "Do the right thing." Will we ignore it or respond?

Just for today I will seek to serve others with kindness, doing what is right, and walking humbly with God.

Self-centered ways are childish ways. God invites us to grow up and make mature choices as adults to act responsibly. For too long we have let our feelings be our guide and that's been our downfall. God calls us to live as Jesus did, showing compassion and mercy where we can, even when it's inconvenient and we don't feel like doing it.

He makes the whole body grow and build itself up in love. Under the control of Christ, each part of the body does its work. (Ephesians 4:16a NIRV)

We may not know why it's important to do inconvenient things in order to find freedom from character defects and grow into the person we were created to be. We want to learn what we want to focus on when we think we are ready. That's where the principle mentioned above gives us guidance: "***be humble as you live in the sight of your God.***" We are the students. God is the teacher. Only God knows the proper sequence of lessons. God wants us to depend on Him and lessons will come in God's right time. God will show us the way forward and strengthen us to be thoroughly equipped for every good work, but it requires humility and surrender on our part.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me the grace and strength to serve others with kindness. Teach me to do what is right when it is right to do it. Help me to be willing to do things Your way not mine. Amen

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2019

SLOW AND STEADY

Most of us have heard the fairy-tale of the race between a rabbit and a turtle. The rabbit was so sure he would have no trouble winning that he got distracted. The turtle, on the other hand, just put his head down, and one slow step at a time steadily moved forward. It was the turtle, not the rabbit who won the race.

Steady plodding brings prosperity; hasty speculation brings poverty. (Proverbs 21:5 TLB)

We hear all kinds of talk in meetings, treatment programs, and in families, as people start on a journey of change. Often those who "talk big" are those who also "fail big." We should not be distracted or discouraged by what others are saying and doing. God accepts us for who we are and where we are on our journey. He knows all about us and what needs healing and restoring.

Let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. (Ephesians 4:23-24 NLT)

Everyone's journey is different. Each of us needs to be faithful to read the Bible each day and listen to what God says. We need to prayerfully bring our circumstances before God, seek His advice and then act accordingly. Small choices today have a huge impact going forward. God knows how tough the journey is going to be in this season and He will give us what we need for today and prepare us for what lies ahead. God is taking us through the transformation process at just the right pace, a pace that is individually suited to us. With God's guidance, we will have the strength we need for the whole journey.

Small choices today have a huge impact going forward.

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed but wants everyone to repent. (2 Peter 3:9 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I'm so glad You know me. You know my weaknesses and my strengths. You know my past and my future. You are the only one who can help me walk forward at a safe and steady pace. I surrender to Your plans and Your timing. Help me to grow in faithfulness and trust. Help me to be patient and peaceful on my journey with You. Amen

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2019

WHAT AM I DOING WITH WHAT I HAVE?

In the Bible Jesus compared the Kingdom of Heaven to a man going on a journey to a far country. Before he left, he entrusted what he owned to his servants according to their abilities. He gave one servant five talents, another two talents and another one talent. While the master was away the servant with five talents traded and made five more talents. The one with two talents made two more. The servant who was given one talent dug a hole and buried it. Upon his return the master praised the first two servants for what they had done. The third servant made excuses for why he had not used his one talent. The master called him a wicked and lazy servant and took the one talent away from him. *(Read: Matthew 25:14-30)*

God judges on what we have done with what we have been given.

For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. (Matthew 25:29 NKJV)

God has given talents to each of us. We may be someone with five talents, someone with two talents, or someone to whom God has chosen to give one talent. God never judges on the number of talents we have. God judges on what we have done with what we have been given. Some of us think that our past limits our usefulness to God, so we hide our talent so no one can see it. God has entrusted us with His precious word and the ability to invest in telling the good news to others. Are we willing to open our mouths and speak of what God has done for us? If we are, God will give us the words to say.

My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds, of your saving acts all day long—though I know not how to relate them all. (Psalm 71:15 NIV)

Today, let's consider how we can invest what we have been given in the Kingdom of God.

Prayer: Gracious God, Thank You for giving me new life and hope for the future. Forgive me for being fearful of speaking about You to others. I ask You to give me the courage to tell others about Your forgiveness and saving grace. I am forever grateful that You love and care for me. Amen

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2019

GETTING TO KNOW HOW GOOD LIFE CAN BE

As we continue to pay attention and do what God's word says He will reveal more of His will for our lives. God has good plans for our day-to-day living and He's more than willing to make those plans known to us. God has promised us a life that is even better than we could imagine. This is the purpose of prayer and meditation – to get to know the good things God has planned for us and then shape our lives around His life-giving principles. As we act on what God teaches us we become more and more conscious of how well His ways work in all our relationships.

Jesus said: ***But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! Ask me and I will tell you remarkable secrets you do not know about things to come. If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you.*** (John 15:7, Jeremiah 33:3, James 1:5-6a NLT)

Meditation and reading scripture reveal to us the nature of God and all the promises He has made. Underneath the "spiritual exercises" is God's desire to affirm His unfailing love for us. As we pray and meditate on God's Word, we are not seeking to simply learn facts but rather to consciously get to know God.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. The humble will see their God at work and be glad. Let all who seek God's help be encouraged. (John 16:13, Psalm 69:32 NLT)

As we become familiar with God's character and ways and make them the foundation for our daily living we will become more and more aware of the loving and uplifting presence of God in our lives.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I welcome the work of Your Holy Spirit to guide me as You reveal Your will for my life. I am grateful that you give me the desire and power to carry out what You have prepared for me to do. Help me to humbly serve You in Your divine purposes and to honour You in all my ways. Amen

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2019

LIFE IMPROVES AS I PRACTICE SELF-CONTROL

The Bible tells us that when God's Spirit lives in us our lives will demonstrate it by qualities such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. God works in us so we can choose and act in ways that please God and satisfy our souls. One of the ways we please God is to say "yes" or "no" at the appropriate time.

We live in a time and culture that could easily be labeled as self-indulgent rather than self-controlled. One principle that appears to operate in our lives in this 21st Century is, "If it feels good, do it." God desires for us to have a rewarding and fulfilling life. Surprisingly, God tells us that in order to have that we will sometimes have to deny ourselves some immediate pleasures.

As we follow God's guidance and allow God's Spirit to mature the fruit of self-control in us, we will be blessed in this life.

So, let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. (Galatians 6:9 NLT).

Just like the farmer who plants good seeds has to deal with weeds all through the growing season, we will need to do what is right while fighting against the temptation of immediate gratification. Sometimes we will have to wait longer than we expected and trust God's promise to provide us with everything we need at just the right time. While times of waiting are difficult, there are rich rewards to be reaped when we sow the seeds of self-control.

As we follow God's guidance and allow God's Spirit to mature the fruit of self-control in us, we will both be blessed and be able to be a blessing to others around us.

But we belong to the day. So let us control ourselves.

Let us put the armor of faith and love on our chest. Let us put on the hope of salvation like a helmet. (1 Thessalonians 5:8 NIRV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, even though I normally "want what I want when I want it," I pray today that You would help me walk in Your ways and allow Your Holy Spirit to mature the fruit of self-control in me. Amen

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2019

SUNDAY PSALM – LIKE NIGHT AND DAY

Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts. They have no fear of God at all. In their blind conceit, they cannot see how wicked they really are. Everything they say is crooked and deceitful. They refuse to act wisely or do good. They lie awake at night, hatching sinful plots. Their actions are never good. They make no attempt to turn from evil. (Psalm 36:1-4 NLT)

We read these words in the Bible and it perfectly describes those times in our lives when we were running on self-will in our destructive lifestyle. We were co-operating with the evil one every day and often weren't even aware of it. We didn't care about what people thought of us and what we were doing. We told ourselves that we weren't afraid of anyone – certainly not God. Crooked and deceitful barely goes deep enough to describe the choices we made and the things we did.

Aren't we grateful that God, in His great love for us, never gave up on us but kept inviting us to come to Him and leave all that behind? In hindsight we can hardly imagine why we chose to live in such dark and ugly places for so long. The contrast of God's love poured into our lives each day now amazes us as we come into closer conscious contact with Him. Through prayer and meditation, we are now seeking to walk out God's principles for healthy living.

Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the ocean depths. You care for people and animals alike, O Lord. How precious is your unfailing love, O God! All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings. You feed them from the abundance of your own house, letting them drink from your river of delights. For you are the fountain of life, the light by which we see. (Psalm 36:5-9 NLT)

It's not enough to know about God's love. Let's seize the opportunity today to embrace a loving relationship with God, rest in His shadow, and let Him fill us to overflowing with His goodness.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your unfailing love for me. You are the fountain of life and in Your light I am refreshed and strengthened as I choose to give my will and life over to Your care. Help me to wholeheartedly follow You in all my ways. Amen

For you are the fountain of life, the light by which we see.

(Psalm 36:9 NLT)

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2019

AVOIDING PAIN

We don't need to be told that emotional trauma is painful. We've given lots of time and effort to ignoring, avoiding, and denying the pain we feel. We've used anger, addictive substances, and even self-harm to try to reduce our pain. While we think we are reducing pain with our coping mechanisms, we are in fact increasing it. God has a better way of dealing with pain and He offers it to us.

When we invite Him, God comes to be with us in our pain. God is always with us. We will never again be alone. God will watch over and care for us and, as we open our hearts to Him, will heal our pain. His promise is that He will give us the grace we need to persevere until we are fully restored.

We need to admit that we are in pain and become willing to submit to the treatment process required to bring healing.

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. God always gives you all the grace you need. So, you will only have to suffer for a little while. Then God himself will build you up again. He will make you strong and steady. (Psalm 34:18 NIV, 1 Peter 5:10 NIRV)

God will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, but we need to admit that we are in pain and become willing to submit to the treatment process required to bring healing. No matter what got us to this place, God has a solution for our problem. Are we willing to surrender our will and our life into His care, have Him remove our defects of character, sort out our chaotic relationships, and base the direction for our daily living on His principles as recorded in the Bible?

But I never really left you, and you hold my right hand. Your advice has been my guide ... and on this earth you are all I want. My body and mind may fail, but you are my strength and my choice forever. (Psalm 73:23-26 CEV)

Thankfully we have companions in meetings, churches, treatment centers and even in our families, who will help support us. Our part is to stay real and be honest about our pain. God cares. Others care. We don't need to avoid our pain any longer. With God's help we will find healing and freedom.

Prayer: Loving God, I give thanks that as I face my pain You are with me, and You care. I ask You to give me the courage to go forward in recovery, trusting that You will make all things right as I surrender to Your will and Your ways. Amen

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2019

BEING SENSITIVE TO OTHERS

In the Bible we read over and over again how Jesus was sensitive to people and what they were going through. He reached out to them with compassion. Recovering the life God intends us to live is learning how to move from being overly sensitive about our own needs and feelings to becoming aware what others are going through and truly caring about them.

Don't be jealous or proud but be humble and consider others more important than yourselves. Care about them as much as you care about yourselves. (Philippians 2:3-4 CEV)

It's important to be sensitive about what we say, when we say it, and how we say it. We need to learn to be honest but compassionate to those we are speaking with. This goes hand-in-hand with truth telling.

...Everyone should be quick to listen. But they should be slow to speak. They should be slow to get angry. ...Say only what will help to build others up and meet their needs. Then what you say will help those who listen. (James 1:19, Ephesians 4:29 NIRV)

God's word instructs us to be careful and sensitive about what we do or say so we don't offend others. When we insensitively say and do "what we want when we want," we may harm those who are seeking to recover from hurtful situations.

You say, "I have the right to do anything." But not everything is helpful. Again you say, "I have the right to do anything." But not everything builds us up. No one should look out for their own interests. Instead, they should look out for the interests of others. (1 Corinthians 10:23-24 NIRV)

God desires us to have confidence in being the person He created us to be. He longs for us to leave behind feelings of inferiority which lead to living oversensitively to the words and actions of others. God encourages us to stand strong in His love and acceptance.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to speak and behave with wisdom and compassion. Help me to be gentle and kind in all my dealings with others. Amen

Jesus was sensitive to people and what they were going through. He reached out to them with compassion.