

Rotten To The Core

Step One: We admitted that we are powerless over our dependencies, that our life has become unmanageable.

Step One is an admission; an admission of our powerlessness and of our life's wreckage. Regardless of what we have gained or lost - what we have achieved or where we have fallen short - we have ultimately reached a bottom. The first step is one of surrender, an admission of defeat. In our helplessness and sorrow we turn to God. Yet our feelings of unworthiness, our lack of merit, prompt a degree of hesitancy. We are not happy about our sinfulness, but we can rejoice in the knowledge that God is ready and willing to lovingly work with us to do for us what we cannot possibly do for ourselves.

I have come to urge sinners, not the self-righteous, back to God. Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous, but sinners. (Matthew 9 & Mark 2)

We wonder how God could possibly value us as a person. We think we are the only one who has made such a horrible mess of life, the only one who has been given a rotten hand in life. God tells us that His thoughts are different than ours and invites us to look at ourselves and our life from a new perspective. ***The Lord looks down from heaven on all to see if there are any who are wise, who want to please God. But no, all have strayed away; all are rotten with sin. Not one is good, not one.*** (Psalm 14) We are not alone in our suffering and sin. We are not alone in our bad choices. We aren't suffering simply because we've misused chemicals or developed destructive habits and co-dependent relationships. We are not suffering because we were created a second class human being or because we grew up in a less than perfect environment. We suffer because we have not lived to please God and to seek God's will in how we live each day. We suffer because we've

decided that our pain is too great, our confusion is too bleak, our fear and panic are too strong, and so we give in to a temptation for a "quick fix." We have all strayed away to our own twisted plans and short-sighted solutions that didn't include God.

But remember this - the wrong desires that came into your life aren't anything new and different. Many others have faced exactly the same problems before you. And no temptation is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it, for God has promised this and will do what He says. God will show you how to escape temptation's power so that you can bear up patiently against it. (1 Corinthians 10)

At various points in our life we become aware that life is a mess and that we are a failure. At those moments of pain we have a choice. We can run further into our addiction in a useless attempt to avoid our sorrow and shame, or we can turn to God. ***For God sometimes uses sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek eternal life. We should never regret his sending it. But the sorrow of the one who is not a Christian is not the sorrow of true repentance and does not prevent eternal death.*** (2 Corinthians 7) When we turn to God, the wonderful reality is that God uses even our sorrow and troubles for good. ***We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.*** (Romans 8)

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What kind of circumstances tempt me with thought of "I can't handle this. This is too much. I just can't do this anymore"?
2. What "escape" plans are the ones that most often surface for me in my thoughts or my actions? (Habits, addictions, attitudes, etc. we use to run away from problems or difficulties)
3. What information do I need to give to feelings of shame and unworthiness I experience as I reflect on my life?
4. How can I face and work with sorrow in a way that will help me turn from sin and seek new life?