

Satisfaction by Submission

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

One reason Step Three looks so hard to some people is the fact that it is an external step, not just an internal decision. This step requires action toward another person and that person is God. The "12 x 12" says, "It is only by ACTION that we can cut away the self will which has always blocked the entry of God into our lives."

Why would we bother to do that? Why take on this challenging action? Why give God entry into our lives? The truth is, we will never experience real satisfaction in our life until we shape our lives by what is real and only God knows what that looks like for each of us. Only by inviting God to live in us to direct our thinking, and then surrendering to God by acting according to what He says, will we ever find what we've been seeking all along – both in and out of addiction – life that really is life at the deepest places of our experience. Behaving according to God's will is what actually satisfies. That's what we've actually longed for, without knowing it. When we begin to live according to God's will it's like the light goes on and we recognize, "This is it. This is what I've been looking for." In that moment something new comes alive that's never been alive before and it truly is satisfying.

Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will accept. Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is. (from Rom. 12)

Submission is simply coming to understand that we live in God's world and that He is the only one who can successfully run it. Submission is a way of coming to understand that if we are going to finally have a life we MUST NOT always have our own way. Our happiness is NOT the result of getting what we want when we want it. In fact, true happiness will only be achieved when we repeatedly say, "NO" to ourselves and "YES" to God's will.

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. (from Jeremiah 29)

The God who has created us puts before us what He alone knows is good for us and, in love, warns us away from things that would harm. His thinking isn't twisted by wounds and resentments and shame and fear. His perspective is solely one of love and blessing. His one desire is for us to know a satisfying way of life and live it well.

What is this satisfying way of life we call God's will? While it is important to listen to our heart for that, it is even more important to actually learn the wisdom of God that is already well described. It is not up to us to figure out or re-invent God's will for ourselves. God has already clearly taught His people how to know His will through the Bible and through listening to and obeying good counsel from pastors, sponsors, and healthy friends who have experience walking with God.

During the adjustment stages of our life with God in recovery we will find ourselves being irritated and stretched by these new demands. The real challenge of turning our will and our lives over to the care of God will be the exercise of humility that says, "God knows better than I do. I need to trust God and make this change even though I don't FEEL like it." Turning our will and our life over to the care of God is not simply asking God to bless what we think and what we figure out, but actively researching what God says brings satisfaction to daily life and then submitting ourselves to that new structure on a daily basis.

Christ has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us – they help us learn to endure. And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation. And this expectation will not disappoint us. (from Romans 5)

We often search for a shortcut to happiness and satisfaction. Life often takes us through painful places we would rather avoid. Some of us have gotten off the right track, lured away by hopes of a faster and easier way to "the good life." We are told by God that Satan will forever offer us these shortcuts. We are warned to resist the devil and then we can expect that he will flee from us. This resistance is shown by ignoring anything that we know is wrong, staying away from people and places that are harmful to our recovery, and building ourselves up by staying with Godly people and involved in activities that God says build spiritual health in us.

We need to keep asking ourselves is: Did my old familiar ways of doing things really satisfy me? Will I now turn to God who made me, whose desire is to give me a full and satisfying life? Will I surrender and follow this new way in order to find the satisfaction I've always desired?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How is my life being restructured as I regularly exchange my will for God's satisfying new way of life?
2. What am I doing that is different from what the Bible says? What am I not doing that the Bible says I should? How will I adjust to what God says works?