

Accountability: The Cure That Lasts

Step Five -- We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Why do we need to admit our wrongs? What makes Step Five an important part of our recovery?

Live no longer as the ungodly do, for they are hopelessly confused. Their closed minds are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him. They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed. But that isn't what you were taught when you learned about Christ. There must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness—righteous, holy, and true. (Ephesians 4)

As we grapple with our addictions we are likely to avoid honest communication with others about our problems. It is important, however, that we return to the relationships that help us face the truth. Various Bible writers speak of the value of honesty, of dealing honestly and directly. Jesus also laid out specific instructions for dealing with people who have done wrong but persist in denial. Accountability and honesty in our relationships are essential to successful recovery. When we make ourselves accountable to others, the caring influence of their friendship can help keep us on the right track. They can provide us with an objective perspective, helping us to admit the truth. We often become isolated as a result of our shame or the fear that we will be rejected if we ever reveal who we really are. Admitting our wrongs to a trustworthy person helps break down the isolation.

What's our role as friends in recovery and brothers and sisters in Christ? How are we meant to be there for each other?

Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ. For we are each responsible for our own conduct. Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time. (Excerpts from Galatians 6)

Step Five says goodbye to self-deception and hello to forgiveness and cleansing. God promises there is cleansing from every wrong. Admitting the exact nature of our wrongs includes giving an account in exact and specific terms. It is only when we get specific that we will no longer be able to fool ourselves about the nature of our wrongs. Since we cannot ignore God and get away with it anyway, we might as well come clean and be forgiven.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Why do I need to continue to return to people who help me face the truth about myself?
2. What's life in recovery like with ongoing clear and humble confession as compared to living in lies and deception?
3. How do we go about building a relationship with someone to whom we can return again and again for an honest talk about how we are doing?
4. If I confess to God, why do I need to tell anyone else the exact nature of my wrong?
5. How do I practice this principle on a daily basis?