

Becoming Willing To Obey

Step 6: We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Surrendering to God is the goal of Step 6, with a desire that God remove patterns of sin and woundedness from our lives. We experience freedom and fulfillment in life only when God's desires become our desires, God's way becomes our way, and God's word becomes our action. ***Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for God's sake shall find it. Seek first God's kingdom and God's righteousness; and all these things will be added to you.*** (Psalm 37, Matthew 16, Matthew 6)

Jesus knew the tragic results of individuals choosing self-centered lives. Jesus taught and demonstrated that the key to a life that is truly happy, joyous and free is the choosing of God's will over our own. We cannot make ourselves do things that are best for us so Step 6 is not a decision to accomplish something. Rather, it is a willingness to let new priorities from God shape our thinking and behaving. When our goal is to be happy we will fall into destructive self-centered life patterns. When our goal is to love God and have a relationship with Him, God will give happiness as a by-product of that relationship. God says: ***"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*** (2 Corinthians 12:9)



As we work Step 6 we make one fundamental change -- we commit to become persons who desire God's will instead of our own. We learn to face reality by overcoming false beliefs about: a) what is right and wrong with my life; b) who has the necessary information about what works; and c) who gets to be in charge of the process of change. Step 6 acknowledges that I've come to understand that in my sinful brokenness I am unable to identify right and wrong for myself. I need God's word to show that to me. Step 6 also comes alive in me when I look to God's word and wise Christian counsel, rather than my own experience to help me identify what is helpful and harmful in my character. I actually complete this step when I begin to act in God's new way – anything, anywhere, anytime. ***Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.*** (Proverbs 3:5-6 NLT)

We have long established patterns of behaviour that challenge us as we seek to apply Step 6 in our daily living. We have certain patterns that we hang onto because they SEEM to meet important needs in our lives and SEEM to help us avoid pain.

People pleasing is one example. We think we can't risk confronting others with the truth. We go to extremes to avoid and run away from problems or we hide behind anger and

unforgiveness. We mistakenly believe that we are not safe and secure if others disagree with or disapprove of what we think or do. As followers of Jesus Christ, we will regularly make choices that look strange and unpopular to those who have surrounded us in our lives of addiction and early recovery. In a world that tells us to take charge of our own destiny rather than handing it over to God for His control of the changes, we will look different. We will be misunderstood at the outset. Step 6 requires us to prioritize following God's instructions over the opinions of others and the discomfort their misunderstanding gives us. Jesus described this with a picture about a narrow gate and few finding the gate. ***The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.*** (Matthew 7:13-14)

Perfectionism is another example of a character defect that needs to go when we come to God for change in Step 6. In our past, the appearance of things being in control or safe was more important than the actual underlying truth. This pattern of needing to appear perfect often shows up in our recovery as well. In spite of the fact that we acknowledge areas of healing and brokenness in the recovery process, we are still afraid to acknowledge weakness. The exposure of weakness makes us feel unsafe. Our self-image is so vulnerable that we seem unable to admit that, even though by God's grace, we are living better than we did, we still struggle. To admit the struggle is to somehow name our life in recovery as failure or too hard and so we try to hide behind a facade of perfectionism. We can recognize the façade when we start rationalizing our own attitudes or actions by comparing them to the behaviours of others. When we hear ourselves think or say, "it's all good" we're moving in this direction. When we simply want to hide away from or actually begin to isolate from others because of "their crappy behaviour," chances are there's a façade of perfectionism in us that needs to be torn down. ***Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer 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.*** (Galatians 6:1)

Step 6 helps us to acknowledge the truth that we cannot make ourselves perfect or good enough for God. God is the only one who can remove defects of character in us as we walk with Him. This is not a one-time event. It is a journey. As we agree with God that His ways are right and, time after time obey His instructions, we allow Him to remove our self-destructive behaviour patterns and reform our will to match His will. ***Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*** (Psalm 139:23-24) Inside God's never-ending love and acceptance, Step 6 requires surrender to this new way of life of continuing obedience to the Lord of life.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What has changed in my life so God's desires and priorities are now more and more my desires and priorities?
2. What do I need to do on a daily basis to actually live in this new way of continued obedience to God?