

COURAGE TO CHANGE

STEP 6 - We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Having God deal with our defects can be frightening. No matter how bad life gets we tend to feel at home with what's familiar. We may stay trapped in destructive life patterns because we fear change. But if we wait for the fear to go away before we take courageous steps, we'll never make significant progress in recovery.

The character defects we want to eliminate are often developed through many years of struggling to survive. They are part of us and will not vanish overnight. We do not need to fear that God will cause things to change so quickly that we won't be able to handle it.

As God's people were about to conquer the Promised Land, Moses said to them: ***"Do not be afraid of those nations, for the Lord your God is among you, and he is a great and awesome God. He will cast them out a little at a time; he will not do it all at once, for if He did, the wild animals would multiply too quickly and become dangerous. He will do it gradually, and you will move in against those nations and destroy them"*** (Deuteronomy 7:21-23).

The entrance of God's people into the Promised Land is like our journey into a new life. Their conquest was to take place a little at a time. Recovery is also a long-term process. We need not fear change. God will cast out our defects a little at a time so we can handle the changes. Then we will be able to gradually move into a new life, experiencing victory one step at a time. Paul tell us that ***"God who began the good work in you will keep right on helping you grow in His grace until His task within you is finally finished"*** (Philippians 1:6).

Courage isn't the absence of fear. Courage means that we take advantage of the little strength we find within ourselves, that we find little ways to encourage ourselves, and that we stubbornly stick to God's program for us. Having the courage to change does not mean that we will never experience some fear. It means finding enough strength to take the next step.

In the Bible when Jesus walks on the water, the disciples are terrified when they see him. ***"Then Peter calls to Him, 'Sir, if it is really you, tell me to come over to you, walking on the water.'*** ***'All right,' the Lord said, 'come along!'*** ***So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when He looked around at the high waves, he was terrified and began to sink. 'Save me, Lord!' he shouted. Instantly Jesus reached out his hand and rescued him"*** (Matthew 14:28-31).

Peter gathered up enough courage to take one step. He ventured out into a new experience. When he got in over his head, he called out to Jesus and found the help he needed. We, too, only need to summon the courage to take the next step. This doesn't mean that we won't be afraid or don't need help. It does mean that with God's help, we can make it. All we need is the courage to take just one more step.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What scares me about having God remove my defects of character?
2. How do I think my life will be different as these defects are removed?
3. What does being "entirely ready" mean to me?
4. Which defects am I not entirely ready to have removed? Why am I still attached to them?
5. What can I do to become "entirely ready" to have God remove them?
6. What one step is God calling me to take?
7. How do I take it?

