

Removing the Cancer

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

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. (Romans 6:12-13)

"The biopsy results are back. The lump is cancer." Shocking words that forever change the course of a person's life. In my friend's life it meant taking leave from work, having surgery, going through six months of radical chemotherapy and another 5 weeks of radiation therapy.

Defects of character are as much a part of us and as dangerous to our spiritual health as cancer is to my friend's body. However, without the careful testing and analysis of medical professionals my friend's cancer would have gone undetected. She initially went to the doctor for help with fluid on her legs not a lump in her breast. The lump had formed and grown undetected in my friend's chest for a lengthy period of time.

Many of us come into recovery because we are sick and tired of being sick and tired. Life has spun out of control and the pain of the consequences now outweighs the temporary pleasure of the addictive behaviour. Our bodies are broken. Our relationships are wrecked. Memories of things done to us and by us haunt our days and nights. Guilt and shame seem overwhelming. We admit our lives are unmanageable. We welcome God to come and take away this pain and begin to care for us. And for a period of time things improve - in some cases dramatically.

Then, in a shocking turn of events, we are brought face to face with an evil virus in us that is killing us that needs to be dealt with -- our self-centered patterns of behaviour that are rooted in defects of character. We are told that we are unable to fix ourselves and that we need God to remove these defects.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

How many times over the course of the next months and years did I hear my friend talk about how she "wasn't sick" until she went to the doctor. What did she mean? The cure for her cancer required painful surgery and weeks of recovery. Then it was 6 months of nausea and weakness,

hair loss and discomfort while doctors poured poison into her system to deal with lurking cancer cells. That was followed with burnt and peeling skin, sores in her mouth and extreme fatigue from weeks of radiation treatments. There's no doubt that my friend felt much worse during this time of treatment than she ever did before she went to see the doctor.

When the initial layer of distress and discomfort is removed from our lives in recovery we come face to face with our own brokenness and sin and the only hope for healing is radical, and often painful, treatment.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (Romans 12:1-2)

To become ready to have God remove all our defects of character we have to become willing to not only stop all known sin in our lives, but allow God to show us ways we've been harming ourselves and others in ways we were not even previously aware. An ancient measure of sin in human lives was "The Seven Deadly Sins" - pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, & laziness. To move away from these deadly sins requires that we give God permission to change our habits, our thoughts, and no longer do what we feel like doing when we feel like doing it. It hurts. It's not convenient and many times it doesn't even feel fair. But if we are going to really allow God to remove our defects of character, we have to give God total control of who we are and what we do.

Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:20-23)

Only God can remove the cancer of my character defects. The treatment is radical and for a time, uncomfortable, but the results are life. Am I ready and willing to place myself in God's hands so He can remove whatever He knows is killing me?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Where am I experiencing discomfort in my living and relationships today?
2. How are the seven deadly sins active in my daily living?
3. What do I need to acknowledge today that I've been unwilling to look at previously?
4. What do I need to do today to get ready for God to remove these defects of character?