

What Does Willing Look Like?

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

Step 6 reminds us that we can solve problems only by becoming willing to change something about ourselves. The character defects we work to release in Step 6 are the behaviors and attitudes that keep us bound to our problems, whatever those problems may be.

So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. Don't be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry. Now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds.

Many problems simply cannot go away until we become willing to let go of the thinking and acting that ties us to them. From God's perspective, that involves a whole new focus around who we are and how we live our days. In the past we started with our fears, resentments, and anxieties in mind. From there we chose reactions, bad attitudes and manipulative or addictive behaviours to try to get what we thought we needed. In our new life with Christ, we are to train our minds to start with a "God focus" rather than a "personal focus." We remember that God is with us, making available to us a power greater than ourselves to restore us to sanity. God has a way of life for us that is good and pleasing. But, it is quite different from our well-practiced habits of responding. God has new resources for us when we are willing and ready to stop (or let go of) the old.

Clothe yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you. Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness,

humility, gentleness, and patience. You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love. Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And always be thankful.
(Col 3)

If recovery is to be a living experience and not just something we read and talk about, we're going to have to become willing to say goodbye to a lot of our old, habitual behaviors. We don't put clean clothes on top of dirty clothes. We first remove the dirty clothes, take a bath, and put on fresh. Instead of simply making an informed inventory of our negative and fear-filled responses to a situation, God invites us to receive new things from Him and respond in new ways. Instead of anger and rage we can receive healing, comfort, and strength to forgive. We learn to make allowances for others and to set healthy boundaries. Instead of responding to every lust and desire we feel, we can acknowledge the feeling, identify the basic loneliness or fear beneath it, and let God touch us with tenderness and companionship. Instead of lying and manipulating we can receive strength to choose the truth that ultimately sets us free.

In Step Six we need to become aware of ourselves as children of God, in the present. With God's help old responses can be put away and all things can become new.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How do we let go with the obsession of ourselves - our rights, our demands, our definition of how things are?
2. Where do the words of Jesus fit into the shaping of my thoughts as I deal with life in a new way?
3. Lying, cheating, lashing out, running away, and manipulating have been survival techniques for us for a long time. How do we become willing to let those go?
4. One character defect many of us struggle with can be described, "If I feel a need for something, I have to get it." (i.e. attention, sex, boredom/excitement) God calls this lust. How can I move from lust to living in God's good gifts?
5. How do we make the switch from anger and impatience to "making allowance" and forgiveness?