

Stinking Thinking

One of our greatest spiritual dangers, especially as we walk in the steps of our recovery, is "stinking thinking." Delusion comes in many forms. One false thought is the conviction that God cannot or will not help me. When we think that way, we tend to allow ourselves to be dominated by fear - fear of relapse, fear of the past, fear of guilt, fear of embarrassment, fear of loneliness, fear of being hurt in relationship.

Jesus said, "Do not be afraid; ... I am with you always." (Matthew 28)

What we think leads to what we do. Thought almost always precedes action, yet thinking can be inaccurate and miss the mark. When we think that God cannot or will not help us, we leave ourselves wide open to negative actions. We're too afraid to do what is good so we end up experiencing dissatisfaction and emptiness and often choose addictive habits to fill the gap. When we think we have to "take care of ourselves" as we relate to others, we get hurt and retaliate without considering a new and healing way God might have for us to respond. We blame others or our circumstances for what we are feeling and experiencing and so we vent our fears and angry thoughts on whoever is closest to us at the moment. Then we end up experiencing discouragement, loneliness, and increased pain from the angry conflicts.

Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him and He will help you. (Psalm 37)

God does not leave the safety of our lives to the experience of others. God invites us to put our lives into His hands and into His care. When we are convinced that God's power is greater than any evil that could come to us, we can live daily with confidence, hope, and optimism. We can dare to believe life can be good for us and reject the thoughts that try to keep us discouraged and afraid. We can face disappointment or even failure with a positive energy as we open ourselves to the new

growth God is building in us through the experience of His care for us.

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 direct your paths. (Proverbs 3)

God wants us to live safely and He teaches us to distinguish between damaging fear and sober precaution. Fear paralyzes and drives us to dark and lonely places. Precaution helps us to avoid foolish mistakes and maintain safe steps. A cautious person thinks clearly and takes reasonable risks but also recognizes real danger and chooses another path.

Cast all your anxiety on God because He cares for you. (1 Peter 5)

God invites us to trust that He really cares about us. When our life is going smoothly, trust seems easy. The test of trust always comes when life stops making sense. When faced with situations that cause worry and anxiety, we have two options: assume that Jesus doesn't care about me ("stinking thinking") or we can choose to put our trust in Him and expect good guidance and helpful solutions. Our trust must be in God even if we don't understand everything we are going through.

Unfailing love surrounds those who trust in the Lord. (Psalm 32)

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. In what circumstances might I think God doesn't really know or care about what I'm going through?
2. What difference does it make to my actions to have God with me when I am feeling vulnerable or afraid?
3. What's my experience of actions (bad or good) being directly influenced by what I am thinking?
4. What thought processes do I have to go through to move from failure and fear to optimism and confidence?
5. How does a person actually "cast all their anxiety on God" and what's the result of that?