

Serenity Prayer: *Acceptance*

There are times when life treats us unfairly. We may protest the injustices, fall victim to self-pity, give in to a "poor me" kind of attitude, or sink into depression. During these times when life is unfair, however, what we really need is serenity. Serenity is an inner calm in the midst of the ups and downs of life. It involves learning to be content with the things in our life that cannot be changed.

If anyone in history could claim to have been treated unfairly, it was Joseph. He was one of twelve sons, the favourite of his father. In their jealousy, Joseph's ten older brothers staged his death to fool their father and sold him into slavery in Egypt. Once a slave, Joseph devoted himself to serving his master well and was quickly promoted. His master's wife then propositioned him, and when Joseph refused her, he was falsely accused of rape. Thrown into prison with no hope of release, he again did his best to serve. He was soon running the administration of the prison. Finally, after many long years, Joseph was freed. He was promoted to the position of Prime Minister of Egypt. From this position Joseph was able to eventually confront and forgive his brothers, who had sold him into slavery many years before (*Genesis 37-45*).

Some of us have never accepted the hurtful circumstances of our life. We may be living in denial to avoid the pain. We continue to struggle against the painful realities, to rebel against who we are or what has happened to us. Others of us have accepted the bad, even to the point of feeling that it's normal and comfortable. Therefore, we repeat the destructive cycle of behaviour.

The apostle Paul wrote: *"I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little"* (*Philippians 4:11-12*). When Paul wrote this, he was in a Roman prison waiting to hear if he would be executed. And yet we hear no whining or complaining. Instead, he learned to accept the circumstances he could not change.

SERENITY PRAYER

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things
I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
taking, as Jesus did,
this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it;
Trusting that You will make all things right
if I surrender to Your will;
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with You forever in the
next. Amen.*

The process of recovery is a time of learning to find serenity while also accepting life as it is. Life isn't always fair. It isn't predictable or controllable. It can be wonderfully rich in some ways and terribly difficult in others. When we become willing to face the hurt in our life and consider how we have reacted to it, then our discomfort can lead us to break the destructive cycle. Then we can learn to be content with the things we cannot change.

We can't change the fact that our world is imperfect and things are far from the way they should be, but we can choose our attitudes. We need serenity from God to help us change our responses to the injustices of life.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How do I respond when life treats me unfairly?
2. How do I get serenity and learn to be content with the things in life which cannot be changed?
3. What turned Joseph's difficult situation into something positive? How might I put this into practice in my own life?
4. How am I handling the painful circumstances of my past?
5. How might I better handle them?
6. What one thing can I do this week to change the way I react to pain?