

Life With God In Recovery

DENIAL



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For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. (Romans 7:18-20 NIV)

The first step towards recovery is in recognizing and admitting that we have a dependency on a substance and/or a person. Denial of that fact is the first obstacle we must overcome. When we are in denial, we truly believe that we do not have a problem with dependency, and we don't need help. Others may have identified the behaviour associated with our dependency but we continue to deny that the problem even exists.

The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives. (Jeremiah 17:9-10 NLT)

Denial keeps us in slavery because we are lying to ourselves. We also lie to others in an attempt to cover up even though our addictive behaviour is glaringly evident. As we become slaves to our addiction, we lose the ability to choose any other way of life. It is only when we break the cycle of denial, when we become brutally honest with ourselves about our bondage, that there is any chance for real freedom.

Denial comes in many forms. How can we identify denial in ourselves or in someone we love?

1. Avoidance: We either withdraw from others to avoid talking about addiction or we try to manipulate the conversation to talk about "anything but MY problems."
2. Arguing: Addicts easily get into arguments about their addictive behaviour and somehow think that by strenuously denying their problems they will go away.
3. Complete Denial: Addicts refuse to admit they have a problem. They believe others have misrepresented their situation.
4. Minimizing: The addict will minimize how much or how often they use their substance of choice or how bad the problem actually is. They are unwilling to see that using is destroying their relationships, ability to work, and other aspects of their lives.

They may admit a slight problem exists and even attempt to change by their own efforts, but, they will not admit they need help.

5. **Rationalizing:** Addicts make excuses for their behaviour hoping that their reasons will be enough for them to avoid taking any action. "I can do what I want because I'm not hurting anyone except myself."

6. **Blaming:** Addicts try to shift responsibility for their behaviour to the behaviour of others.

7. **Comparing:** Addicts attempt to show that because someone else's problem is greater than theirs, they don't have a serious problem

8. **Bargaining:** Addicts often make deals with themselves or others, "I'll just have one more. I'll stop tomorrow. I just need a little to get through today."

9. **Manipulating:** Addicts pretend to take positive steps, hoping others will leave them alone. Addicts may admit they have a problem but do nothing, expecting others to get involved and solve their problem.

When we have come to new life in Christ, we ask God to reveal truth in all our affairs. We desire to know what is helpful and good, and to identify what is foolish and harmful so it loses its power to negatively impact us.

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24 NIV)

When we seek God's help to confront denial, God will expose where our thinking and perceiving have become twisted and where our ways and His ways differ. God's power and wisdom will help us make changes according to what He shows us.

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. (Hebrews 4:12 NLT)

While in recovery we learn to accept responsibility for our actions. We come to realize that our actions yield consequences. Some of us may have deceived ourselves into thinking we could escape the consequences of the things we did. But with time, we have become aware that God has made accountability a necessary element of healing and healthy living.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7-8 NIV)

The good news is that God will help us face anything we need to deal with. God will show us a way forward for ourselves and also with those we may have harmed. God wants us to live in self-worth before Him and others. We fear the humiliation and pain of naming the truth about our shameful past, but God's forgiveness brings great joy and deep peace when we finally acknowledge the truth. Truth leads to freedom. Deceit and denial lead to bondage and death. God encourages us to fearlessly admit truth today. Let's live in the life and freedom God offers by doing life in God's way today.

Questions for Reflection and Group Discussion

1. In what ways am I vulnerable to denial about my actions?
2. How does God's loving presence in my life help me overcome denial and walk in life-giving truth?
3. Did others try to help me face reality? What denial techniques did I use to maintain the lie that I didn't have a problem?
4. For each of the 9 listed areas of denial, give a personal example from both the past and the present.
5. In what way do I allow God to search me and name any thoughts, motives, or behaviour that are offensive to Him? What do I do with what God reveals?
6. Where do I notice good results from living in truth rather than denial?
7. What lingering problems with denial do I still struggle with?
8. What will I do this week to root out denial so I can experience the joyful life God promises?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I know from experience that my heart deceives me. Forgive me for the ways I've sought to escape responsibility for my actions through various forms of denial. Tonight, I invite You to reveal to me the truth about the impact of my past actions and behaviour. I ask you to fill me with strength and courage to acknowledge and deal with what You reveal to me. I come to You weary of my burdens. I desire the new life of healing and hope that You promise when I live in truth. Thank You for Your unfailing love and care for me. AMEN