

JESUS' DEATH AND MY RECOVERY

What does the death of Jesus have to do with us? What difference does it make to persons in recovery that Jesus died and was resurrected over 2000 years ago?

Most of us have attended meetings and worked through the 12 steps. We have prayed and read God's word, and have come to acknowledge that our neglect, actions and words have hurt others. The good news is that the death and resurrection of Jesus provides the way for forgiveness of sins and eternal life for us, and for all human beings. The penalty for whatever evil was done by us, or done to us, was paid in full at the cross. We can be free from the pain that drove us to addiction, and the self-will that kept us there, by receiving God's forgiveness. When we "believe on the one God has sent" we are forgiven and born again to a new life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NIV)

SURRENDER AND THE CROSS: At some point, we will have to make a decision which way of life we will choose. We can continue to try and manage our present difficulties, our sin, and our broken relationships, or we can give our lives over to Jesus. We can let memories trigger anger and resentment, or we can be healed. We can remain stuck in an endless cycle of wandering as a wounded person, crippled by the events of the past, or we can be freed from being a victim.

God says, ***This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.*** (Deuteronomy 30:19 NIV)

Jesus surrendered to God's will and plan for His life and submitted to the painful way of the cross. Jesus suffered in our place so that we might receive God's boundless grace as we turn our will and our lives over to His care.

HEALING THROUGH THE CROSS: Through the cross and resurrection, Jesus opened up a new way of life for us. We can bundle up our pain and brokenness, our hatred and self-pity, our addictive behaviour, our sadness and sorrow, and bring it to the foot of the cross. Jesus asks each of us today, "Do you want to get well?" There's only ONE way for us to get well and that's by letting go of our old way of doing life, which Jesus died for on the cross, and receive the new life which Jesus purchased for us by His death and resurrection. This is the only way our defects of character can be fully removed.

Life With God In Recovery

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It was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6 NLT)

DEFECTS OF CHARACTER AND THE CROSS: How do we turn our will and our lives over to the care of God and allow Him to remove all of our defects of character? We make a choice. We humble ourselves before our loving God and tell him that we, like Jesus, are willing to live in obedience to Him and follow his directions NO MATTER THE COST. We stop harming ourselves and others. We forgive ourselves for the hurt we have caused. We forgive others for the hurt they have inflicted on us. We surrender to God those things that are harmful to our mind, our emotions, our bodies, and our relationships, humbly asking him to remove our shortcomings. We stop doing things our own way and learn new ways of coping. We learn and obey whatever God says works. We receive comfort and healing, guidance and strength from Him, so that we can relate in a healthy way with loved ones and friends.

GOD'S CARE FOR US PROVEN BY THE CROSS: The death of Jesus on the cross clearly shows us that God cares about us. We can affirm God's love for us each day as we surrender our will and our lives over to His care. God cared when injustice was done to us, and if we bring our pain to Him, His love and mighty power will bring healing from the worst type of injustice we may have encountered. As we come to Him, God will work in our lives to renew our minds and hearts, and shift our focus from our pain to His unending goodness towards us.

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. (Philippians 4:8 NLT)

OUR JOURNEY AND THE WAY OF THE CROSS: The cross of Jesus reminds us that God's way is often different from ours. Sometimes, despite all our good intentions, we may fail to do the right thing. Discouragement may come. We need to focus on the fact that we are not failures, but are "works in progress". That's why we take personal inventory, and when we are wrong, promptly admit it. Sometimes we set ourselves up for disappointment. We want an immediate answer to the prayer we have just prayed so that change will come quickly and we can feel better. We want others to be sorry for what they have done to us before we are willing to let go of the hurt and resentment we have held towards them. However, life does not work that way.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. (Isaiah 55:8 NIV)

THE CROSS AND GOD'S PERFECT TIMING OF EVENTS: We often "give up on God" before His plan, in His perfect timing, takes effect. Jesus death on Good Friday came before His resurrection on Easter Sunday. Things looked hopeless during the time between those two events. Negative thoughts may challenge our new way of life. A memory may return. Something we were so sure was going to be the answer for us crashes, or comes to an end. Life seems lonely or even empty.

However, God's word reminds us, ***Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever.*** Jesus knew that....***in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*** (Hebrews 12:2 MSG; Romans 8:28 NIV)

God's plan for our new life required Jesus' death on a cross. However, Jesus showed the power of life over death, through the victory of resurrection. Will we continue to trust in our own will and understanding of life, or will we trust God who loves us and has given us the power to live a victorious, purposeful life?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What does Jesus death have to do with my recovery?
2. In what ways do I recognize that I still need to surrender my will and my life over to the care of God?
3. How am I practicing the above principles in all my affairs?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for giving me new life through the death and resurrection of Jesus. I am forever humbled by Jesus' obedience to death, even death on a cross. Help me to die to self-will and my old ways of thinking and behaving. I ask You to reveal and remove all my defects of character. Help me to live each day obedient to Your word, Your way, and Your timing, trusting that you will make all things right as I surrender to Your will. Thank You for working all things together for good in my life. May all I do and say glorify Your Holy Name. AMEN