

ADDICTION OR GRACE

Life With God In Recovery

ADDICTION OR GRACE



God created the heavens and the earth and established certain laws which were beneficial for all the people on earth. Gravity is one of those laws. When we push a bag of trash into the garbage chute we can't see the law of gravity but we can hear the bag hit the bottom so we know that it is operating. In the same way, the existence of love and grace are evident in those whose hearts are turned towards God. Just like the evidence of gravity can be seen in the physical world, so the evidence of grace can also be seen in those who have turned their will and their life over to the care of God. In our addiction, we didn't take time to think about factors that determined the course of life. Now that we have made a choice to live with God in recovery, we have an opportunity to find out how God created the world and the place in life He intended for us in it.

May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. (2 Peter 1:2-3 NLT)

GRACE – OBEYING GOD'S WORD God created humans in His own image and God is love. Therefore, we know humans were created in love. Non-compliance with God's word separated humans from the relationship with Him that God intended. Because of His relentless love for us, God paid the price of our disobedience through the death and resurrection of Jesus. When we accept the finished work of Jesus on the cross as payment for our sin, our relationship with God is restored. Our Heavenly Father delights in His redeemed children and He pours out His endless grace on those who live in His love and care and wholeheartedly follow His ways.

For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. (Colossians 1:19-21 NLT)

GRACE – NECESSARY INGREDIENT FOR CHANGE One problem in our society today is that many people try to live with respect for one another and fix human behaviour through self-help and education, without any input from God. Behaving in destructive and addictive ways is to be expected when we believe everything in life is simply the result of random selection. With that view, we have to figure how to fix ourselves, without knowing what went wrong.

Our behaviour usually reflects what we believe about God. God is love and God created us in love. Do we believe that? To live fully in recovery, an individual must believe that our world and each of our lives are supported and shaped by the love and amazing grace

of God. The principle is simple, if we want to behave towards others in a more loving way we have to know that we ourselves are loved.

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1John 4:7-8 NLT)

GRACE – BELIEVING GOD LOVES ME WHEN I DON'T GET MY OWN WAY When we don't get what we want, we believe God could not possibly care for us. When we don't feel loved, we believe we're just not good enough to be loved by God or anyone else. Believing thoughts like these drives us to seek comfort in harmful relationships, practices and ultimately substances. Initially we may not realize the impact of our beliefs but the discontent and anxiety within us will lead us down the path to our substance of choice. That route may be through work, alcohol, prescription or street drugs, sex, gambling, spending, abusive language, rage etc. Addiction substitutes "instant gratification counterfeits" for God's good gifts that develop over time. Sooner or later we will come to know that counterfeits just don't satisfy. Grace recognizes that God is protecting us from harm and helping us develop what is truly helpful and satisfying.

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. (Isaiah 55:2 NLT)

GRACE – FOCUSING ON GROWING WITH GOD RATHER THAN ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOUR
Over the long haul, how do we prevent relapse into addictive behaviour and a destructive lifestyle and maintain our choice to live in the love and grace of God? Strangely, we have to ***stop focusing on*** "not picking up" and focus instead on God's goodness to us, God's strength in us, and God's blessings around us. We have to ***stop focusing on*** our own thoughts and behaviour and intentionally refocus our thoughts on God and His principles. It's time to stop dwelling on what happened 5 minutes or 5 years ago and instead focus on the good news that our past sins have been forgiven, comfort and healing for every hurt is available today, and we are free to move forward in our recovery. God pursued us with His love even while we were running away. He did so, not to accuse or condemn us, but to heal and restore us. To live in grace rather than in addiction is to rely on the truth that God's power and love is sufficient to help us stand firm in Christ.

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NIV)

The devil, the father of lies who feeds addiction, wants us to dwell on our addiction – the memories, negative consequences, and tempting thoughts. On the other hand, God, the father of love and grace, invites us to seek His help, stand strong, and confidently go forward.

Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? ... But he gives us even more grace to stand against such evil desires ... So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. ... Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor. (James 4:4-11 NLT)

GRACE – CHOOSING TO RETURN TO GOD God wants to fill us with His life-giving Spirit. He offers us a relationship with Himself that is intimate, deeply satisfying, and brings great joy into our lives. We can, if we want, choose the lonely, destructive, painful path of relapse and addiction, but we don't have to. God's offer of grace and help in time of need remains constant. No matter how far down we may fall, God invites us to return to Him. Continuing in addiction after a relapse is self-will. Returning and being accepted by a forgiving God is wonderful grace.

Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. (Philippians 3:8-9 NLT)

God invites us to a satisfying, meaningful, joyful and purposeful life. Are we willing to leave our addiction behind, come close to God, and accept His invitation to live in His wonderful grace?

Question for Reflection and Discussion

1. If I use my behaviour as the measure, am I leaning towards addiction or grace?
2. In what ways have I lived in anger and blame towards God for bad things that happened to me or when God didn't do what I asked Him to do?
3. Am I focusing on growth with God rather than on addictive behaviours?
4. In what ways do I need to move away from addictive thinking and invite God to give me the grace I need to move forward with Him?

Heavenly Father, I am amazed at Your love and grace poured out on the whole earth and even more, that it was available to me even when I was living in rebellion against You. Thank you for opening my eyes and helping me see that You made me for the joy of having a loving relationship with me. Forgive me for the times I have neither wanted nor recognized Your love and grace in my life. Here and now, I choose You. I choose grace. Help me to live in Your grace each day so I may get to know how amazing You truly are, and grow strong in Your care as I get well and move forward. Thank you for the hope I have today because of your lavish love for me. AMEN