

Life With God In Recovery

AM I WILLING TO LIVE IN GOD'S LOVE



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When we come to Christian recovery gatherings we often hear of the unconditional love that God has for each of us. Are we actually willing to live in God's unconditional love or are we still seeking a life that will ultimately bring pain and shame? God's invites us to a recovered life of peace and love and joy.

Many of us have questioned God regarding the purpose of our existence and the reason why things have happened to us as they have. Jesus spoke to another questioner one night about God's great plan for us, and how that plan actually works. Jesus said, ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."*** (John 3:16-17 NKJV)

God created us for a life with Him that is full and good -- an abundant life. So what happened and why have we not experienced that? Love is only true love when it is freely chosen and not compelled. God gave us the freedom to choose. God offered us a loving relationship with Him that is anchored in our trust in His care but we have chosen to make our own way. God, who knows everything, has invited us to live within His infinite knowledge of how life works. However, in our fear of the unknown, we choose to navigate each day in our own limited knowledge. The foundation of trouble and addiction in our lives is our failure to trust our life choices to the direction of this all-wise, all-loving God. We always bring pain and disaster into our lives when we attempt to live life on our own terms. We just don't know enough to make safe plans for ourselves.

God knew the knowledge of good and evil, that was awakened in humans by their disobedience, would bring shame, fear, pain, suffering, broken bodies and broken hearts. God cared so much about that suffering that He sent His Beloved Son to die for the destructive sins of every human being. His desire is that we live free from sinful rebellion and instead experience love, joy, and peace both in this world and in the world to come.

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV)

What hinders us experiencing this loving relationship with God? Most often it is our unwillingness to rebuild our system of beliefs based on God's word as recorded in the Bible. We continue to believe that no one cares for us as much as we deserve. We believe we have to manage our own care if we are to have a good life.

We may talk about God's unconditional love for us but until we actually believe Him and do what His word says, we are only relating facts about Him – facts we don't completely believe. We will never experience a life-changing relationship with God until we change our beliefs and our behaviour to reflect the principles of His word. ***But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them his way.*** (James 1:22; Psalm 25:9 NLT)

When we first came into recovery we tended to focus primarily on our past behaviour. For years we tried to cover our pain with addictive substances or destructive behaviour because that was what seemed good at the time. We suffered injustice and so we felt we deserved comfort and went after comfort in whatever convenient ways we found it. We didn't question the impact our choices might have had on others. We did what we felt we had to do to survive and have a little happiness. Sadly, despite some momentary pleasure, we fell deeper and deeper into sin and heartache. Outside of God's love and wisdom, there is no good way of life. As we progress in our recovery, God invites us to shift our focus from behaviours to the real heart of the addiction issue – our need to know Him and live in His loving care for us.

God wants us to live such a satisfying life that we can honestly report to others, "My life is good, pleasing, and perfect." Most of us would say today, "Sign me up for that life." Or would we?

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2 NIV)

We know we have problems. We know we need to find a better way. The issue remains, do we want God's good, perfect, and pleasing way or our own way?

What is God's way? ***Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake***

you." So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5-6 NKJV)

God's way is simple. We choose to believe He is good and has our best interests at heart. Regardless of what we may feel, we choose to follow His direction. We become willing, with God's help, to change the way we think and respond to life today. When our thinking and God's word clash, we repent, lay down our own thoughts, and choose for God's way. Every day, in every circumstance we match our behaviour with God's principles. Here's how this is described in the Bible: ***We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.*** (2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NLT)

Without God's help we will never be able to sort out our own path and get it right. Are we willing to acknowledge this as the guiding principle of all of our decisions and behaviour today? Are we willing to surrender to God, obey His Word and receive His forgiveness? If we are willing, this will be the beginning of a new life in love today.

Questions For Reflection and Group Discussion

1. What is God's loving plan for my life as described in John 3:16-17?
2. What hinders me from experiencing this abundant life? (Name my part only – not the behaviour of others)
3. How do I see that my knowledge is limited about what the good life is and how a person lives it? (see page 16)
4. In what ways do I think and act as though God's love is NOT unconditional? (see beliefs and behaviours on page 17)
5. Read Romans 12:1-2. What would I need to do, based on these verses, to find a life that is good, pleasing, and perfect?
6. Page 18 lists some behaviour choices that demonstrate our willingness to trust in God's way. What one step can I take this week to grow in this area?
7. What do I need to do today to become willing to live in God's love?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, Thank you for your unconditional love for me. I ask for your help in removing every stronghold of human reasoning and every false argument that produces rebellious thoughts in me. I want to cast off everything that hinders me from having an intimate relationship with you. Help me to know your good, pleasing and perfect will for my life, and help me to walk in it. Thank you that you never leave me nor forsake me. I am forever grateful. AMEN