

Life With God In Recovery

OVERCOMING A VICTIM MENTALITY



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In our society, and particularly in the world of addiction and recovery, a victim mentality is quite widespread. Each person is created by God with a need for intimacy, both with Him and with others. People with a victim mentality struggle with emotional intimacy in relationships and they often have no idea why. What is going on? They repeatedly sabotage life and relationships by their way of thinking and believing.

The Bible tells us: ***whatever is in your heart determines what you say.*** (Matt. 12:34b NLT)

A victim is a person who has been abused or hurt or oppressed and was without power to change their circumstances. They developed a way of thinking and interpreting life that comes from unresolved offences, grief, and bitterness. Even though physically the abuse is no longer happening, in their minds they live and behave as though it is. As a result, the person now believes these experiences left them so marred that they no longer are able to take responsibility for their life. They blame others for what they are experiencing today.

God says, ***I have swept away your sins like a cloud. I have scattered your offenses like the morning mist. Oh, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free.*** (Isaiah 44:22 NLT)

Instead of embracing the solutions God is offering, victims remain obsessed with the pain and injustice of the past. Some isolate and live behind high walls. They complain and blame. Others live with frustration and are prone to get angry. Some bury their feelings, opinions and desires. Some allow others to control them and tell them what to do, believing they are unable to break free. Some believe that others “make them” live as powerless victims in their current circumstances and their life can only improve if someone else fixes what is wrong. They expect others to rescue them and take on their responsibilities.

How does a person with a victim mentality break free? We ask God to help us let go of the fear and insanity that resulted from events of our past and replace them with His truth in our hearts and minds.

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are

killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.” No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. (Romans 8:35-37 NLT)

These verses name several difficult, challenging, and very painful situations. While our experience of pain might not be specifically mentioned here, the intent of the writer is to tell us that whatever injustice and trouble we have suffered, God’s word applies in our situation. As amazing as it sounds, God promises us that we will not just survive and cope with what life has handed us, but we will thrive and live with overwhelming victory. Our future success has not been stolen by the events of our past. God offers us abundant life today and Jesus has made a way for us to have that life. No one and no circumstance can rob us of that life. Our lives and well-being come from God, not another person.

Jesus suffered and died on the cross to take away our sin and enable us to have life with God forever – a life that is full and satisfying. Jesus dealt with all sin and injustice on the cross. Jesus assumed all the evil and victimization of sin and injustice so you and I could be free. Jesus became a victim so we no longer have to live as one. His death in our place covers sins done by us and injustices done to us.

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6 NIV)

What Jesus has done for us is good news. However, it is very challenging for a person who has spent years living with a victim mentality to move into the experience of being an overcomer. Why? We’ve become familiar with a lifestyle of not taking the initiative for ourselves and wanting someone else to “do it for us.” Under our conscious fear of rejection is often an unconscious layer of anger, not just against the abuser, but also against those who “should have” protected us and did not. In these circumstances it seems impossible to us that we could face our fears and take responsibility for our actions while living in the overcoming love of God. Nevertheless, God’s way for us is to live in love and not in fear and God asks us today, “Do you want to get well?”

Implied in this question are two promises:

1) I know all about your trouble but my love in you can overcome it. ***In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*** (John 16:33 NIV).

2) If you will trust me with your life, I can make something good out of everything that has happened. ***And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*** (Romans 8:28 NLT)

What’s my part in overcoming a victim mentality?

- 1) I need to make a decision that, with God’s help, I can and will face my pattern of living my life based on a victim mentality.
- 2) Held safe in God’s powerful protection I will take responsibility for dealing with the root issues and for the process of change.
- 3) I will quit blaming others for not protecting me or meeting my needs.
- 4) I will trust God to heal me and allow Him to deal with those who caused me harm.
- 5) I will work with God to resolve my grief, anger, resentment, and roots of bitterness.
- 6) I will renew my mind and describe myself as God sees me: I am an overcomer, not a victim.
- 7) I will do everything I can today to build healthy relationships, set healthy boundaries, and trust God to make me adequate for every task.

Questions for Reflection and Group Discussion

1. Where do I recognize a victim mentality in myself?
2. Romans 8:35-37 (above) challenges the victim mentality. How does it challenge me?
3. What does Jesus’ death on the cross have to do with the injustices I’ve experienced and their impact on my life?
4. For each area of victim mentality, I’ve identified in question 1, how do I apply the promises given in John 16:33 and Romans 8:28?
5. How is God’s unfailing love changing me from being a victim to an overcomer?
6. In what areas do I still need help to surrender to God’s truth?
7. What next step can I take today to make progress in letting go of a victim mentality?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your word. I ask forgiveness for the times I have rejected Your word in favour of my own self-pity. Help me to reject my stinking thinking and acknowledge that Your word is truth. Please comfort me as I seek to overcome my victim mentality by the renewing of my mind. I surrender to the truth of Your word. I ask that You work everything together for my good and Your glory. Thank You for Your unfailing love and care for me. AMEN