

Life With God In Recovery

STEP SIX: FOLLOWING GOD'S AGENDA



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STEP 6 – We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Surrendering to God is the goal of Step 6, with a desire that God remove patterns of sin and woundedness from our lives. We experience freedom and fulfillment in life only when God's desires become our desires, God's way becomes our way, and God's word becomes our action.

Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. (Psalm 37:4, Matthew 16:25, Matthew 6:33 NLT)

Jesus knew the tragic results of individuals choosing self-centered lives. Jesus taught and demonstrated that the key to a life that is truly happy, joyous and free is the choosing of God's will over our own. We cannot make ourselves do things that are best for us so Step 6 is not a decision to accomplish something. Rather, it is a willingness to let new priorities from God shape our thinking and behaving. When our goal is to be happy we will fall into destructive self-centered life patterns. When our goal is to love God and have a relationship with Him, God will give happiness as a by-product of that relationship.

God says: *"My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.* (2 Corinthians 12:9 NLT)

As we work Step 6 we make one fundamental change -- we commit to become persons who desire God's will instead of our own. We learn to face reality by overcoming false beliefs about: a) what is right and wrong with my life; b) who has the necessary information about what works; and c) who gets to be in charge of the process of change.

Step 6 acknowledges that I've come to understand that in my sinful brokenness I am unable to identify right and wrong for myself. I need God's word to show that to me. Step 6 also comes alive in me when I look to

God's word and wise Christian counsel, rather than my own experience to help me identify what is helpful and harmful in my character. I actually complete this step when, at anytime, anywhere, and in anything, I choose to act in God's way.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. (Proverbs 3:5-6 NLT)

We have long established patterns of behaviour that challenge us as we seek to apply Step 6 in our daily living. We have certain patterns that we hang onto because they SEEM to meet important needs in our lives and SEEM to help us avoid pain.

People pleasing is one example. We think we can't risk confronting others with the truth. We go to extremes to avoid and run away from problems or we hide behind anger and unforgiveness. We mistakenly believe that we are not safe and secure if others disagree with or disapprove of what we think or do. As followers of Jesus Christ, we will regularly make choices that look strange and unpopular to those who have surrounded us in our lives of addiction and early recovery. In a world that tells us to take charge of our own destiny rather than handing it over to God's control, we will look different. We will be misunderstood at the outset. Step 6 requires us to prioritize God's instructions over the opinions of others and the discomfort we feel when we are misunderstood.

Jesus described this with a picture about a narrow gate and few finding the gate. ***You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.*** (Matthew 7:13-14 NLT)

Perfectionism is another example of a character defect that needs to go when we come to God for change in Step 6. In our past, the appearance of things being in control or safe was more important than the actual underlying truth. This pattern of seeming to be in control often shows up in our recovery as well. In spite of the fact that we acknowledge areas of healing from brokenness in the recovery process, we are still afraid to acknowledge weakness. The exposure of weakness makes us feel unsafe. Our self-image is so vulnerable that we seem unable to admit that, even

though by God's grace, we are living better than we did, we still struggle. To admit the struggle is to somehow name our life in recovery as failure or too hard and so we try to hide behind a facade of perfectionism.

We can recognize the façade when we start rationalizing our own attitudes or actions by comparing them to the behaviours of others. When we hear ourselves think or say, "it's all good" we're moving in this direction. When we simply want to isolate from others because of "their crappy behaviour," chances are there's a façade of perfectionism in us that needs to be torn down.

Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. (Galatians 6:1 NLT)

Step 6 helps us to acknowledge the truth that we cannot make ourselves perfect or good enough for God. God is the only one who can remove defects of character from us. This is not a one-time event. It is a journey.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. (Psalm 139:23-24 NLT)

As we agree with God that His ways are right and, time after time obey His instructions, we allow Him to remove our self-destructive behaviour patterns and reform our will to match His will. What am I conscious of today that needs changing so I am entirely ready to have God remove all my defects of character?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How does recognizing and acknowledging weaknesses and character defects actually help us welcome God's work in us to remove them?
2. How are my ideas of what's wrong with me and what needs changing being challenged by God's word and in my daily relationship with God?
3. How does "people pleasing" and "perfectionism" show up in my daily living and how am I co-operating with God to recognize these and have God remove them?
4. What does the Step 6/Psalm 139:23-24 process of having God search my heart and identify character defects look like for me? How do I put it into practice?
5. What has changed in my life so God's desires and priorities are now more and more my desires and priorities?
6. What do I need to do on a daily basis to actually live in this new way of continued surrender to God's will?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for Your willingness to call me out of darkness and to walk with me while I welcome the knowledge of Your truth into my behaviour. I admit that only You know what works for me to have the meaningful life You created me to enjoy. I want Your priorities and Your practices to become my way of living. Continue to search my heart, God, and in your gentle loving way, point out anything that remains that needs healing and forgiving. Help me turn quickly from my own ideas that get in the road of freedom and recovery and to surrender fully to Your guidance. Thank You for caring for me as we journey together on the path to new life. Amen