

Life With God In Recovery

FULL OF JOY (HAPPY JOYOUS AND FREE)



Chapter 9 in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous discusses rebuilding relationships and how joy will impact our ability to do so. *"We aren't a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life."* On page 133 we read this confident statement, *"We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free."*

We don't have to study the chapter very carefully to notice that the founders of AA link misery to self-will and addictive habits, and joy to a loving relationship with God. The founders followed God's ways and recognized how it brought joy into their relationship with

God and others. Joy is a quality we surely need as we move forward in our life with God in recovery.

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. (James 1:2-4 NLT)

Life in recovery can be challenging at times. We have joy in the fact that we are no longer in the pit of our addiction, but we are now treading waters that are unfamiliar to us. To remain full of joy in the middle of it all is a challenge. We are unfamiliar with our daily lifestyle and are learning new ways to cope with what is going on inside us. We have been the “experts” in surviving our dysfunctional lifestyle but now we are the “newbies” in coping with life in recovery. People around us are encouraging us to stay the course but we are unsure and even fearful of our new environment. Those who have walked this path before us continue to reassure us that this is a normal reaction. Thankfully, God has promised to be with us throughout the transition process and show us this way of life that is “happy, joyous, and free.”

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever. (Psalm 16:11 NLT)

Our FOCUS AND MOTIVATION is the key to functioning in a “happy, joyous, and free” lifestyle. As people of God in recovery we are instructed to live each day for the glory of God rather than for self-fulfillment. Is there truly joy in walking in the ways of God? Sometimes we can easily say a definite “yes” as we experience the joy that results from making good decisions.

At other times, we find ourselves in a battle with our will, being tempted to turn to dysfunctional but familiar ways of our past. We forget how we felt when we groveled in the darkness of our addiction. God has called us out of the darkness we were in and invites us to walk steadily forward in the light of His presence. Like a good Father, God rejoices with us when we take a few steps forward and when we stumble and fall He encourages us to get up and keep going. God is calling us to fullness of joy as, together with Him, we walk into the light.

How happy are the people who know the sound of joy! They walk in the light of Your face, O Lord. They are full of joy in Your name all day long. And by being right with You, they are honored. (Psalm 89:15-16 NLV)

SURRENDERING OUR MINDS to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is another key to experiencing joy and peace in our whole being. God is a God of order. He is not a God of confusion. When we let confusion reign in our minds, life is like being tossed about in choppy waves in

the ocean. Thinking and acting on our own self-centered thoughts brings fear and despair to us and grief to those who love and care about us. Choosing instead to live guided by God's Holy Spirit takes us to calm waters where we can rest with Jesus and experience joy and delight with those around us. We are filled with confident hope when we move in the power of the Holy Spirit.

For God is not the author of confusion but of peace. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 14:33a; Romans 15:13 NKJV)

What steals our joy and causes us to stumble? The underlying trait that steals our joy and jeopardizes our life in recovery is pride. We begin to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to. We start to find fault in our recovery program, in the people around us, and in our leaders and mentors. We blame others and our environment for our discontent. We start to feel confident in our ability to manage our recovery. Sadly, our prideful thinking makes us feel we can succeed on our own. We begin to believe that we could return to our old habits and lifestyle and handle life more successfully than we did in the past. We forget that it is only due to the help and guidance of God and those around us that we are currently feeling stronger.

You have felt secure in your evil ways. You have said, 'No one sees what I'm doing.' Your wisdom and knowledge lead you down the wrong path. You say to yourself, 'I am like a god. No one is greater than I am.' (Isaiah 47:10 NIRV)

Physically we are now in a better place than we were when we came into recovery and are more alive to the world around us. However, we will need the ONGOING SUPPORT OF WISE COUNSELORS to learn and establish safe boundaries, and to maintain our healthy lifestyle. When we start to think we are so great that we can do recovery alone we need to share these thoughts with a trusted friend or mentor. They will understand what is happening within us. We came from a lonely forsaken place and now, by the grace of God, are getting acquainted with the real person we are. Our joy in recovery will be maintained as we give thanks for our current well-being to the God who brought us out of the slimy pit we were in, and for those He has given to support and guide us on our journey.

The path of honest people takes them away from evil. Those who guard their ways guard their lives. If you are proud, you will be destroyed. If you are proud, you will fall. (Proverbs 16:17-18 NIRV)

If we desire to be joyful in our recovery we need to always be mindful of our thoughts and actions. We need to find out what God's principles are for successful daily living and

reshape our behaviour around them. We need to surrender pride in self every time it raises its ugly head. We need to remember that the Holy Spirit is always with us to give us wisdom and guidance. We need to admit our need of God's power to change us and be willing to accept the fact that we cannot live a joyful life on our own. As we practice these principles in all our affairs we will be able to say with the founders of AA, "We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free."

When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. (John 15:10-11 NLT).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What changes have contributed to joy in my daily living?
2. What steals my joy and causes me to stumble?
3. In what ways am I noticing the truth that as I walk with God and helpful individuals, that my life is happier, more joyous, and I feel free to be me?

Heavenly Father, Thank You for loving and caring for me even when I was in deep darkness and unaware of who You are. Forgive me for being prideful and believing that I could live a joyful life in recovery without You and without those who counsel and mentor me. Thank You for pursuing me with Your unfailing love and for revealing to

me the reality that You alone give fullness of life. I am forever grateful that You, the God of hope, will fill me with all joy and peace as I trust Your ways to take me forward in my recovery. Amen