

Life With God In Recovery

STEP FOUR VULNERABILITY: RUNNING ON EMPTY



Step 4 – Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

In the past, bad habits and negative attitudes played a significant role in our lives. When we felt vulnerable we anesthetized ourselves to what was going on inside us. We used our substance of choice to help cope with the emptiness, the nameless pain, the loneliness or some other distress we were experiencing. Our daily agenda in addiction was entirely focused on meeting our own needs. Now that we are aware that God has promised to meet all our needs, are we willing to let Him do so?

God invites us, ***Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.*** (Psalm 50:15 NASB)

When we admitted that we were powerless over our dependencies and that our life had become empty and unmanageable, we sought a recovery program. We stopped using our substance of choice and began to deal with our vulnerable feelings which previously led us to our addictive lifestyle. In sobriety, how can we actually face these overwhelming feelings, and the pain of loneliness, frustration, disappointment, and even shame, without picking up again?

Life in recovery is about living in truth, and the truth is that on our own, our hearts are empty. That is why we often struggle with fear when we feel vulnerable and powerless. God, and trusted people in recovery around us, assure us that there is a safe way forward for us. Step by step we will come to know and believe in a Power greater than ourselves who will restore us to sanity. We are encouraged to make a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of this powerful God. When we choose to do so, we will find that our dead hearts begin to come alive.

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)

As we go through life in the recovery process, we begin to trust God to meet all our deepest needs and invite Him, on a daily basis, to fill us up with the power of His Holy Spirit. We intentionally reflect on what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will—which promises to satisfy the nagging emptiness within us. We ask God for understanding of His word and how to apply His principles to our lives. We read the Bible daily and in order to fully understand what God is saying to us, we discuss what we've read with our pastor, sponsor, mentor or other godly persons. This is how a person begins to be "filled up" on a daily basis.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV)

As we seek to live in God's will each day, we ask God to help us deal with those events in our past which our addiction helped us medicate—feelings of pain and loss, loneliness, frustration, grief and dissatisfaction. How can we ensure these areas of vulnerability are occupied with healthy thoughts and behaviours?

We first have to admit to the presence of these feelings and recognize that they relate to events we have never fully faced. If we desire to live the life we've always longed for, then our familiar response of hiding our weaknesses will have to change. How do we do that? As honestly as we know how we name our vulnerability to the painful events of our past, and trust that Jesus will work all these things together for our good. We ask Him for healing for the deeply wounded areas in our soul and, in faith, receive health and wholeness. It is also helpful to seek out trusted people who are willing to talk and pray with us.

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 ... he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. (2 Peter 1:3-4 NLT)

In our lives today, how do we activate "everything we need for living a godly life"? It's not a complicated process. 1) We admit that our addictive desires are corrupt and choose to forsake them. 2) We get to know God's promises by reading the Bible. 3) We practice "speaking truth to ourselves" rather than simply reacting to how we are feeling. 4) We start to put God's principles into daily practice. As we persevere, we will surely find that peace will come, our emotions will quiet

down, and we will begin to experience goodness filling our hearts and our minds.

Where we have previously lived in loneliness, Jesus invites us now to take the risk of building new relationships with healthy friends and sponsors who will come alongside us and help us grow. When we experience feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction, God invites us to see this as a signal that something is wrong. We then need to identify the empty place deep within us that needs to be filled and take the appropriate action for our situation. Rather than run away, it's time to see that a breakthrough might be just around the corner. Where we lacked accountability because of the absence of Godly correction, Jesus now invites us to put ourselves under the guidance of a mature and trustworthy Godly person and let them mentor us as we move forward in our recovery. Where we waited for others to come and fix us and drag us out of dark places, we now need to do the reaching out, and by so doing, experience the connectedness and joy of Godly relationships.

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. (Hebrews 10:36 NIV)

Feeling empty and vulnerable, and clinging to thoughts or practices that present us with an opportunity to relapse, are signs that we need to seek help. There is always something we can do that will ease the craving in our mind and body. We must let go of the lie that our

substance of choice will best fulfill that longing. We wouldn't be in recovery today if it had. We can fill the void in our heart by telling ourselves the truth. God does care! To those who ask for it, God will give the strength needed to stand firm in the truth of His word. Our choice today is, do we believe what God says and fill up on that, or, do we continue to run on empty until we give into an addictive obsession?

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 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. (1 Timothy 6:6 NKJV, 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NIV)

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How have I used a substance or an addictive habit to cope with emptiness, pain, loneliness, or other distress I was experiencing?
2. What obsessive thoughts are lurking within me that have, in the past, made me vulnerable to relapse? How am I hiding that vulnerability?
3. If I desire to live the life I've always longed for, then my familiar response of hiding my weaknesses will have to change. How do I do that?
4. What positive action am I taking to get past the feeling of being empty and vulnerable?

What action am I avoiding taking today?
Why?

5. How am I building a lifestyle of transparency and accountability?
6. How am I activating God's promise to give me "everything I need for living a godly life"?
7. What healthy risks am I taking to build new relationships with friends and sponsors who can come alongside me and help me grow?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, Thank you that you are the same, yesterday, today and forever. I know I can trust you because you are faithful to do everything you promise. When I feel vulnerable and afraid, I can trust you to help me because Your word says you give strength to the weary and increase power to the weak. Thank you that you actually hold us up and support us with your righteous right hand. Help us to put our hand in Yours as you lift us up and take us forward in our recovery. We are forever grateful that you care. AMEN