

FRIDAY

CHRISTMAS COMFORT AND PEACE

We are fast approaching the annual celebration of the birth of Jesus, the One God sent to save us and give us peace. These pre-Christmas days may be difficult for many of us as the cost-of-living soars and uphill inflation seems to be never-ending. For a variety of reasons many of us are anxious about our ability to buy gifts or to be with family over the holidays. Our comfort level is challenged as negative thoughts come and go in our minds. Instead of the thought of Christmas bringing us joy we find our hearts are uneasy. Countless thoughts have filled our minds in the past days or weeks, but the significance of Jesus' birth is the greatest life-changing event that will ever remain at the heart of Christmas.

GOD made my life complete when I placed all the pieces before him. When I got my act together, he gave me a fresh start. Now I'm alert to GOD's ways; I don't take God for granted. Every day I review the ways he works; I try not to miss a trick. I feel put back together, and I'm watching my step. GOD rewrote the text of my life when I opened the book of my heart to his eyes. (Psalm 18:20-24 MSG)

For Mary and Joseph, that first Christmas contained many challenges and anxious moments as they made their way to Bethlehem in the late stages of Mary's pregnancy. After months of enduring the probable whispers and gossip in Nazareth about Mary being pregnant before she and Joseph were married, a governmental census required them to travel to Bethlehem, their town of birth. On arrival Mary went into labour and Joseph struggled to find a place for her to give birth in the overcrowded town. Their comfort level was likely as low as it could get. However, God was not lost in the challenges of that first Christmas and He is not lost in the challenges that we face. Our part is to give God all the pieces of whatever is going on and trust Him to work them together for our good. God will bring us comfort and will fill us with peace for each event we struggle with.

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all. (2 Thessalonians 3:16 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, As I prepare for Christmas I ask that You fill my heart with love so that, together with others, I can have peace and celebrate Christmas well. Amen

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Weekend

DEALING WITH STRESS – PLAN AND PRAY

Stress comes with daily living. Problems show up without notice. We need to have a plan in place to handle the unexpected events and stress that life brings.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8 NIV)

God is aware of all our circumstances. There is nothing that is a surprise to Him. When we pray and seek His input, God is available and willing to give us wisdom in each situation we encounter.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV)

We have an enemy of our soul who lurks around seeking someone to destroy. Satan's desire is to drive us to breaking point as he attempts to deceive us into thinking we can, or must, handle the stress of our problems with our own limited capabilities. As we obsess on troubling events and our helplessness to handle them, the evil one will cause us to be fearful and that will weaken our trust in God. The key to handling stress is to seek God's help at the initial stage of any problem. Knowing and trusting in God's unchanging Word is an essential component of a stress reducing plan. We gain strength as we allow God to stabilize our emotions with His peace, infuse our hearts with His joy, and provide us with His wisdom.

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. (Ephesians 6:10-11 NLT)

The Bible is a toolbox and contains various tools for handling stressful situations. Let's not neglect to find and use these tools in every situation we encounter.

Prayer: Loving God, Forgive me for the times I have allowed a stressful situation to devastate me. Help me to remember that You could and would help if You were sought. Amen

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY DAILY MEDITATIONS



Week 50

Monday

THE REASON FOR OUR BIRTH AND OUR RECOVERY

I wonder what people said on the day that we were born. With very few exceptions there is great joy and great wonder at the appearance of a new little baby full of life with 5 little fingers and 5 little toes and all the little wrinkles and miniature markings. Some folks have names picked out in advance for their baby and others wait, knowing that the personality of that little one will somehow point to the right name. We have hopes and dreams for this new little life. Regardless of the twists and turns and the ups and the downs of our life since the day of our birth, God's design for us remains constant. He has a perfect plan for us and, when we come into recovery, is ready and willing to bring it about whether we are 18 or 81. John the Baptist was born to be used by God to get people ready for the coming of Jesus to earth. John's message was one of repentance and preparation for the way of the Lord. As we share the story of our sobriety we are encouraged to look to the reason God gave us life in the beginning and is giving us recovery today. Perhaps John the Baptist's message may also be ours to share with others.

"And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins. Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace." (Luke 1:76-79 NLT)

This Christmas season, and in the coming year, we will grow in our lives with God in recovery as we share the message of how God has changed us. We have found forgiveness, experienced God's tender mercy, and have been guided to the pathway of peace. As we continue our journey, we can share our story of God's transforming power and goodness to us, and by doing so, help others to open their hearts to His power of redemption.

Prayer: Loving God, Thank You for making me alive in You. I give You permission to fulfill Your purpose for my life. Live in me that I may have life through You. Help me to share the message of Your forgiveness and healing with those I meet on my journey. Amen

GOD IS FOR US

The twelfth promise of AA reads: "We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves." The Twelfth Step begins with, "Having had a spiritual awakening..." These are indicators that the God we did not know has been there for us all along and has been willing to act on our behalf. Through the surrender of our will and life into His care, God has effectively and powerfully acted on our behalf and has opened our eyes to see His commitment to do for us what we could not do for ourselves.

If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31b NIV)

Going forward we can expect more of the same because God will work for good in everything that has gone on in our lives, including the events that broke us down and the destructive actions we took in response to that.

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28 NIV)

All sorts of things, and perhaps even people, will seek to have power over us in the future. We have come through a few years of coping with the effects of a deadly virus and there is still much uncertainty looming on the horizon. The required social isolation was not good for us who rely on meetings for support. However, as we trust in God, we are promised that He will get us through, one day at a time, one moment at a time. Absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God that Jesus has revealed.

No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:39 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am so grateful that You are for me and not against me, and that I am now able to recognize the many things You have done on my behalf even before I was willing to submit to Your ways. Going forward, please help me to trust Your love and faithfulness through every trial that may lie ahead. Amen

PURSuing WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

Many of us choose to rely on our own understanding of how life works and what is best for us. We are reluctant to change our ways in favour of God's ways even though we are living proof that our own ways do not work. It is a wise person who takes time to pursue the wisdom and knowledge of God as given in the Bible.

Foolish people don't want to understand. They take delight in saying only what they think. (Proverbs 18:2 NIV)

When we are a believer in Jesus we walk in the light and are renewed daily by the Spirit of God. We try to leave behind those things that would violate God's laws. To know what violates God's laws, we need to meditate on His word so we can learn what His principles are. As we improve our conscious contact with Him, the God who sought us and brought us from darkness to light will increase our knowledge of His ways.

Wise men and women are always learning, always listening for fresh insights. Words satisfy the mind as much as fruit does the stomach; good talk is as gratifying as a good harvest. (Proverbs 18:15, 20 MSG)

Listening to knowledgeable people who have walked the recovery path before us may save us from many pitfalls. From experience, they have learned about those things that cause addicts to stumble and fall. They know how vulnerable we are when we fondly look back on our old ways and tend to forget the pain and heartache. God has promised to give us everything we need to live a Godly life. When our former way of thinking is drawing us back towards the darkness, we need to persevere in resisting the lies of the evil one and strengthen ourselves in the Lord who will give us everything we need to live a Godly life.

Words kill, words give life: they're either poison or fruit— you choose. Friends come and friends go, but a true friend sticks by you like family. (Proverbs 18:21, 24 MSG)

The word of God is life-giving, and it is the wise person who heeds correction and gains understanding.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please give me a hunger and thirst for the knowledge of Your Word and a firm desire to practice what I learn in all my affairs. Amen

FORGIVENESS RECEIVED

Forgiveness happens when a person willingly forgives the wrongs that have been committed against them by another. When we accept Jesus' death on the cross as payment for our sins, we become children of God and God generously forgives us for the many sins and wrongs we have committed. As God's children, He now asks us to forgive the sins of those who have committed offences against us.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (Matthew 6:12 NIV)

God is love and all God's actions are filled with love. We are truly alive when we purposefully live in God and God lives in us. Anything we think, or say, or do, or even desire to do, that is not filled with love, is something that grieves the heart of God. God loves those who have harmed us in the same way He loves us. God created us to live in a loving, caring relationship with Him and with others. When we continue to refuse to forgive others and are not interested in knowing God's plan for our life, the Bible describes our actions as sins against God for which we need forgiveness.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. (Psalm 51:4 NIV)

When we truly receive God's forgiveness and acceptance, gratitude and joy will fill our hearts, and forgiving others is something we will do out of thankfulness to Jesus for paying the penalty for our sin.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I ask for Your forgiveness for having an unforgiving heart towards those who have harmed me. Please heal me and give me the desire and the strength I need to forgive others as You have forgiven me. Amen