

FRIDAY

THE JOY OF NEGATIVE MEMORIES TRANSFORMED

As we prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ's birth, some of us may have negative memories and regrets about past Christmases. Dysfunctional families, addiction, poverty, and loneliness may have been part of our history. However, regardless of the many disappointments we may have experienced, God knows and cares about us and where we are at today.

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born the prophet Isaiah prophesied, ***"The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine."*** (Isaiah 9:2 NLT) We are the people on whom the light is now shining and for whom this great prophecy has been fulfilled.

At times in our past, life may have been unmanageable, and we were powerless to do anything about it. We felt unnoticed by family members, teachers, and others, and resolved in our hearts that no one understood or even cared about us. The truth is that God sees, God understands, and God cares about us. Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, in His humanity entered our human experience and therefore can identify with our pain. Jesus is known as Immanuel which means, God with us.

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. (John 3:16-18 MSG)

God's invitation to us today is to turn our bad memories and regrets over to His care and allow Him to heal our hearts. As we give God our past hurts we will receive from Him the purposeful future He has planned for us. What a great exchange! This is the gift that Christmas offers every person.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for the gift of Jesus. May I ever be mindful that Jesus came to earth that I might have life and have it to the full. Amen

Partners in Hope Recovery Society
1906 – 615 Belmont Street
New Westminster, BC V3M 6A1
604-215-0335 pihrecovery@gmail.com
www.partnersinhope.ca



Weekend

MISSING THE MEANING

Christmas decorations, inside and outside malls, stores, and homes, have been put up to celebrate the Christmas season. Malls often prepare a winter wonderland with a special "North Pole" room where Santa can greet his friends. In some places a nativity scene featuring figures of Mary and Joseph, some shepherds, and the baby Jesus is displayed. Today, perhaps we should pause and reflect on the fact that the birth of Jesus is the true reason for the season.

The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:9-12 NLT)

Many people, and perhaps we ourselves, are so pre-occupied with the activities around Christmas that we ignore Jesus. Some may be exhausted by the demands of the season and others may struggle with loneliness. Some of us may be preoccupied with shame and guilt about being in a position in life where we are distant from our families or perhaps financially unable to provide gifts for our children, or for various other reasons.

Today is a wonderful opportunity to intentionally leave behind the busyness of the season and spend time together with God. Jesus is the reason for the season. Let's invite His presence into our lives. Let's simplify the things that need doing. Let's shift from exhausting activity to the joy of being receivers of God's generous love. Let's fill this time of the year with direction and meaning as we include Jesus in our thoughts and activities today and every day of the Christmas season.

In those days and at that time I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. (Jeremiah 33:15 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for the gift of Jesus to the world. Help me to stop fretting about things that are out of my control and celebrate Jesus, for He is truly Immanuel, God with us. Amen

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY DAILY MEDITATIONS



Week 51

Monday

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

As kids many of us sang an action song with the words, "The head bone connected to the neck bone, the neck bone connected to the shoulder bone" and on and on down the bones to the toes. With each bone named, kids would touch that area. It was lots of fun. Our bodies are a wonderful metaphor of the connection and support God wants us to have in community. We all need a support system, and to be part of a group that supports one another.

But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. (1 Corinthians 12:18-20 NIV)

Each body part has a specific function. An eye sees and a hand holds. An ear can't smell, and a nose can't hear. We each need input from one another so that together we make a functioning whole. Our little toe is not a big part of the body but stub that little toe and the whole body adjusts to cover for the pain it is feeling. We cannot see the enzyme called magnesium but if we don't have enough of it in our bodies many things suddenly don't work the way they should.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NIV)

We each have different personalities and family backgrounds. We choose sponsors and create personal networks with people we can communicate with. Support for one another is the reason we gather in meetings and share our stories. Our input is required just as much as the next person's input. Each person has different skills and so it is only together that we support one another and provide for a particular need. The experience of old timers is as necessary as the input from those who just cleaned up in the past 24 hours.

None of it works well without "the head" who is Jesus. We also need the Word of God and the grace of God. We need to stand firm on the truth of God's Word which will help us filter out every other thought or sound that seeks to bring us down.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to know You more and stay connected to You so I can uphold Your Word and be an effective link to help others in my community. Amen

We all know that staying sober starts with not picking up a drink or our drug of choice or returning to whatever our destructive habit was. However, maintaining a sober life has more to do with listening to God's direction and aligning our thoughts and behaviour with His will. In this way we will live beyond our defects of character and learn to grow in positive character qualities which will enhance our life and relationships.

We are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God. (Titus 2:12 NLT)

While our "DOC" whether alcohol or something else, is "cunning, baffling, and powerful," the enemy of our soul is not our obsession to use it. God's word is very clear that there is a battle going on for our very lives. The devil wants to destroy us person by person. God wants to advance His amazing plans for our life. Whose influence will we choose today?

Keep a cool head. Stay alert. The Devil is poised to pounce, and would like nothing better than to catch you napping. Keep your guard up. You're not the only ones plunged into these hard times. It's the same with Christians all over the world. So keep a firm grip on the faith. The suffering won't last forever. It won't be long before this generous God who has great plans for us in Christ — eternal and glorious plans they are! — will have you put together and on your feet for good. He gets the last word; yes, he does. (1 Peter 5:8-11 MSG)

To live a truly sober life is to be both vigilant and relaxed at the same time. How do we do that? We walk carefully — alert and trusting. We watch out for the attacks of the evil one and bring ourselves back again and again to the truth that God is working out His amazing plan for our life. God will never fail to accomplish the good work He has begun in us. Daily circumstances may challenge our emotions and attitudes and even trigger thoughts of picking up. However, the suffering will not last forever. To live sober is to faithfully obey God's Word in any temptation we may be facing.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to live sober today. Just for today help me keep my guard up and remember that this suffering will not last forever. I choose to obey Your Word for You have promised to have the last word on my behalf. Amen

Many of us have struggled to believe the Word of God as written in the Bible. Perhaps we thought the Bible was an ancient book and not relevant to our lives today. Each year there are people around the world who celebrate events that were written in the Bible hundreds of years before they happened, and many events written there are still to come.

At least 700 years before the birth of Jesus took place the Bible records a prophesy about a coming king who would be born in the small town of Bethlehem in Judea. This prophecy was made long before Rome became a major power in the known world.

O Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are but a small Judean village, yet you will be the birthplace of my king who is alive from everlasting ages past! (Micah 5:2 TLB)

Caesar Augustus, a Roman Emperor, decided that a census should be taken throughout the occupied nations. Each person was required to return to their city of birth for registration. Mary and Joseph were required to travel from Galilee to Bethlehem to be registered.

And because Joseph was a member of the royal line, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, King David's ancient home—journeying there from the Galilean village of Nazareth. (Luke 2:3 TLB)

The prophet Micah did not know that a Roman census would be required to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and yet he wrote about the event as God directed him hundreds of years before it happened. Do we believe the Bible when it tells us of plans God has for us? We can't see into the future, but God knows the beginning and the end of all things, and He is faithful to perform what He says.

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11 TLB)

Prayer: Dear God, I need help and guidance to live a purposeful life. Please help me to find and follow Your principles as recorded in the Bible, and please help me put them into effect as You reveal the good plans that You have for my life. Amen

How are we expected to know what is right? How do we know what is wrong? What is helpful? What is harmful? How can we be sure that we are making the right choices? God knew we would need help in these areas and gave us moral laws that instruct us how to live a purposeful, satisfying life. The Bible tells us that God has a plan for each person's life and, if we seek Him, He will give us the wisdom we need to make wise choices in each step of our journey.

Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. (Proverbs 3:5-6 MSG)

One of the practices we are encouraged to maintain in recovery is taking daily inventory with God. This practice has us reflect on the happenings of each day. We inventory what we have done right. We inventory what we have done wrong. We also look at those events which we know have the potential to draw us back into the darkness, resentment, and shame that we have been journeying away from. The purpose of a daily inventory is to expose and, if necessary, deal with any lingering shortcomings that might cause us or someone else to stumble.

See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Hebrews 12:15 NIV)

As we review the events of today, let's be conscious that God's presence was with us wherever we went. Let's ask Him to help us accept those things we cannot change, for the courage to change those things we can, and for the wisdom to know the difference.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am thankful that You are with me wherever I go and, if I seek Your guidance, You will keep me on track in my recovery. My desire is to bring glory to Your name in all I say and do. Please shelter me and be my constant guide to the pathway of peace. Amen