

FRIDAY

COMING OUT OF THE SHADOWS

We often describe life in active addiction as darkness and life in recovery as light. We are grateful to God for pursuing us with His love and bringing us out of the darkness. God called us again and again until, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we were able to respond and move towards the light. Sometimes it seems that people hear the call, move away from the darkness towards the light, but then get caught somewhere in between, "in the shadows."

What is life like in the shadows? Difficult things that have happened to us are said to "cast a shadow" on our lives. Many people feel they are living in the shadows when they experience deep grief and pain. However, when we move towards the light, we experience God's comforting presence in and around us and this helps us face the shadows of grief, pain, and injustice.

Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. Poor people have come to you for safety. You have kept needy people safe when they were in trouble. You have been a place to hide when storms came. You have been a shade from the heat of the sun. (Psalm 23:4; 91:1 NLT, Isaiah 25:4 NIRV)

We can be assured that God is close to us during shadowy times. As the shade of a tree is comforting and refreshing on a hot sunny day, so the Lord provides a shelter and cares for us in our time of need. As we seek Him, God's healing presence will calm and restore our soul in safe, shady places.

To come out of the shadows and live in the light, we must be willing to shift our focus from our grief and woundedness to God's comfort and care. Even though we may feel vulnerable doing so, we must open our hearts to God and make our pain available for His healing touch.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to walk further out of the shadows and into the light of Your love. Even though the way is unknown and a bit scary for me, help me to remember you are near and will comfort and keep me safe as I bring my wounded heart to You for healing. Amen

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Weekend

BEING DECISIVE

Making decisions and taking responsibility for our choices requires courage. It was easy in our addiction to bully people for things we needed to feed our habit but a healthy weighing up of facts and coming to a reasoned decision that is good for everyone tends to bring out our vulnerabilities. There are just so many things we don't know about ourselves and about life. We hate both physical and emotional pain and still want to do whatever we can to avoid it. How do we come to that place where we know that this or that way is the route we should take?

In simple terms, we seek wise counsel from God and then obey what He says in His Word. God promises to watch over and guide us and, if we start to head in the wrong direction, He will whisper a correction into our ears.

The Lord shows his people how to live, but the wicked have lost their way. If you wander from the right path, either to the right or to the left, you will hear a voice behind you saying, "You should go this way. Here is the right way." (Psalm 1:6, Isaiah 30:21 ERV)

It is not God's plan that we swing between the extremes of being pushy or being passive. Too often we are willing to say, "Whatever happens, happens" and even to add in "for a reason." The truth is, things often happen because of our choices that could have been made differently.

Lord, help me learn your ways. Show me how you want me to live. Guide me and teach me your truths. You are my God, my Savior. You are the one I have been waiting for. (Psalm 25:4-5 ERV)

Each day we take a daily inventory of how we behaved, so we can learn and perhaps do better on another day. We pray for conscious contact with God and for knowledge of His will for us and the power to help us carry it out. Both of these practices help us start to find balance and to be decisive in a healthy way.

I praise the Lord because he taught me well. Even at night he put his instructions deep inside my mind. I always remember that the Lord is with me. He is here, close by my side, so nothing can defeat me. (Psalm 16:7-8 ERV)

Prayer: Loving God, help me to know You and Your ways and to walk in them. Amen

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY DAILY MEDITATIONS



Week 41

Monday

RESPONDING TO LIES

The following Psalm was written by the future King David of Israel at a time in his life when he was being pursued by those who sought to kill him. David called out to God to help him and was explicit in his desire for God to act with revenge against those who were hounding him and speaking lies about him.

I say to the Lord, "You are my God." Hear, Lord, my cry for mercy. Sovereign Lord, my strong deliverer, you shield my head in the day of battle. Do not grant the wicked their desires, Lord; do not let their plans succeed. Those who surround me proudly rear their heads; may the mischief of their lips engulf them. May burning coals fall on them; may they be thrown into the fire, into miry pits, never to rise. May slanderers not be established in the land; may disaster hunt down the violent. I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy. Surely the righteous will praise your name, and the upright will live in your presence. (Psalm 140:6-13 NIV)

Some of the slander that grieved David concerned a priest to whom he had gone for help. An onlooker who was there at the same time exaggerated what he saw to David's enemy, King Saul. Unfortunately, the outcome was that the help given by the priest resulted in the priest's entire family, except one son, being put to death. David had to flee and he and the men who gathered with him were hunted like animals. In his grief, David is asking God to bring disaster on his enemies and not let their plans succeed.

David's prayer is quite different from that of the Lord Jesus who experienced lies being told about Him. Because of His great love for us, Jesus allowed Himself to be rejected, beaten, and nailed to a cross, even though He had done no wrong. In His great concern and love for those who crucified Him, Jesus prayed, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."* (Luke 23:34a NIV) How many of us have caused trouble for others by telling lies about them? If lies were told about us, how would we respond? There is no greater love than we would lay down our lives for our friends. How about our enemies?

Prayer: Gracious God, Help me to love my enemies and pray for those who persecute me so that I may behave like a true child of my Father in heaven. Amen

WISDOM-- RETRAIN AND REPOSITION

Coming out of addiction and living life in sobriety is always challenging and should be lived one day at a time. Our addiction kept us busy fulfilling its demands and now our thought patterns need to be retrained in ways of healthy living. Our bodies are in a state of shock. We miss and grieve the familiar way of addictive life and the people who used to be around us. New beginnings require planning and help in order to move from one place to the next, so it is always wise to seek help from those who are experienced in having done so.

Leave your simple ways behind and begin to live; learn to use good judgment. Wisdom will multiply your days and add years to your life. (Proverbs 9:6, 11 NLT)

Living in recovery requires that we keep away from our old stomping grounds and from the people who are still out there. Initially we may think that seeing a familiar face is good for us and we might even be able to influence someone to also seek recovery. It is more likely that they will lead us back into addiction than we will influence them for good. It is much wiser to seek the company of someone who has been in recovery for a time and can share their experience in avoiding the pitfalls that lead to relapse.

So don't bother correcting mockers; they will only hate you. But correct the wise, and they will love you. Instruct the wise, and they will be even wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn even more. (Proverbs 9:8-9 NLT)

Looking back at our life with guilt and shame will bring us misery and stifle our growth unless we have chosen to repent of our sin and give our will and life over to the care of God. Jesus died so we could be free from the penalty of sin. We can't change what's been done, but when we accept that we have been forgiven by God, we can move forward.

Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment. (Proverbs 9:10 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am not afraid to leave my past behind because I know You will care for me and teach me to use good judgment in my future life with You. Amen

TOGETHER WITH GOD

ANY DIFFICULTY CAN BE WORKED OUT

If we really want to get well we need to stop using our problems as a means of getting attention, sympathy or pity.

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. (Jeremiah 29:11-12 NIV)

The past cannot be changed. In our grief over some past events, we have allowed the pain to be our foundation for the future. We must stop using our problems as an excuse to sit on the sidelines of life. We need to stop wasting time having pity-parties for ourselves. We need to examine and accept the truth about the life situations that have caused us pain and ask God to heal our wounds and make us whole. With God all things are possible, and He additionally gives us hope and a future. When we pray and look around at opportunities God is presenting, we can get excited about our day and where it will lead us.

For since the world began, no ear has heard and no eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for him! (Isaiah 64:4 NLT)

If trouble should arise God will help us face each situation calmly and with courage. As we apply God's principles in each circumstance, we can confidently leave the outcome with Him. The challenge for us is to trust God when His direction may seem contrary to what we would have Him do. God knows the perfect way through our difficulties and our principle for life should be to simply trust and obey Him one step at a time and allow Him to lead us forward.

Let me hear of your unfailing love each morning, for I am trusting you. Show me where to walk, for I give myself to you. Rescue me from my enemies, Lord; I run to you to hide me. (Psalm 143:8-9 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I believe that You have prepared a wonderful day and a good future for me. Together with You, any difficulty I might face can be worked out and overcome. Amen

SECURE IN GOD'S CARE

In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety. (Psalm 4:8 NASB)

When we watch the news at night, we know from various reports that we live in a dangerous and harmful world with many threats to our personal security. Family members, friends, and others die from drug and alcohol related problems. Violence is on the rise. Robberies are numerous. Random shootings in various cities threaten daily life. Earthquakes, tornados, fire, and damaging floods in multiple locations remind us of how vulnerable we are and how fragile life is.

God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. (Psalm 46:1-2 NLT)

We need a safe place to run to when disaster, pain, or loss seeks to overwhelm us. At times like these we often seek people or physical things to give us comfort rather than seeking God. Perhaps we hesitate to seek God because we do not feel secure in the truth that, through Jesus, we are legitimate children of God. We assume that if we were, we would not be having trouble.

The good news is that when we put our faith in Jesus, our Heavenly Father will act on our behalf. We don't have to face trouble alone. When our lives are touched by trouble we can call out to God and He will help us. God will fill us with His wisdom and strength. God is greater than any problem we may face, and we can truly be secure in the fact that God will take care of us.

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world....and call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me. (John 16:33; Psalm 50:15 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, When troubles abound in my life I know You could and would help, if You were sought. Help me to seek You first in any trouble that comes my way and have faith in Your power to do more than I could ask for or even imagine. Amen