

FRIDAY

ROOTING OUT ENVY

Envy is included on many lists of character defects. Envy is the sense of wanting what others have or feeling that we deserve more. The Bible speaks about this negative character trait in strong terms saying that if we harbour feelings of envy, it pollutes us, and makes us "unfit for God."

For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts of lust, theft, murder, adultery, wanting what belongs to others, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, pride, and all other folly. All these vile things come from within; they are what pollute you and make you unfit for God. (Mark 7:21-23 TLB)

Wanting what others have or feeling we deserve more is opposite to living in contentment with what we do have. God created the earth and humans so that we could be in relationship with Him. God chose not to give humans the knowledge of good and evil. Satan, the deceiver, twisted the thoughts of the first humans by causing them to envy God and be like Him with the knowledge of good and evil. What a mess that created! Jesus, on the other hand, did not hold to being equal with God, but humbled Himself and came to earth to die for our sins. Jesus set aside His majesty in heaven so He could come and liberate us from the sin debt we owed. This was God's way of restoring His relationship with humans and giving them life with Him forever.

A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones. (Proverbs 14:30 NIV)

We are instructed by God to look to Him for all we need and to give thanks for the generous gifts He provides for us each day. God will give us everything we need to live the life He has prepared for us. Being contented in God's care with what He has provided for us will free us from the character defect of envy.

You want what you don't have, so you kill to get it. You long for what others have, and can't afford it, so you start a fight to take it away from them. And yet the reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it. (James 4:2 TLB)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for taking good care of me. Forgive me for being discontented and for envying what others have. Help me to be like Jesus and live life as You planned it for me and be ever thankful that You will provide all that I need. Amen

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Weekend

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

A recent search for the word "encourage" in the Bible brought 92 direct references. This is obviously a quality of character that matters to God.

Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, "How can I help?" (Romans 15:1-2 MSG)

The dictionary definition of "encourage" includes these ideas:- to give support, confidence or hope; help or stimulate to develop; inspire, motivate, nurture, champion, and strengthen.

When we truly love and care for a person our desire is for life at its best for them. We need to take time to listen to and talk with our loved ones or friends who are struggling and try to understand what is going on in their lives. Sometimes just discussing a problem helps a person find a solution or resolve an issue. Of course, not everything can be resolved that easily. We can show we care about a person by following up with a phone call, a note, another meeting, or whatever it takes to help that person get through the troublesome time they are experiencing.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had. (Romans 15:5 NIV)

Demonstrating to others that we care about them is encouragement to them whether the problem is resolved or not. If God had not come alongside us when we were struggling and encouraged us to try again, where would we be today?

Let's look around each day and see the opportunities that God is giving us to encourage others with the same comfort and encouragement we ourselves have received.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to take my eyes off myself and focus on the divine encounters You are giving me to encourage others. Amen

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY DAILY MEDITATIONS



Week 35

Monday

SURRENDERING TO THE TRUTH

Negative feelings are usually attached to a lie. To get beyond negative feelings we must reject the attached lie and choose for the truth while our feelings are still vulnerable. In faith, we choose to believe the truth we have learned and remind ourselves of this truth as often as necessary, while allowing the truth to determine our actions. When we do this, our feelings will follow our actions. As we apply these principles to our daily way of life, we will experience the peace and freedom that truth brings.

We will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ (Ephesians 4:14-15 NLT)

In our society most people act in accordance with their feelings rather than allowing their actions to determine their feelings. Bad attitudes and addictive behaviours offer short term pacifiers and escapes but no real peace and blessing. When we determine to walk in obedience to God's principles, we will have a life that is filled with love, joy, and peace.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. (1 Corinthians 13:6 NIV)

Following God's path requires conquering our feelings when they don't line up with truth. We lay down our familiar self-centered ways and follow God's life-giving ways. Today we have a choice, to live by our feelings or to live according to God's truth. The former leads to disaster. The latter leads to life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess I have allowed my feelings to shape my life for a long time and because of this the outcome has been disastrous, over and over again. Help me to live by Your truth and stand strong in Your love so my feelings have an opportunity to come into line with Your truth. Thank You for the peace that results when I follow Your principles for a purposeful life. Amen.

WHOM HAVE I INJURED?

An important part of living with God in recovery is coming to an accurate view of what went wrong in our relationships and doing our part to make things right. What prompted us to physically, mentally, or emotionally hurt another person? Regardless of the excuses we may make for our behaviour, we need to admit that we did cause harm to some family members and friends.

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:9 NIV)

Perhaps we spoke in anger, or we used distance and coldness to wound others. Our lying, cheating, or stealing from others deprived them of peace of mind and emotional security. What we thought were “victimless crimes” always had a victim. Many of us used dominating and controlling tactics so we could manipulate others and ensure we got our own way. We were masters at playing the blame game and were unwilling to talk about our issues or take responsibility for the situations we created around us.

Prayer: Loving God, Help me to have an accurate view of the underlying root cause of what went wrong in relationships where I know there is struggle or distance on my part. Please give me the humility and grace to confess my wrongs, make amends, and pray for those who have been impacted by my behaviour so each one of us can be healed. Amen

OVERTAKING SHAME FOR PAST BEHAVIOUR

Life with God in recovery includes recognizing where shame is active in us and inviting God to heal the wounds that have caused us embarrassment and humiliation. We can recognize shame when we constantly feel unworthy, insecure, or inferior. The thought that isolation and aloneness would be easier to deal with than living in community is another telltale sign of shame.

Instead of shame and dishonor, you will enjoy a double share of honor. You will possess a double portion of prosperity in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours. (Isaiah 61:7 NLT)

The first step in rooting out shame is to receive God's forgiveness for any ways we have sinned against God and others. When we put our trust in what Jesus did for us on the cross, not only is our guilt removed, but God also promises to cleanse our consciences from the shame. When the evil one says our sins are unforgivable, we must counter this lie with the fact that Jesus is the perfect sacrifice for ALL our sins.

Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. (Hebrews 9:14 NLT)

Memories of past behaviour can easily trigger shame. When we accept forgiveness of our sins from Jesus, our past is blotted out and we become beloved sons and daughters of God with new hope and a future. We must focus our thoughts on this truth, intentionally affirming it as often as necessary. We must also behave in accordance with this truth rather than reacting to our feelings. When we resist the evil one's accusations in this way, shame will go and peace and stability will come.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You that Jesus died on the cross for me so I could be forgiven, cleansed, healed and made whole. I acknowledge that only You can restore me to new life and today I choose to put my trust in You to do that. Amen

VALUING THE ORDINARY

One of the most remarkable aspects of the 12-Step movement founded by Alcoholics Anonymous is the emphasis on ordinary people – even broken and pretty much washed-up folks. These are the ones who can serve others well and be the support strugglers need as they find their way to sobriety and the life they were created to live. Twelve step organizations are not run by professionals. Central offices may employ special workers but the heart and soul of what goes on is done by ordinary people helping ordinary individuals stand up and move forward in their lives.

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. (James 3:17 NLT)

God's way of life for everyone is humility and down-to-earth loving and serving. We are called to follow the example of Jesus who had all the glory of heaven and yet laid it all down to come to earth to live among us. Jesus was born in humble circumstances – a stable. He grew up in a humble town – people asked this of Jesus' hometown, “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*” (John 1:46 NLT) Jesus did not own any property and was homeless. He lived as an ordinary man so He could demonstrate how much God loves us and how powerfully God can use us when we surrender our will and our life into His care.

God wants to give us eyes to see the hidden value in an ordinary life, even a broken one. God wants us to operate with grace as we help others gather up the broken pieces of their lives and offer those seemingly useless bits to Jesus, so He can restore the masterpiece God created. We need to work together with others, acting with humility and gentleness, valuing everyone, because only God knows how to transform us into useful vessels designed for His purpose.

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (Ephesians 2:10 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to have the same humility that Jesus did and to value ordinary people in ordinary circumstances. Help me to see the beauty of their lives as we serve and support one another in the loving relationship You intended us to have. Amen