

FRIDAY

OVERCOMING OVERWHELMING DISCOURAGEMENT

We sought recovery when we admitted our lives were unmanageable, and we were powerless to change. How we got to where we were may have included a winding trail of events that seemed unfair, and which caused us much pain. With our good intentions we finally settled into a recovery program. However, for most of us, some difficulties surfaced, and we became discouraged and intimidated by not finding quick solutions to our problems. Then, overwhelming feelings of wanting to run set in. The biggest obstacle to staying on course is, looking for solutions to our problems without seeing God's help in the resolution of them.

Answer me now, Lord! I have lost all hope. Don't hide yourself from me, or I will be among those who go down to the world of the dead. Remind me each morning of your constant love, for I put my trust in you. My prayers go up to you; show me the way I should go. (Psalm 143:7-8 GNT)

Often, we have lost hope that life will ever treat us fairly. We have set goals for ourselves only to see them fail and fall apart. How can we overcome this trend? We need to pray to the God who created us and tell Him all that is in our hearts so that healing can take place. We need to forgive those who have treated us unfairly and own those things which we have done that negatively impacted so many lives. Repenting of our wrongs and forgiving others will give us new hope, and help us see more clearly the events of our life which had major impact on us.

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)

God says if we call on Him in our day of trouble, He will rescue us. That is a promise that gives us hope as we practice God's principles in all our affairs.

But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:25 GNT)

Prayer: Gracious God, Help me to believe Your Word and never lose hope for a purposeful life. Remind me each morning of Your constant love and care for me. Amen

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Weekend

CHANGING OUR STINKING THINKING

We are not shaped so much by our environment as we are by our perception of our environment. The way we think has a powerful impact on how we face life each day. If we are not thinking right, it will be reflected in our emotional state and in our actions.

The thought of my suffering and homelessness is bitter beyond words. I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss.

(Lamentations 3:19-20 NLT)

In the Bible we read about a man named Jeremiah. He expresses despair and bitterness as he wrongly perceives that God is against him and that God is the cause of his suffering and his difficult circumstances. Even though Jeremiah was having an awful time, God wasn't the cause of his problems. Jeremiah wasn't thinking right in assessing what was happening, so he did not respond correctly. Blaming God does not fix anything!

Then Jeremiah remembers the truth about God and his whole way of thinking changes. **Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: The unfailing love of the LORD never ends! By his mercies we have been kept from complete destruction. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each day. I say to myself, "The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!" The LORD is wonderfully good to those who wait for him and seek him. So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD.** (Lamentations 3:21-26 NLT)

What a turnaround! Did God change? No. Did Jeremiah's circumstances change? No. What changed? Jeremiah's perception of God changed and his emotions followed suit.

Life's events don't determine who we are. We can't control people, places, or things but we can choose how we interpret and respond to them. God promises to be with us through any fearful times we may face. We need to fill our minds with this truth and respond accordingly when troubling circumstances arise.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, When life is difficult, help me to remember that with You any difficulty can be worked out and overcome. I am forever grateful that You care for me. Amen

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY DAILY MEDITATIONS



Week 30

Monday

REDUCING SELF-CENTEREDNESS

The Big Book of AA describes the significance of our problem with self-centeredness in this way: *"There often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His [God's] aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help."* (Big Book pages 62-63)

This confirms what the Bible says about needing God to help us deal with self-centeredness and other shortcomings.

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life ... because of his glory and excellence, 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)

The authors of the Big Book mirror this important truth for us as follows: *"This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life.* (Big Book pages 62-63)

So you should try very hard to add goodness to your faith. To goodness, add knowledge. To knowledge, add the ability to control yourselves. To the ability to control yourselves, add the strength to keep going. To the strength to keep going, add godliness. To godliness, add kindness for one another and to kindness for one another, add love. (2 Peter 1:5-7 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for your help in dealing with my self-centeredness. I surrender all that I am to You. Be the director of my life. Work Your will in me and through me so that I might share in Your divine nature and have sincere affection for everyone I meet. Amen

Asking God to remove all our defects of character is actually giving Him permission to expose and remove those things that are hindering our ability to live life to the full. By reading the Scriptures in the Bible we come to know that God loves us and is committed to taking care of us. To live life to the full we need to focus on, and believe in God's unchanging commitment to care for everyone who walks in His ways.

The Lord is good and does what is right; he shows the proper path to those who go astray. He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them his way. The Lord leads with unfailing love and faithfulness all who keep his covenant and obey his demands. (Psalm 25:8-10 NLT)

We must choose for God's way each time His direction conflicts with what we think is a better way. Character defects will be removed as we become willing to follow God's principles instead of choosing our own way. We need to admit that choosing for our own way got us to where we are today. We cannot manipulate God's principles because the Bible tells us His Word is forever settled in Heaven.

Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Psalm 119:89; Matthew 6:10 NIV)

Becoming willing to have God remove all our defects of character is a bit like dealing with dirty clothes. We don't put clean clothes on top of dirty clothes. That would give the appearance of change while we just cover the stained clothes and continue with poor hygiene. When sinful habits and defects of character are revealed, we need to give God permission to remove them, cleanse us, and help us become the person He created us to be.

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me—now let me rejoice. (Psalm 51:7-8 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, My desire is to have all my defects of character removed. Help me to live entirely surrendered to Your will and Your ways so I may live as the new creation You say I am. I proclaim the old me has gone and the new me is here. Please help me to live my new life in the light of Your Presence. Amen

This new life we have been given begins each new day. Yesterday's mistakes, blunders, worries and the resulting pain are all behind us. We are unable to change what has been said or done. We need to admit that, repent, turn away from the evil things we have done, and let go of the pain of those harmful things done to us. We need to turn to God who promises us a season of refreshing.

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. (Acts 3:19 NIV)

Living as if God did not exist is the first thing we need to repent of. The first steps of the 12-Step Program deal with this issue. We admit we are powerless. We come to believe God can restore us. We turn our life, including our rebellious self-will over to God, and receive salvation and a new way of living through Jesus Christ. We need to recognize the voice of God's Holy Spirit within us as He reveals behaviours and thoughts that are stirred by the insanity of our thinking about the past which cannot be changed.

Refreshing new life is available to us if we will just reach out and embrace it. Whether we are brand new in recovery or returning after many stumbles, God is with us. When we call on Him, He will answer us and provide the love and mercy we need to begin each new day. As our will is surrendered to His, God will give us everything we need to live life with a new sense of joy.

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. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (Psalm 51:4, 1 John 1:9 NLT)

Sprinkled with the blood of Christ, our hearts have been made free from a guilty conscience, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. So come near to God with a sincere heart, full of confidence because of our faith in Christ. (Hebrews 10:22 ERV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your mercy that is new every morning. I repent of my rebellious ways and desire from this day forward to walk in the truth of Your word. Please help me to forgive and forget about past hurts and strengthen my will to practice Your principles in all my affairs. Amen

For you are great and perform wonderful deeds. You alone are God. Teach me your ways, O Lord, that I may live according to your truth! Grant me purity of heart, so that I may honor you. With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God. I will give glory to your name forever, for your love for me is very great. You have rescued me from the depths of death. (Psalm 86:10-13 NLT)

One of the most dangerous characteristics of life in addiction is the mindset that we know what went wrong and exactly what we need to make things right. We know that those around us caused harm to us and believe that resulted in our troubles. We are quick to judge and strongly criticize everyone and everything except ourselves. We know we have things to teach others, if only they were willing to learn!

Life with God in recovery requires that we take a new approach. We humbly recognize that the person needing help with God is leading us to the "depths of known way of doing things is leading us to the "depths of death." We also require God's strength to change our ways. God will give us the will and desire to walk in His ways if we choose to seek His wisdom.

Everything we need doesn't come in pretty packages the day we enter recovery. It's in the ups and downs of day-to-day life that we come to truly know ourselves. Sponsors, counsellors, and trusted friends help us recognize our character defects. God's Word gives us clear instructions, so we can determine how our way of living lines up with His directions. However, none of this has power unless we have a teachable spirit and, with a humble heart, put into practice those things we have learned.

Along with the writer of the above Psalm we need to ask God to teach us His ways, so we can live according to His truth.

Prayer: Gracious God, I ask You to teach me Your ways and lead me on the road to a new life. Be my guide into the knowledge of all truth for You alone know my heart and my old ways. I choose to put my faith in You because Your love for me is unfailing and I desire to honour You in all I do and say. Amen