

Friday

DIVIDED LOYALTY – REVEALING THE WHOLE TRUTH

We often feel awkward about bringing our recurring sins before God. We are embarrassed by the number of times we have had to deal with the same issues – those things that we don't want to do yet keep doing over and over again. What is going on? Why can't we beat those things that cause trouble in our lives and also in the lives of those we love? What will it take for us to find solid ground on which to build a firm and lasting recovery?

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1 NKJV)

The slogan, "If nothing changes, nothing changes", is true. When we find ourselves coming back from the "same old failure" we need to admit whether we stayed with the necessary lifestyle changes we agreed to make, or are refusing to disclose the enduring pain we hold on to which might be feeding our recurring actions. This may be an opportunity to allow God to take us deeper into our buried pain. We need to reveal if we are feeling resentment, hatred, fear, pain, or deep shame about something in our past, and/or see only our addictive substance as a means of relief. God offers us comfort for our grief and healing for our hurts, but this requires complete honesty in what we will reveal and deal with. Only the truth – the whole truth – will set us free.

So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor. (James 4:7-8, 10 NLT)

If we sincerely desire freedom from our dependency, God will help us find it.

Prayer: Gracious God, I do not just want to talk about what has happened in my life but to repent and turn away from my destructive behavior. Please give me the courage to be honest and to confess those memories or situations that still cause me anxiety. Where I see my dependency as relief, help me to see it as an enemy of my survival. In every situation, I look to You for healing. I also ask for strength and determination to accept the things I cannot change and the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to follow Your ways with an undivided heart. Amen

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Weekend

NO RECORD OF WRONGS

Keeping a record of wrongs often leads to the winding path of relapse and active addiction. When someone harmed us in the past, we may have been unable to deal with the situation at that time, so we buried the pain. The pain, however, was not dead and it festered with evil thoughts about the person who committed the offence. Other incidences may have added to this and we just kept pushing each one down. We became angry and intolerant and verbally exploded in situations which did not meet with our approval. To deal with the pain and distress we sought medication to make us feel better. At first the medication worked but eventually more and more was needed to help us live with the hurt and bitterness that was inside us.

Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land. (Psalm 37:8-9 NIV)

Our record of wrongs influences the way we think and behave. For example, we think evil about a person who has harmed us and want them to suffer for what they have done. Increasingly we become agitated and anger builds within us. Vengeful thoughts fill our mind. Others find it hard to be around us because we have a super-sensitive attitude, and the fuse of our anger is always smoldering. What can we do about this?

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31-32 NIV)

If we have turned our lives over to the care of God, He has forgiven us for the sins we have committed, and He asks us to forgive those who have harmed us. This may be one of the hardest tasks we will face but God will give us the power to do what we cannot do on our own. Obeying God will free us from the wickedness of an unforgiving spirit. Refusal to do so means we are still entertaining that spirit and allowing it to control our lives.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You that through Jesus all my sins are forgiven. Please help me to forgive my offenders and turn them over to You to deal with. As I choose to live by the power of Your Holy Spirit, help me to hear no evil, see no evil, and think no evil. Amen

LIFE WITH GOD
IN RECOVERY
DAILY MEDITATIONS



Week 29

Monday

STREET SMARTS OR WISE LIVING

In our addictive lifestyle we made poor choices and walked paths that caused harm to ourselves and to others. We picked up a lot of "street smarts" as we tried to figure out cunning ways to deal with our circumstances. When we managed to lie our way out of trouble, we were considered smart. It didn't matter that we blamed and criticized those around us if we got ourselves "off the hook". We thought we were clever when we managed to steal from a store without getting caught or when we ripped a person off without them knowing it was us. In the legal system we looked for loopholes to help us "beat the rap" rather than looking at truth and dealing with the consequences of our actions. In the past we relied on our "street smarts" but they are certainly not a foundation for wholesome, healthy living in recovery.

Wisdom will save you from evil people, from those whose words are twisted. These men turn from the right way to walk down dark paths. They take pleasure in doing wrong, and they enjoy the twisted ways of evil. Their actions are crooked, and their ways are wrong. (Proverbs 2:12-15 NLT)

"Street smarts" took us to a dead-end on the road of life. Applying God's wisdom will bring us to a full and satisfying life.

Grow a wise heart—you'll do yourself a favor; keep a clear head—you'll find a good life. (Proverbs 19:8 MSG)

It's time to admit to ourselves that we need God's help to live wisely. Our lives based on "street smarts" are unmanageable. God wants us to be conscious of His will for us and have the power to carry it out. We need to come to God and ask Him for forgiveness for our rebellious ways and then put our trust in Him to take us forward and meet all our needs.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I repent of my "street smart" way of living and confess that I know very little about the way to live a good life. Please guide me with Your counsel and support me with Your strength. In all my ways, I commit to living my life according to Your Word. Amen

The contrast of destructive self-centeredness in active addiction versus the healthy lifestyle of supporting one another in recovery is clearly expressed in Promise 7 of A.A.: - *We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.* Learning and growing in our recovery and sharing our experience, strength, and hope with others, are ways we fulfill this principle. Long before this was brought to the attention of recovering alcoholics, God's Word in the Bible explained that this was the way God wanted us to live.

Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others too, and in what they are doing. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Philippians 2:4 TLB, Colossians 3:16 ESV)

We help each other by giving time and attention to one another. One of the greatest gifts we can give to a person is a listening ear and time for them to share whatever they need to share. We need to slow down and pay attention to those around us, lending a helping hand as needed, rather than merrily going along doing our own thing. Even though it is not always convenient, and is often hard work, there is something very satisfying about caring for others in a way that strengthens and builds them up.

By "carrying the message", as Step 12 encourages us to do, we make ourselves vulnerable as we share our struggles related to finding sobriety and getting to know God. By sharing our experience, we provide common ground for someone to find themselves at a starting point for moving ahead. This "gaining interest in others" is so important that when Jesus boiled down all the teaching of the Scriptures into two commandments, this was one of them. The success of our life and our recovery depend on living our lives this way.

Jesus replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37-40 NLT)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You put Your own interests aside and came to earth to die for my sins. Help me to be more like You and be more interested in others and less self-focused. Amen

We all go through times in our lives when we feel the sky is falling and we are unable to do anything about it. This is falling and we are unable to find quick and clever ways to overcome difficulties. The God to whom we turn our will and life over to is the God who will use many things in our lives for good – including the resourcefulness we practiced for destructive means. Cleansed of the cheating and manipulation, God wants us to be an example to others of how to tap into His wonderful resources. With faith in God's goodness at work in us, we can now refocus our skills and talents:

The writer of today's Psalm appears to be in a similar mess, and his solution is to tell God about it and cry out to Him for help. What can we learn from his experience that will give us strength and hope in our own times of powerlessness and unmanageability?

Listen to my prayer, O Lord, and hear my cry for help! When I am in trouble, don't turn away from me! Listen to me, and answer me quickly when I call! My life is disappearing like smoke; my body is burning like fire. I am beaten down like dry grass; I have lost my desire for food. I groan aloud; I am nothing but skin and bones. I am like a wild bird in the desert, like an owl in an abandoned ruin. I lie awake; I am like a lonely bird on a housetop. All day long my enemies insult me; those who mock me use my name in cursing. (Psalm 102:1-8 GNT)

When we came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity, we gave our will and our life over to the care of this God of our understanding. As we live in His will, we discover that whatever the cause of our anxiety, God is available to help us face any issues head on and overcome the challenges they may bring. Our prayer, knowing that God will hear and answer our prayers and give us peace that goes beyond our understanding.

In my distress I prayed to the Lord, and the Lord answered me and set me free. (Psalm 118:5 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, When I am fearful and feeling low because of my stressful circumstances, help me to remember that You are the all-knowing God who guards my heart and mind and takes care of me. Amen

Who is more resourceful than an addict in need? Desperation really fuels the ability to find quick and clever ways to overcome difficulties. The God to whom we turn our will and life over to is the God who will use many things in our lives for good – including the resourcefulness we practiced for destructive means. Cleansed of the cheating and manipulation, God wants us to be an example to others of how to tap into His wonderful resources. With faith in God's goodness at work in us, we can now refocus our skills and talents:

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men. (1 Timothy 5:8, Colossians 3:23 ESV)

We can help and offer many creative solutions in a variety of areas from lessons learned through our life experiences during pre-addiction days as well as during dark times. We need to ask God to show us how to use the understanding we have gained for the good of others. We don't have to be the resident expert, and we don't always need to have things done the way that worked for us, but we may be able to offer a fresh viewpoint that may be useful to someone in a given situation.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. (James 1:5, Luke 16:10 ESV)

God has kept us alive and brought us to this day. God Himself says that He has given us every spiritual blessing so we can do those things that He has planned for us to do. His plan is that through our lives – yes our lives – others will see the good things we have done and give God the glory. So, let's be resourceful and put our abilities into the service of God in order that we may offer a helping hand to those around us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, It's amazing that You are able to use some things in my past – the good, the bad, and the ugly – in Your agenda for me today. Help me to live with faith that You brought me and my unique gifts to this day to do good and to glorify Your Name. Amen