

Friday

DISCERNMENT

How can I get discernment? What do I do with it when I get it? Discernment comes from God's Holy Spirit living in us and giving us understanding of God's character and His ways, so we can build a life on the foundation of love, joy, and peace. God desires that we know Him intimately. Through the wisdom of God's Word in the Bible and the understanding given us by the Holy Spirit, God will help us discern the plan He has for our lives.

Let those who are wise understand these things. Let those with discernment listen carefully. The paths of the LORD are true and right, and righteous people live by walking in them. But in those paths sinners stumble and fall. (Hosea 14:9 NLT)

As we begin to take the first steps in our life with God in recovery, we need to seek God's wisdom to discern the right path for us. We need God's guidance when we are uncertain of the way to take, but we need it even more when we think we know the way. Our approach to any new situation is often swayed by our way of thinking in the past.

Some simple steps we might take in this process are:

- ✓ list the known pros and cons of the choices before us.
- ✓ consider the gifts God has given us.
- ✓ pray and trust that God will direct our steps in the way we are to take.
- ✓ seek guidance from someone who knows us well (perhaps a pastor, priest, parent, counselor) and carefully consider their advice.

This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is good for you and leads you along the paths you should follow." (Isaiah 48:17 NLT)

We need to make a truthful assessment of our will versus God's revealed will in each situation, and not allow our imagination or desires to mislead us. God promises to direct our steps as we submit our life to Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, My desire is to have understanding of Your ways so that I may have discernment in all I undertake to do. Please guide me in all my ways. Amen

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Weekend

LOVE IS NOT DEMANDING

Many of us struggle to recognize the difference between asking and demanding. Demanding people believe they are entitled to what they deem to be their rights. They will often require more from another person than what that person intends to give. Demanding people regularly use manipulation and threats to get what they want. On the other hand, a person making a respectful request recognizes that granting any request must be left to the discretion of the person being asked.

Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. (Ephesians 4:2-3 NLT)

Demanding people are usually concerned for their own needs but, as children of God, we are told to also be concerned about the needs of others. That is why the Bible tells us to love one another as we love ourselves. Love requires that we give people freedom to be who they are without any imposed demands on them to meet our needs or do things our way. If we love someone, we will allow them to make their own choices. That is what God does for us. He did not make us robots who are required to do what He demands. He gives us free will to choose to love Him and follow His ways.

We pray that the Lord will make your love grow. We pray that he will give you more and more love for each other and for all people. We pray that you will love everyone in the same way we love you. (1 Thessalonians 3:12 ERV)

Jesus demanded nothing from us when He came into the world to save us from our sins. To be selfless like Jesus we need to remember that love is not demanding but exhibits humility in all its ways. Each person should be respectful of others' boundaries and choose not to impose their own expectations or desires on another. Love is never demanding!

Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love makes up for many of your faults. (1 Peter 4:8 TLB)

Prayer: Gracious Father, Please help me to be non-demanding in all my ways and to love and respect others and the boundaries they have set. Thank You for the love You lavish on me as You give me the will to choose to love You. Help me to be more like You. Amen

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY DAILY MEDITATIONS



Week 25

WHY FOLLOW JESUS

Jesus says: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.* (John 14:6 NLT) For us who are used to doing things our own way and basing our hopes and dreams on our expectations, that's an exclusive statement for Jesus to make. God's word clearly tells us: *"There is a way which seems right to a person, But its end is the way of death.* (Proverbs 14:12 NASB) What do these words mean to you and me as we learn to walk in truth in recovery?

Often, we make choices that for the present time seem to be good, but before we know it, we end up in trouble and wonder what happened. Sometimes we even attribute the blame to God when we find ourselves burdened down by our own deliberate choices. The truth is that God alone knows what is best for each person. Only God has the foreknowledge necessary to guide us over the long haul.

We were never made to live life on our own. We were created to live in relationship with God through Jesus Christ. God's intention was for us to thrive and have a good life as, through His Holy Spirit, He empowered us to follow His principles in all our ways. Following the desires of our own heart results in us needing to be forgiven and saved and healed from the effects of our poor decisions. God invites us to consider the consequences of our past choices and to choose a new way of life. In the Bible we read that Jesus humbled Himself and came to earth to die for our sins and to restore our relationship with God. We also read about God's principles for living life to the full. Today, let's accept all that Jesus has done for us, humble ourselves, and turn from our rebellious ways to God.

Our sins are heavy upon us; we are wasting away! How can we survive? As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live. Turn! Turn from your wickedness, O people... (Ezekiel 33:10b-11 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Life is not everything I hoped it would be and I confess that the reason for this is I continue to do things my way. Please forgive me. I surrender my will and life into your care. Come and live in me. Help me to surrender self-will and choose to do Your will, so I can experience the abundant life You have promised. Amen

USELESSNESS AND SELF-PITY DISAPPEAR

On pages 83-84 of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous we read twelve promises that will happen as we diligently work the twelve steps. The question is asked: - - "Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them."

The Bible also makes this "extravagant promise: " ***That's also how it is with people. The ones who stop doing evil and make themselves pure will become special. Their lives will be holy and pleasing to their Master, and they will be able to do all kinds of good deeds.*** (2 Timothy 2:21 CEV)

Many of us have wasted years and even decades in addition. By the time we get to recovery, our bodies are tired and worn out, our minds are fragile, and it takes a long time for us to work out new ways of doing things and to learn new skills. We often feel like the opportunity to be successful and productive has passed us by, but the sixth promise in the Big Book speaks directly to this time as it says, "*That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.*" This promise is echoed in one of God's many promises to us. God's plan for our lives will be effective the moment we put our trust in Him and follow His ways. God knows our past, our present, and our future, and will work everything together for our good because of His great love for us. God appointed us to be saved and has a purpose for each of our lives.

"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." (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV)

How does God do it? How does it all come about? We don't know, and we don't have to know. Our part is to get to know God, follow His guidance, stay strong in His love, and be available. God will teach us everything we need to know and promises we will experience a fruitful and fulfilling life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I wasted so much time in addiction and unhealthy life practices. Help me to believe Your promise that You can use me in a way that blesses others and fills me with joy and satisfaction. Show me my part and help me to fulfill Your plan for my life. Help me to do the next right thing and leave the rest with You, Amen

KNOWING AND DOING THE RIGHT THING

People with discernment will naturally do the right thing in each situation. Spiritually discerning people also have the capacity to separate and sift what is good from what is best, based on their knowledge of God and His ways. When humans were created, we were meant to live in relationship with God. In His wisdom God gave humans free will to choose to love and obey Him. Even though humans chose to disobey God and our relationship with Him was cut off, eternity remains in our hearts where it was planted in the beginning.

God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end. (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NLT)

Many humans continue to function in this world as though they will live forever. They don't consult God as to what is best for them. They think they know it intuitively and end up suffering painful consequences. The truth is that without God's wisdom, we don't know how to live purposefully in this life, or what will happen to us in the next. What are we to do?

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NIV)

God invites us to know Him personally by receiving salvation through His Son Jesus. His Holy Spirit then comes to live in our hearts and, through the Scriptures recorded in the Bible, teaches us God's principles for life that we could never know on our own. The result is that we will have discernment to choose what is right. This is more than our conscience speaking or "trusting our gut." This is God revealing truth to us, so we can live well. As we spend time with God each day and practice His teachings, He gives us a discerning heart to know His ways.

Deal with your servant according to your love and teach me your decrees. I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes. (Psalm 119:124-125 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess that You are the only wise God. Teach me Your ways that I may discern and choose what is the best path for my life. Amen

WHO REALLY KNOWS ME?

How do we feel when people who should know us don't? Jesus understands our sadness and wants to heal our hearts from disappointing relationships. Jesus wants us to experience the joy of knowing that we are valued and that we belong.

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 1:10-12 NLT)

Sir Christopher Wren was the architect of St. Paul's Cathedral and be the most beautiful buildings in London were designed by him and he earned much respect for his work. It seems unthinkable that people of that time would not have recognized Christopher Wren. Jesus, who was both the architect and creator of this world came into it, and those who should have recognized Him didn't and, in fact, they rejected him.

He (Jesus) was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. (Isaiah 53:3a; Ephesians 1:5-6 NLT)

Jesus was despised and rejected when He came into the world and subsequently was crucified. Through belief in His sacrificial death on our behalf, we are fully accepted into the kingdom of God. Jesus knows the experience of deep grief and therefore has great compassion for us. When we feel lonely and don't think that we belong, Jesus is with us. He offers us a relationship that will fill our hearts with peace and joy. When we open our hearts to Jesus, He will teach us how to have a deep and abiding relationship with Him, and with others.

Prayer: Come into my heart Lord Jesus and give me the courage to love You with all my heart. You created me to belong and experience the joy of being part of Your family. Heal me from past disappointments. I want to have a loving relationship with You and learn how to love others and experience healthy relationships. Please help me. Amen