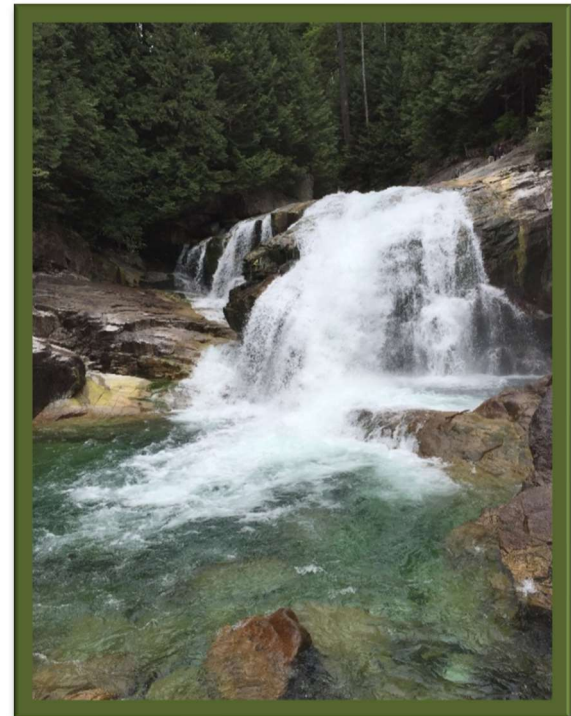


Life With God In Recovery

STEP FIVE: The Exact Nature Of My Wrongs



THE EXACT NATURE OF MY WRONGS

STEP FIVE: We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. (Proverbs 28:13 NIV)

All of us wrestle with our conscience regarding situations we struggle with. We may lie to ourselves and pretend that what we have done is not as bad in comparison to what others have done. We may also minimize how our conduct negatively impacted others. When we are in denial, we try to work hard at being “good,” to counteract the wrong we know we have done. In order to truly put the past to rest, we must stop rationalizing our past behaviour, acknowledge the error of our ways, realize the hurt we’ve caused, and turn away from this destructive way of life. God created us for a life in loving relationship with Him. All destructive and addictive behaviour is rooted in the breakdown of that relationship. That’s the exact nature of all our wrongs.

For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. (Psalm 51:3-4 NKJV)

From the time Adam and Eve chose to disobey God’s instructions, humans have shaped their lives and sorted their problems based on their own understanding. Our unwillingness to live in trust and surrender to the only all-knowing God is the foundation of all our wrong doing. Only God, who is wise and mighty, knows what is good for us. He has a plan for each of our lives that will give us hope and a bright future. Today, in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, whether good or full of troubles and injustice, God knows how we can best handle the situation.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Prov. 3:5-6 NIV)

The exact nature of our wrongs is that we think God is absent or surprised by our circumstances. In the past people have treated us badly and, quite naturally, we were frightened and wounded by their wrong doing towards us. In certain situations we now seek to protect ourselves from further potential harm by becoming angry and resentful towards others. This forms a personality trait which keeps us at a 'safe distance' from the harm we fear others may cause us. Instead of turning to God for help, we try to fix the problem ourselves and end up in a worse condition than before. When we bring the issues before God, He hears our cries for help and rescues us from all our troubles.

Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him." But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain. (Psalm 3:2-4 NIV)

The exact nature of our wrongs is rooted in the lie that our problems are caused by what is around us rather than what is within us. It's time that we admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being that our way of dealing with problems did not solve them. Doing things our way actually creates greater problems for everyone. It's time to admit that we cannot do life on our own and that we need to seek God's ways. God's direction has to be our first choice every time, rather than our "choice of last resort." We need to admit that we don't have all the answers. We need to learn from God's word and listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. We need to listen to the advice of mentors and others who have walked with God for a time. With God's help we need to apply what we have learned to our daily living.

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. I've promised it once, and I'll promise it again: I will obey your righteous regulations. I have suffered much, O Lord; restore my life again as you promised. (Psalm 119:105-107 NLT)

It's time to agree with God and our own conscience about the exact nature of our wrongs. It's time to admit that wrong is wrong and that we are guilty of wrong thinking and wrong behaviour. God sees the damage of sinful choices and hates the destructive impact on people He loves. When we finally face the reality of our sinning, it is helpful to recall God's kind and merciful nature. No sin is too great to be forgiven. Jesus has paid the price

for our sin with his death on the cross. We do not have to earn forgiveness but we do have to acknowledge our need for it and receive it.

The Bible tells us, ***If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.*** (1 John 1:8-9 NLT).

When we choose to live in truth, we find internal peace. We have accepted God's forgiveness for all our wrongs and know that He has promised, ***"No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you as white as wool."*** (Isaiah 1:18 NLT) Having admitted the exact nature of our wrongs and accepted complete forgiveness from God brings us to the place where we are free indeed. Because of Jesus there ***is*** no record of wrongs against us. No condemnation! We need not fear the future. Why? Because God is always with us, we need never face our problems alone. Together, with God, any difficulty can be worked out and overcome. Our lives have been transformed and our future is secure. We are building on the solid rock which cannot be shaken! ***For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?*** (Psalm 18:31 NIV)

If we fail to have overwhelming gratitude for God's forgiveness after we have dealt with the exact nature of our wrongs then we have missed something. We either haven't acknowledged how evil our wrongs were in light of God's holiness, or we haven't recognized how amazing God's love truly is. True confession, done with integrity, always brings a desire and firm commitment to know and walk with God whatever the cost. It is this deep gratitude to God that motivates us to willingly surrender moment by moment to the new way of life God has prepared for us.

Today, am I willing to confess the exact nature of my wrongs? Will I repent and turn away from my own understanding and enter into the fullness of life I've always desired. 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)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Have I determined the exact nature of my wrongs?
2. How is all my destructive and addictive behaviour rooted in the breakdown of my relationship with God?
3. Where do I recognize that the unwillingness to live in trust and surrender playing a major role in my destructive behaviour?
4. Do I agree with the statement, "The exact nature of our wrongs is rooted in the lie that our problems are caused by what is around us rather than what is within us?" Why?
5. What's my experience of confessing my wrongs been like and, more importantly, how has it impacted my life?
6. How does a person deal with condemnation while confessing the exact nature of their wrongs?
7. How does gratitude connect to the work of this step?

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for your unfailing love for me. Please reveal to me the exact nature of my wrongs. I may conjure up what I think is the exact nature of my wrongs but you are the God of truth and I want to know the truth so that I can bring all my wrongs before you and be set free. I admit to trying to lean on my own understanding and going my own way. Please forgive me and help me to follow faithfully the plan you have for my life. Thank You that I never again have to face my problems alone. Thank You that You never leave or forsake me. I am forever grateful. AMEN