

One glaring character defect God wants to change in us is our vision of God whenever we stumble. When we are lying face down in the dirt and feeling stupid, it's easy to see an angry God with the big stick in his hand. God wants us to see Him for who He truly is. He's looking over us with an outstretched hand, offering us forgiveness and a new start. Becoming ready to have God remove all our defects of character is truly making our hearts available to this God of unconditional love and forgiveness and, recognizing that growth is a journey where mistakes are useful for teaching when placed in God's hands.

"Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my shameful deeds – they haunt me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight ... Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me."
(Psalm 51:2-4, 10 NLT)

God, help me to get entirely ready to have you remove all my defects of character.

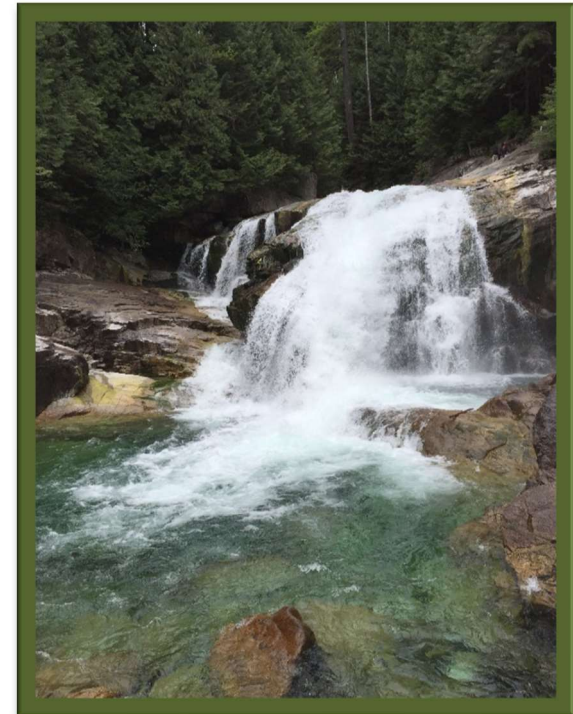
QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What scares me about having God remove my defects of character?
2. What does being "entirely ready" mean to me?
3. Which defects am I not entirely ready to have removed? Why am I still attached to them?
4. What can I do to become "entirely ready" to have God remove them?
5. How do I think my life will be different as these defects are removed?
6. What am I doing today to address my defects? What will I start doing?

Heavenly Father,
Thank you for creating me to enjoy life in a meaningful loving relationship with you. Forgive me for wandering away and developing harmful defects of character. Thank you for showing me the truth about myself. I turn away from my own limited and ultimately harmful ideas and turn to you for restoration. Fill me daily with Your Holy Spirit so I have both the desire and the strength to let go of these characteristics which cloud the purpose for my life. Help me to be continually honest with myself. Guide me in the paths of righteousness for your Name's sake. Thank you for caring for me as we journey together on the path to new life. AMEN

Life With God In Recovery

STEP SIX: ENTIRELY READY



ENTIRELY READY

STEP 6 – We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

God's desire for us is that we would experience the life of meaning, purpose and joy for which He created each of us. The purpose of Step Six is to help us address those personal issues that may have been a contributing factor in our drift from that life, and later took us down the path of addiction. After identifying those shortcomings in our life of addiction and admitting to them by working Steps 4 and 5, this next step challenges us to ask ourselves if we are really willing to give up our flawed beliefs and broken patterns of behaviour, and allow God to make changes in our core thinking. Becoming entirely ready to do something about our defects, is a key to our freedom from addiction.

My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart. If you do this, you will live many years, and your life will be satisfying. Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones. (Proverbs 3:1-2, 7-8 NLT)

Having God deal with our defects can be frightening. These character defects are often developed through many years of struggling to survive. No matter how bad life gets, we tend to feel at home with what's familiar to us. We may stay trapped in destructive life patterns because we fear change. But, if we wait for the fear to go away before we take courageous steps, we'll never make significant progress in recovery. Recovery is a long-term process. God will remove our defects in a way that empowers us to handle the changes. As this happens, we will gradually be able to move into a new life, and experience victory one step at a time.

We can learn from the story in the Bible of God's people facing enemies as they were about to enter the life God had promised them. Their leader, Moses, described the journey to the promised life this way: ***Do not be afraid of those nations, for the Lord your God is among you, and he is a great and awesome God. The Lord your God will drive those nations out ahead of you little by little. You will not clear them away all at once, otherwise the wild animals would multiply too quickly for you. But the Lord your God will hand them over to you. He will throw them into complete confusion until they are destroyed.*** (Deuteronomy 7:21-23 NLT).

Coming to the place where we are ready to hand over these issues to God and give Him control over the way and the timing of their removal isn't easy. It takes courage to come to God with issues that have made us vulnerable. Having the courage to change does not mean that we will never experience some fear. Courage means that we take advantage of the little strength we find within ourselves, that we find some ways to encourage ourselves, and that we stubbornly stick to God's program for us. It means finding enough strength to take the next step and do the next right thing, trusting that God is working it all together for good in His plan for our lives.

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. (Philippians 1:6).

Are we ready to speak the truth at all times to God, to ourselves and to others? One of the first places many people stumble in recovery is maintaining honesty about what is actually going on in their head and heart and continuing to confess that to God, to ourselves, and to another human being. We have a previous lifetime of denial and deception that wasn't only about our addictive behaviour. For many of us it started with our unwillingness or our inability to acknowledge fear, sadness, pain, or frustration and deal with it. To live well in recovery, we must allow God to help us acknowledge these issues in our daily life and help us to deal with them in new ways.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. (Psalm 139:23-24 NLT)

Relationship difficulties have often cut away at our heart from the time we were very small. In our addiction, we spoke against family members and friends, manipulated them, repeatedly broke promises we made, didn't consider their needs, or give them respect. Our default position was lying, cheating, stealing and other expressions of self-interest. When we didn't like things in a relationship we easily said angry words, make sarcastic comments, told someone else what a jerk the other person is, and criticized or blamed that person for our behaviour. Are we entirely ready now to let go of all these expressions of anger and lashing out that have been our tools of coping for many years? Are we prepared to have God challenge every bad thought and negative word we have towards any other person in any situation?

In order to move into a life of living well, we will now have to establish a new lifestyle of integrity, kindness, and respect. It seems an impossible task, a standard that we are unable to attain. On our own it is! But God is able and willing to help us complete the task if we will turn to Him and give Him permission to work in our attitudes and reactions.

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. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. (Psalm 14:2-3, Philippians 2:13 NLT)

Our life in recovery is assured if we live this step on a daily basis. Character defects will slip away one at a time as we surrender ourselves to God. Each time we notice one of them in operation, we can invite God to live powerfully in us so we can think and behave in new ways. It takes patience to learn how to walk with God and to continually choose for His way until it becomes our default way of life. Each time we choose to have God remove an expression of a character defect in us rather than acting on it, we are changing and new life is developing in us.

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. (2 Peter 3:9 NLT)