

NO ACCUSATION – NO CONDEMNATION



Certain thoughts or words negatively affect us and may contribute to relapse. Few things are more powerful in this regard than hearing accusation or condemnation from others or even from within ourselves. When we take our focus off who God says we are, and center our thoughts on condemning words, we begin to believe recovery is too hard for us. We convince ourselves that we are not progressing in our relationship with God and our life in recovery. We start to believe we're too messed up, it hurts too much, or it costs too much to change. We tell ourselves we are stupid and are a failure at whatever we try to accomplish.

The Bible tells us our enemy, the devil, prowls around looking for a way to smash the progress we have made. He's standing right beside us, just waiting to "kick us to the curb." One of his favorite tactics is to tempt us to make a wrong choice and then immediately condemn us for being weak and powerless. When we are doing well he'll remind us of times when we did poorly. If we have joy in following the ways of God, he'll attempt to steal our joy by making us believe we are proud and self-righteous. When we are simply enjoying the satisfaction of doing right in God's sight, he'll tell us that we're not good enough because we're not perfect. His one purpose is to get us so discouraged, so frustrated, or so filled with pain and shame, that we simply give up, go out, and pick up again.

"I know that as soon as I'm gone, vicious wolves are going to show up and rip into this flock, men from your very own ranks twisting words so as to seduce disciples into following them instead of Jesus. So stay awake and keep up your guard. (Acts 20:29-30 MSG)

While we can't justify a bad choice based on several good ones, it is still important to not focus on one failure when we've had dozens of successes in the same time period. God strengthens us in our areas of growth and encourages us in the areas where we still need to grow. The evil one disheartens us. God reassures and supports us. The evil one says, "Failure" and God says "You are growing more and more like Jesus." How comforting and reassuring it is to know that God is aware that

on our journey we will make mistakes as part of our growing and maturing.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (1 Peter 5:8-9, Romans 8:28 NIV)

Getting us to compare ourselves with others is another way the enemy tries to feed us accusation and condemnation. When we don't feel good about ourselves, or when we're feeling shame, he'll be right on our shoulder telling us what a failure we are in comparison with the next person. Rather than keeping our thoughts simple and focused on what God wants us to do, the evil one tries to get us to give our attention to what others are doing or not doing, what they are expecting of us or not; whether they are noticing and appreciating us or not. On and on and on the evil one goes with distracting and disturbing ideas. How confusing our own thoughts become when we focus our attention on what the evil one is whispering into our ear! We begin to evaluate, accuse and even condemn others based on our unsound thinking. This enables us to quickly get into the "victim mode" and, from there, how easy it is to stumble into relapse.

I am warning you ahead of time, dear friends. Be on guard so that you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing. Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All glory to him, both now and forever! (2 Peter 3:17-18 NLT)

Is there an area within us that is just too painful to touch? Are we avoiding dealing with pain because the evil one tells us we are a real mess and it would not be wise to uncover hidden things at this time? Jesus said the truth will set us free so. Whose voice will we believe?

Have we done wrong? If so, we simply need to acknowledge it to God, ask for forgiveness, and be reassured that we are cleansed from all sin. Any voice accusing us after we've been forgiven is telling us lies and trying to push false guilt on us. Will we base our recovery on lies or the truth?

We also need to be on guard against thoughts that accuse and condemn others. As soon as we begin to notice such thoughts, we need to do a self-check and find out what's wrong in our hearts. When we observe negative traits in others, we should pray for them and bless them and leave their negativity with them, rather than allowing their problems to become our problems.

You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! (Isaiah 26:3 NLT)

How do we defeat the discouragement of accusation and condemnation that comes from others? Jesus tells us: ***But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*** (Luke 6:27-28 NIV)

God neither accuses nor condemns, so any words said to us by others, or from our own self-criticism, are simply words we need to let go. God speaks the truth to us in love, and He challenges us to do the same when we speak to ourselves or others.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:1 NKJV)

It's time to agree with God and ban all accusation and condemnation from our thoughts and relationships.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does accusation and condemnation affect my recovery or make me vulnerable to relapse?
2. How can I face and counter the negative feelings of frustration and discouragement that come because of accusation and condemnation?
3. How does "progress not perfection" describe God's view of my journey without making excuses for poor choices and bad behaviour?

4. God's Spirit convicts us of sin. How is that necessary for our growth and how is it different from condemnation?
5. How have I prepared myself to face and defeat the evil one's strategies to discourage me?
6. Whom do I truly believe when I am faced with accusation and condemnation?

Dear God, You are the one who knows me. You know how I respond to accusation and condemnation and how it discourages me in my walk with You. I ask that you help me to acknowledge the truth of your word. Give me the wisdom and courage to use your words as a sword against all accusation and condemnation that may come against me. Help me to stay focused on you. Thank you that you are working all things together for my good. You are a faithful God. I am forever grateful that you care. AMEN