

ADDICTION OR GRACE

Life With God In Recovery

ADDICTION OR GRACE



God created the heavens and the earth and established certain laws which were beneficial for the all people on earth. Gravity is one of those laws. When I push a bag of trash into the garbage chute I can't see the law of gravity but I can hear the bag hit the bottom so I know that it is operating. In the same way, the existence of love and grace are evident in those whose hearts are turned towards God. In our addiction, we didn't take time to think about factors that determine the course of life. Now that we have made a choice to live with God in recovery, we have an opportunity to find out, from God, how He shaped us and the world, and our place in it. Just like gravity in the physical world, so grace in the spiritual world is a principle upon which all of life in recovery is built.

May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. (2 Peter 1:2-3 NLT)

GRACE – OBEYING GOD'S WORD. God created humans in His own image and God is love. Therefore, we know we are created in love. Disobedience to God's word separated humans from the loving, fulfilling relationship with God that He intended. Because of His relentless love for us, God paid the price of our restoration through the death and resurrection of Jesus. When we accept the finished work of Jesus on the cross as payment for our sin, we are restored to eternal life with God. As we receive God's love and care, we can then begin to love and care for ourselves and others as God does.

GRACE – NECESSARY INGREDIENT FOR CHANGE The struggle in our society today is that many people try to fix human behaviour and educate people to live with respect for one another without any input from the God who created them. Depending on what we actually believe, we too will either continue to live destructively in our addictions or begin to live in the sustaining grace of God. To live in grace is to believe our world and each of our lives are shaped and supported by the love and amazing grace God has poured out. Choosing some addictive behaviour is close when we believe everything is simply the result of random selection and we have to figure out how to fix ourselves.

For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. (Colossians 1:19-21 NLT)

The principle is simple, if we want to behave in a more loving way we have to know that we ourselves are loved. Our behaviour usually reflects what we believe about God. God is love and God created us in love. What do we believe?

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1John 4:7-8 NLT)

GRACE – BELIEVING GOD LOVES ME WHEN I DON'T GET MY OWN WAY When we don't get what we want, we believe God could not possibly know us or care for us. When we don't feel loved, we believe we're just not good enough to be loved by God or anyone else. Believing thoughts like these drives us to seek comfort in harmful relationships, practices and ultimately substances. Initially we may not realize the impact of our beliefs but the discontent and anxiety within us will lead us down the path to our substance of choice. That route may be through work, alcohol, prescription or street drugs, sex, gambling, spending, abusive language, rage etc. Addiction substitutes "instant gratification counterfeits" for God's good gifts that develop over time. Sooner or later we will come to know that counterfeits just don't satisfy. Grace recognizes that God is protecting us from harm and helping us develop what is truly helpful and satisfying.

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. (Isaiah 55:2 NLT)

GRACE – FOCUSING ON GROWING WITH GOD RATHER THAN ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOURS. How do we prevent relapse into addictive behaviours and destructive lifestyles and sustain our choice to live in love and grace over the long haul? Strangely, we have to **stop focusing on** "not picking up" and focus instead on God's goodness to us, God's strength in us, and God's blessings around us. We have to **stop focusing on** our own thoughts and behaviours and intentionally bring our thoughts to refocus on God and His ways. It's time to stop dwelling on what happened 5 minutes or 5 years ago and instead focus on the good news that our past sins have been forgiven and we are free to move forward in our recovery. God pursued us with His love even while we were running away. He did so, not to accuse or condemn us, but to heal and restore us. To live in grace rather than in addiction is to rely on the truth that God's faithfulness and love will help us stand firm.

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NIV)

The devil, the father of lies who feeds addiction, wants us to dwell on our addiction – memories, negative consequences, or tempting thoughts. On the other hand, God, the father of love and grace, invites us to seek Him to help us stand strong and confidently go forward.

Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? ... But he gives us even more grace to stand against such evil desires ... 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 4:4-11 NLT)

GRACE – CHOOSING TO RETURN TO GOD God wants to honour us and fill us with His Spirit. He offers us a relationship with Him that is intimate and deeply satisfying and brings great joy into our lives. We can, if we want, choose the lonely, destructive, painful path of relapse and addiction, but we don't have to. God's offer of grace and help in time of need remains constant as long as we live and breathe. No matter how far down we may fall, God will continue to invite us to return to Him. Continuing in addiction after a relapse is self-will. Returning to a forgiving God is grace. **Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ.** (Philippians 3:8-9 NLT)

Today, God invites us to a satisfying, meaningful, joyful and purposeful life. Are we willing to leave our addiction behind and accept His invitation to live in grace? Will we draw close to God? Will we allow ourselves to be lifted out of the pit of a destructive lifestyle, washed and forgiven by the blood of Jesus, and live forever in loving relationship with the living God?

Question for Reflection and Discussion

1. What does my behaviour say about what I really believe? Am I living in addiction or grace today?
2. In what ways do I need to move away from addictive thinking and invite God to give me the grace I need to move forward with Him?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am amazed at Your love and grace poured out on the whole earth and its inhabitants and even more, that it was poured out for me when I was still living in rebellion against You. Thank you for opening my eyes and helping me see that You made me for the joy of having a loving relationship with me. Forgive me for the times I have neither wanted nor recognized Your love and grace in my life. Thank you for the hope I have today for my recovery and my future because of your generous gifts of love and grace offered to me today. I am eternally grateful that You care. AMEN