

# Life With God In Recovery

## FULL OF JOY



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Chapter 9 in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous discusses rebuilding relationships and the need to rebuild joy into our daily living. *"We aren't a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life."* On page 133 we even read this confident statement, *"We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free."* We don't even have to read the chapter very carefully to notice that the founders of AA link our misery to our self-will and addictive habits and our joy to our relationship with God. They found this truth in God's word and recognized its value in their daily living. Now they recommend it to all of us as we journey forward in our life with God in recovery.

***Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*** (James 1:2-4 NLT)

Life in recovery can be challenging at times. We have joy in the fact that we are no longer in the pit of our addiction, but, we are now treading waters that are unfamiliar to us. People around us are encouraging us to stay the course but we are unsure, and, even fearful of our new environment. Those who have walked this path before us will reassure us that this is a natural reaction. We are unfamiliar with our daily lifestyle and are learning new ways to cope with what goes on inside us. We have been the "experts" in surviving our dysfunctional lifestyle but now we are the "newbies" in coping with life in recovery. Thankfully, God has promised to be with us throughout the transition process and show us that new way of life that is "happy, joyous, and free."

***Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust. You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*** (Psalm 16:1; 11 NKJV)

The key to this new way of life that is "happy, joyous, and free" is in our focus – our motivation – as we now live each day for the glory of God rather than for self-fulfillment. Is there truly joy in walking in the ways of God? Sometimes we can easily say a definite "yes" as we experience the joy that results from making good decisions. At other times however, we find ourselves in a battle with our will, being tempted to do those familiar dysfunctional things of our past which caused us to grovel in the darkness of addiction. God has called us out of the darkness we were in and invites us to now walk in the light of His presence. Like a good Father, God rejoices with us when we walk steadily forward, and, when we stumble and fall down, He encourages

us to get up and keep going. God is always calling us to fullness of joy in our daily walk with Him.

***How happy are the people who know the sound of joy! They walk in the light of Your face, O Lord. They are full of joy in Your name all day long. And by being right with You, they are honored.*** (Psalm 89:15-16 NLT)

Surrendering our minds to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is another key to bringing joy and peace to our whole being. God is a God of order; He is not a God of confusion. When we let confusion reign in our minds we live in turbulent waters and allow ourselves to be tossed about to and fro. Choosing for the calm waters where the Captain, the Lord of hosts wants to steer us, brings joy to our hearts and delight to those around us. Thinking and acting on our own self-centered thoughts brings confusion to us and grief to those who love and care about us. There is confident hope when we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. There is only despair when we choose again to follow our selfish ways and ignore the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

***For God is not the author of confusion but of peace. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*** (1 Corinthians 14:33a; Romans 15:13 NKJV)

What steals our joy and causes us to stumble? The underlying trait that steals our joy and jeopardizes our life in recovery is pride. We begin to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to. We start to find fault in our recovery program, in the people around us, and in our leaders and mentors. We blame our environment and others for our discontent. We start to feel confident in ***our*** own ability to manage ***our*** own recovery. We begin to believe that we could return to our old habits and lifestyle and handle life more successfully than we did in the past. Sadly, our prideful thinking makes us feel we can succeed on our own. We forget that it is due to the help and guidance of our awesome God and those around us that we feel stronger.

***You have felt secure in your evil ways. You have said, 'No one sees what I'm doing.' Your wisdom and knowledge lead you down the wrong path. You say to yourself, 'I am like a god. No one is greater than I am.'*** (Isaiah 47:10 NIRV)

When we start to think we are so great that we can do recovery alone, we need to share these thoughts with a trusted friend or mentor. Those in recovery circles will understand what is happening within us. Physically we are now in a better place than we were when we came into recovery and we are more alive to the world around us but we will need the ongoing support of wise counselors to learn and establish safe boundaries in order to maintain this positive lifestyle. As we share our thoughts with those who know us, we will begin to laugh at ourselves as we acknowledge how

ridiculous our prognosis of recovery on our own is. We came from a lonely forsaken place and now, by the grace of God, are coming to terms with the real person we are. Our joy in recovery will be restored as we rightfully give thanks for our current well-being to the God who brought us out of the mud and set our feet on solid ground.

***The path of the virtuous leads away from evil; whoever follows that path is safe. Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.*** (Proverbs 16:17-18 NLT)

If we desire to be joyful in our recovery, we need to always be mindful of our thoughts and actions. We need to find out what God's principles are for successful daily living and reshape our behaviour around them. We need to surrender pride in self every time it raises its ugly head. We need to remember that the Holy Spirit is always with us to give us wisdom and guidance. We need to admit our need of His power to change us and be willing to accept the fact that we cannot live a joyful life on ***our*** own.

***If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*** (John 15:10-11 NKJV).

As we practice these principles in all our affairs we will be able to say with the founders of AA, "We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free."

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

1. What changes have I needed to make to experience joy in my daily living?
2. What steals my joy and causes me to stumble?
3. In what ways am I noticing the truth that as I walk with God, my life is happier, more joyous, and I feel free to be me?

Heavenly Father, Thank You for loving and caring for me even when I was in darkness and unaware of who You are. Forgive me for being prideful and for thinking that I could live a joyful life in recovery without You, and without those who counsel and mentor me. Thank You for pursuing me with Your unfailing love and for keeping me in the reality of the truth that You alone give fullness of life. I am forever grateful that You, the God of hope, will fill me with all joy and peace as I trust Your ways to move forward in my recovery. AMEN