

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. (Psalm 139:23-24 NIV, Philippians 2:13, 4:13 NLT)

God's love goes deeper than any painful, shameful action in our past. For all sin that results from rationalizing our behaviour there is instant, total, and completely undeserved forgiveness. The wisdom of God's truth begins to come alive in us when we speak truth to our hearts and minds and choose truth over our rationalizations. When we surrender our imperfect understanding of ourselves and our past to God, and ask for His help He will reveal the root cause of our confused behaviour and bring us to clarity and truth. He will also give us the power to stand strong in the truth of who we are in Christ Jesus, free from all harmful rationalizing.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. In what circumstances am I vulnerable to rationalizing my thoughts and actions?
2. What tools or strategies help me to recognize and move beyond rationalizing?
3. What keeps me from facing my actions without excuses?
4. Am I willing to receive healing and trust that the love of God keeps me safe and goes deeper than my brokenness?
5. Am I willing to let go of resentments and offer forgiveness to those who have unfairly harmed me?

Heavenly Father, I confess the root cause of my rationalization is my rebellion against You and Your ways. Forgive me for the times I have rationalized my thoughts to accommodate my disobedience. Help me to forgive those who have harmed me and get rid of the roots of bitterness and fear which support my rebellion. Help me to forgive myself for the harm I have caused others. Help me to walk in the light of Your truth. I ask You to give me the wisdom and courage to examine my thoughts and actions in accordance with Your word. I am grateful that You have begun a good work in me and will uphold me as I travel the path to peace of mind and heart Amen

Life With God In Recovery

RELAPSE PREVENTION: Rationalizing



RATIONALIZING

Addicts are experts at creating excuses to rationalize their behavior and minimize the complexity of their problems. Rationalizing is an attempt to explain or justify one's behaviour with logical reasons or excuses. It is a way to minimize the significance of risky actions they intend to proceed with or defend the reason for things they have already done.

We are flawed human beings living in a broken world, so our reasoning is twisted by misinformation that comes at us every day. Rationalizing any harmful behaviour is rebellion against God whether we are specifically disobeying God's commands or just silently saying "no" to God's quiet voice in our spirit. No matter how much we try to justify our sinful behavior it has its consequences and will hurt us. Sins of omission – those things we know we should do but don't, or just can't be bothered making the effort to do – are just as important as the worst of our behaviour.

There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death. It is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it. (Proverbs 14:12, James 4:17 NLT)

Following are three reasons for excusing and rationalizing our behaviour: 1) We want what sin has to offer us; 2) Accepting responsibility for doing the right thing is too challenging or inconvenient in the moment; 3) We are afraid of the shame, pain, or embarrassment associated with our poor choices.

1.) Wanting What Sin Has To Offer: Rationalizing provides convenient explanations for our conduct. We want the pleasure we get from the sinful behaviour. Deep in our hearts we know that it is not right, and it is not God's will for us. However, the sin captures our imagination and is so appealing that we purposefully dwell on it. We then rationalize away the truth about potential consequences of our actions and go ahead and fulfill the desire.

Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. (James 1:14-15 NLT)

2.) Accepting Responsibility Seems Too Challenging: Rationalizing endorses the internal belief that we are victims of circumstances beyond our control. We reason that our wrong choices are justified because of our life experiences. We believe that the person who inflicted harm on us is responsible for our learned

behavior towards others. We make excuses for our actions based on the hurt we have sustained.

3.) We're Afraid of Shame and Embarrassment: We rationalize because we are afraid of the shame, the pain, the embarrassment, or the disappointment that has resulted from our poor choices. It seems easier to make excuses for our behaviour or blame someone else in order to get the burden "off our shoulders." As long as rationalizing makes us feel better we deceive ourselves into thinking that the situation has improved. To be honest and confess that we have made a poor choice may, in the short term, threaten our comfort zone, be inconvenient in the moment, or even cause us embarrassment.

I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 7:21-25 NLT)

Sometimes we've rationalized our behaviour for so long that it's become an unconscious reaction to what someone says or does rather than deliberate deception. We need to ask God to make us fully aware of the harmful choices we are making. He knows the poison stored in the roots of our destructive actions and reactions. He knows and understands the actual impact of all the events that make up our lives – good and bad.

The trigger to our rationalizing may be a bitter root of unforgiveness against someone who harmed us or didn't help us when they should have. Our way of dealing with buried pain is to hold on to the resentment and rationalize why we have a right to it. God wants to heal our wounds and set us free from the false belief the evil one attached to those memories. God's way of restoration is through forgiveness given and received. Are we willing to be healed? Continuing to choose our way through rationalizing, rather than God's way of forgiving, will have a damaging effect on our recovery.

Rationalizing is sin because it means telling lies, and telling lies has grave consequences. Making excuses for sin gives it a foothold in our lives, damages our relationship with God, and causes harm to us and to others. If we continue to rationalize our rebellious actions our hearts will become hard and the Holy Spirit's voice in our ears will grow increasingly faint. A relapse won't be far behind.