

Step Five

STEP 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

First Week - Introduction

Well, my beloved in Christ Jesus, good news! The 4th Step is done (this time). Bad news - now we must share our past (the good, the bad, and the ugly) with God and with another human being. Not easy! It's very humbling in some cases, but oh! how healthy, for it is essential for our healing and our walk with the Lord. Besides, God knows all about it anyway. My friend, in James 5:16 the Bible says to "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." The word "fervent" means burning, glowing, intensely devoted, earnest or passionate. "Avails" means to be worthwhile, effective, helpful, or accomplishing an end.

We have put so much time, work and thought about our personal lives into the 4th Step, and have written it all down. The next thing in getting our affairs in order is to confess to God the wrongs we have done, and allow Him to forgive us and heal the pain, shame, and guilt that we see was contrary to His will for us. Yes, that's right. In I John 1:9, God says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now, we can heal for real! And because God says He will cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness when we confess our sins, we now stand in the place of that "righteous man" of James 5:16, whose prayers are effective! In Proverbs 28:13 we read "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy." Look at all the benefits of confessing your sins in your 5th Step: healing - physical, mental and emotional; forgiveness from God; cleansing from all unrighteousness; having your prayers become truly effective, because those sins or unforgiveness towards others are no longer a hindrance to prayer; and mercy from God.

Through completing this step, you will notice that a healing is taking place in your confidence and even in some of your relationships. The fact is, it is easier to move forward when you can leave the baggage behind. It was such an unnecessary load of weight, because, if it was guilt, shame, sin, or pain, then almost 2000 years ago that burden was put on Jesus, just so that you would not have to bear it. Praise the Lord, what a release! I have said in the groups, that even though we have surrendered our heart and mind to God and accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, I believe to really make Him Lord of our lives we must surrender our free will to Him on a daily basis. When you truly do that, and invite Him up onto the throne of your life, you will receive the real godly freedom and peace, along with the joy your Heavenly Father has for you. This freedom is yours because your soul is now in tune with God; you are in agreement with Him and you are surrendered to Him. Now, He can direct your steps into a prosperous life. To God be the glory!

With love and care,

Pastor Tom and Dottie

Second Week's Lesson - Step 5

In Step 5, we started to feel forgiven, and feel that we could forgive others as well. As we read our inventory, we saw our need to forgive even the vilest offenders who had hurt us. As a result of looking at these issues from our past, we realize how lonely we had really become, and that now there is hope for real relationships (not having to B.S. anyone about how great we are, etc.). The reality starts to set in that of all the creatures on earth, we are special.

Why? Because God has called us His own, and now we are supernatural and have a wonderful future awaiting us for all eternity. And not only for us, but we have been chosen by God to tell our stories to others, and to invite them to join with us in complete and total security, because of who we are in Christ Jesus. So, my dear friend, remember that as tough as it is to share this 5th Step, our merciful Heavenly Father has provided someone special to draw alongside of you in love and commitment, not only to God, but also to you. You need to pray for your accountability partner, as they must be right with God in order to be used by Him fully in your life. Remember, if at any time you feel the one you have chosen as your accountability partner is not right for you, or you can't trust them, you are free to let them go and choose someone else. At the same time, your accountability partner can "fire" YOU, if you are not willing to listen to direction or heed warnings. This is a partnership, and in recovery there are no Lone Rangers! You are both responsible before God for the tasks He has given you. May the God of heaven and earth richly bless you as a team, as you both will become winners for eternity!

In His love and service,

Pastor Tom and Dottie

Before you work on the following lessons, be sure you have actually DONE the 5th Step, and that means reading it aloud to one trusted person (usually your sponsor or accountability partner). If you need help, call Tom or Dottie (310) 821-8677

Personal Questions

1. James 5:16 "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed...." There are two conditions for our healing: 1.) Confessing our sins; and 2.) Praying for one another. The 5th Step says we are to confess to God, ourselves, and one other human being. That's pretty straightforward, and doesn't need much explanation. However, whom is meant by "pray for one another"? In the light of the 5th Step, I believe it means the **"pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"** of **Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:28**. Did some people come up in your 4th and 5th Steps that you need to pray for according to God's word?
2. List those people who are still alive, who "spitefully used" you, hurt you, or persecuted you in some way. Are you willing to forgive and pray for them? If they are not saved, pray for their salvation. If they are saved, but have wrong attitudes, bitterness or anger of their own, pray for the Holy Spirit to convict them of any sin in their lives, and particularly the sins they have committed against you. Matthew 6:12 "Forgive us our debts (sins, trespasses), as we forgive our debtors (those who sin or trespass against us)." Mark 11:25 "And whenever you stand PRAYING, if you have ANYTHING AGAINST anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."
3. What about those people who hurt you and are now dead? If they have died, they are beyond your prayers, and are in the hands of God, one way or the other. If they died in their sins, without ever having received Jesus as their Savior, they are suffering for all eternity in hell. If they DID receive Jesus at some point in their life, then **those "wrongs done to you"** were nailed to the cross along with the **"wrongs YOU have done"**. You may not know their final, eternal destination, but either way, you **MUST FORGIVE** them for YOUR OWN PEACE and well-being. List those people who have already died, that you need to forgive and release to God once and for all.
4. Last of all, forgive YOURSELF. **Forgive yourself for believing the lies** that people told you when you were little, or have been telling you all your life. Release to God all bitterness, hurt, pain and shame, and walk in the freedom Christ offers you. I John 1:7 says, "If we WALK IN THE LIGHT, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from ALL sin." What are some of the lies of Satan that you have believed about yourself?

Bible Study

Read Matthew 5:44-48, Luke 6:27-37

Matt. 5:44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

1. BLESS THEM THAT CURSE YOU - Blessing someone has to do with how you speak of them - this involves your mouth! The Greek word for "bless" here means to "speak well of". Read **James 3:6-10, Eph. 4:29-32**. What do these verses say about our mouths - how we should speak? Does this apply to those who have hurt us deeply?
2. This is a continuation of #4 above, "What are some of the lies of Satan that you have believed about yourself?" Did someone always blame you, make you feel there was something "wrong" with you, call you a loser, guilt-induce you, make you feel you were unwanted, unloved or "not good enough"? Did it seem like they had "put a CURSE" on you because of their lies that you believed? **Read Romans 12:14 & 17-21**. According to this passage, what should be your reaction to them?

PRAYER: Write out here what you want to tell the Lord about your 5th Step. Did you feel a cleansing and releasing of a heavy burden? Are there still people who came up in doing your 4th and 5th Steps that you need to forgive, or that you feel you CAN'T forgive? Just tell the Lord you are WILLING to forgive, if He will give you the ability to do it. Make a commitment to God to FORGIVE everyone who has ever hurt you or spitefully used you, and ask Him to give you the POWER to forgive. Ask Him to CLEANSE you with the precious BLOOD of JESUS - to WIPE away your GUILT, and to ERASE the PAIN. Too many times, we pray and make commitments to God, but then forget what we have asked Him to do, or forget our promises to Him. Write out your prayer, then sign it and date it.

Date: _____

Third Week's Lesson - Step 5

Remember when you started the Love Lifted Me Recovery Program, the number one word I kept hammering on was HONESTY. Well, my Beloved, this is no exception! Sometimes we find it easier to confess our sins and share issues with God, in whom there is no sin, and who cannot even look upon sin, than to share with another sinner like ourselves. That amazes me! Somehow, being alone with God doesn't seem as embarrassing as facing up to another person. But share with another person you must. It may be hard to get started, but pretty soon your accountability partner may share a story or two from their own life which will ease the tension even more. Provided you hold back nothing, your sense of relief will mount from minute to minute. The dammed up emotions of years break out of confinement and begin to disappear as they are exposed. As the pain subsides, a healing tranquility takes place. It is in this phase that many actually feel the presence of God - some for the first time. Others may become conscious of Him as never before. It is a feeling of being **at one with God and man** - we can feel ourselves **coming forth out of isolation** as a result of the open honest sharing of our terrible burden of shame and guilt. This in turn prepares us to move out to the following steps toward a full and meaningful life and service for God!

God is good, all the time!

Love, Pastor Tom

P.S. - We want to remember that we are a work of God in progress, and Philippians 1:6 says "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the Day of Jesus Christ."

Personal Questions

1. We've been talking a lot about forgiving those who have come up in your 4th and 5th Steps who have hurt or abused you. However, most of us will also have people that WE have harmed, offended, lied to, cheated, etc. Are you keeping a list of these people for your 8th and 9th Steps, which will be MAKING AMENDS?
2. You may never have the person or persons who have afflicted and abused you come back to ask forgiveness. Why is it still important to you to forgive them?

Bible Study - "The Life of Joseph"

1. Read Genesis 37:4-36; Gen. 39:7-20; Gen. 40:12-23. Each one of these sections of Scripture tells a story of people who abused, mistreated and harmed Joseph in some way. Based on these passages in Genesis, who are the people Joseph would be bringing up in his 4th and 5th Steps?
2. What did these people do to Joseph? What did his brothers do? What did Potiphar's wife do? What did the butler do?
3. Read Genesis 41:50-52; Gen. 45:1-8; and Gen. 50:15-21. Did Joseph forgive his brothers? God's word does not tell us if he forgave the others, but he must have, because God blessed him in such an amazing way. God cannot bless us as much as He wants to if we still hold onto bitterness, resentment, anger, envy, jealousy, distrust, and other negative things from the past.
4. According to Genesis 50:20, what was Joseph's attitude about all the bad things that had happened to him in his life? Are you able to trust God to work something GOOD out of all the bad things that have happened in your own life?
5. **Romans 8:28** "And we know that ALL things WORK together for GOOD to those who LOVE GOD, to those who are the CALLED according to His PURPOSE." If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then YOU are one of those who are "the CALLED according to His purpose." God has a wonderful plan and purpose for your life, if you love Him and can TRUST Him to work it out. Which would you rather do, let Him work out all the bad things for your good, or would you rather "nourish the hurt" and wallow in self-pity, and continue to make excuses for WHY your life is not better?
6. **"ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER for GOOD"** - Because God is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving, and all-wise, we can TRUST HIM to know what He is doing when He ALLOWS certain things to happen in our lives. But what about when the "bad" things that happen in our lives are the CONSEQUENCES of our own actions - our own WRONG CHOICES and sins? The Lord loves us enough to even WORK THESE THINGS for our GOOD, if we will let Him. Are there some "bad choices" you made in the past that you have not been able to turn over to God, because you don't think you DESERVE to have Him "work it out for your good"?
7. So what is the real reason you have trouble believing God will work all things together for good in your life? A.) Is it lack of FAITH? B.) Is it not being able to TRUST God? C.) Is it your own feeling of unworthiness - that you don't deserve for Him to do it? Or D.) All of the above? If it is lack of faith, your faith will grow stronger as you read God's word (Romans 10:17). If it is lack of trust in God, you need to get to know Him better, and then you will be able to trust Him. If it is your own feeling of unworthiness, rejoice! We are ALL undeserving of ANYTHING the Lord does for us, and that is what GRACE is all about - grace is God's undeserved or unmerited favor!

PRAYER: Release to God ALL the people who have hurt you in any way - don't continue to CARRY that BURDEN. Tell Jesus that you are not going to let what others have done to you get in the way of your walk with Him. Ask Him for an extra measure of His GRACE and LOVE to apply to those people or those areas of your life that need healing and forgiveness. Write out your prayer, then sign it and date it.

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1. Did you pray this prayer and REALLY MEAN IT? If not, why not? In Luke 23:34, Jesus asks the Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him. Has ANYONE done ANYTHING to YOU that is as bad as what they did to Jesus?
2. What do you think is accomplished by holding onto that bitterness and unforgiveness? Are you hurting that person, or are you only hurting yourself?
3. Let's look at some more of the dynamics of forgiveness - what it does in our lives, and what will be the consequences of REFUSING to forgive. **Hebrews 12:15** talks about a "root of bitterness" which will DEFILE MANY. Defile means to damage, destroy, make dirty, contaminate. Who do you think are the "many" who will be defiled and damaged by your bitterness, if you don't get rid of it?
4. If you are married, have children, or if you WANT TO someday, do you think your mate or children will be affected by your bitterness? Will you be a better husband, wife or parent if you are TOTALLY FREE from all bitterness, anger, and resentment?
5. Do you think **the people who HURT YOU so much** may have been suffering from a "root of bitterness" in THEIR OWN lives, and you were one of the "many" who became defiled and damaged because of it? Do you want to be the one who BREAKS the CHAIN of abuse and dysfunction in your family?
6. In last week's lesson, it said to **"Forgive yourself for believing the lies that people told you when you were little, or have been telling you all your life."** Do you now realize that these lies you believed were actually the **"evil speaking"** of someone who had a **"root of bitterness"** in their lives?