

12 Steps To Recovery

Mike Lewandowski

STEP SEVEN: HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS

The sixth and seventh steps go hand in hand together. They are very similar to the biblical concepts of repentance and faith, so necessary for change to occur. Step six states that we have become entirely ready to have God remove all the character defects we discovered in step four. This is a 180 degree change in our thinking about our own ability to change ourselves. Whereas we were trying to control our own lives before, we now realize that only God can truly change us. This change in thinking is what the Bible calls repentance. Step seven says that we humbly ask and depend upon Him to remove our shortcomings. This is what the Bible calls faith. Repentance and faith are inseparable, since we cannot truly change our thinking unless we actually believe that there is another way. Having changed our minds about who is able to change us, we are now ready to trust God to actually do what He promised.

The key to the seventh step is found in the concept of faith. Asking God to remove our shortcomings is an expression of faith in His personal leadership and power in our lives. We are counting on Him to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, i.e., get rid of our shortcomings. In order to do so, we must believe that He is both willing and able change us in this way. But where do we get the faith necessary to humbly ask God for such a thing in the first place?

THE SOURCE OF OUR FAITH

The Scriptures tell us that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10). This means that we re-

ceive the faith we need by first trusting in what the written word says God has done, and will do for us. It is clear from the Scriptures that God is willing to remove our shortcomings in the flesh. As mentioned in a previous study, if we are willing to confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive them (1John 1:9). This simply means that God will remove the shortcomings of our flesh, as we are willing to get honest about them. Hearing what the Bible says God will do gives us the faith to ask Him to do it.

But how can we believe the Bible is true so that we may count on God doing what He says He will do? Faith is also listed as a “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5: 23). The indwelling Spirit of God produces it in our lives so that we may trust both God and His Word. From this and other references in the Bible, we may be assured that we have all the faith we need; we just need to use it. Jesus constantly encouraged His disciples along this line when He referred to them as, “ye of little faith”. This was not so much a rebuke as it was a statement that they already had the little faith necessary; they just needed to use it.

We can neither rely upon our own assessment of what must be changed, nor our own power to do the changing.

THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH

When we humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings we are depending on Him to do whatever is necessary to change us. Peter put it this way, “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you in due time.” (1Peter 4). The object of our faith is God, Himself, not our

12 Steps to Recovery - Step 7

own abilities to change ourselves. The humility that comes from repeated failures to change ourselves is necessary to keep God the object of our faith. An honest review of our own efforts to rid ourselves of shortcomings will humble even the most proud heart and prepare us to trust only God. We can neither rely upon our own assessment of what must be changed, nor our own power to do the changing. The object of our faith must be God working in us through His Spirit to remove our shortcomings.

THE DURATION OF OUR FAITH

Many have become discouraged after asking God to remove our shortcomings and discovering that He has not done so to our own satisfaction. This is primarily due to the fact that we are always in a hurry to change. After exercising the faith to ask God to change us we need to continue believing that He is doing so **at His own speed**. God is not working in us according to our time schedule, but his. Usually we look for immediate changes in particular areas that concern us the most (i.e., those areas that may make us look bad in the eyes of others). But God has a plan to conform us to the very image of His Son according to His own plan.

Between the time we first ask God to remove our shortcomings and the time we begin to see a change in ourselves, we must continue to trust Him. Our faith at this point should focus on two all important truths: we are worthy as persons regardless of external changes, and God will lead us personally to do the things he wants us to do today. It is important to continue believing that we are worthy (i.e., secure and significant as persons) even when our shortcomings persist. It is unrealistic to think that they will all be wiped away instantly. As a matter of fact, the experience of Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians

12) suggests that some of our shortcomings may take a longtime to remove according to God's perfect timing.

Our faith must not simply be in the fact that God will remove our shortcomings, but that we are worthy as persons while he is yet working on us.

Likewise, we need to trust God to lead us daily in His will for our lives

despite the persistent shortcomings of our flesh. To wait until God has removed all our shortcomings before seeking to do His will in our everyday lives will assure us of doing nothing at all. Since some shortcomings of our flesh will continue with us until we receive a new body, we must not view this step as a "once and for all" event, but rather a process that continues on for a lifetime. As the Spirit reveals our shortcomings, we humbly ask God to remove them, and remain focused on Christ, and his strength and promise, not upon our weakness. This process continues until we are finally delivered from all shortcomings when we are with the Lord. Until then we must trust the leadership of the Spirit in all that we do or say on a daily basis in spite of our present shortcomings. Like Paul, we should not be surprised to hear God say, "My grace is sufficient for you, my strength is made perfect in your weakness".

Our faith at this point should focus on two all important truths: we are worthy as persons regardless of external changes, and God will lead us personally to do the things he wants us to do today.

USE WHAT YOU HAVE

Since we are faced with the fact that removing our shortcomings will be a life long process, it is easy to become discouraged. About the time we ask God to rid us of one shortcoming another is discovered. We

12 Steps to Recovery - Step 7

obviously need to focus on the gospel that we are worthy as persons despite our shortcomings. The purpose of the seventh step is not to finally rid ourselves of all shortcomings and achieve a state of perfection, but to trust God to refine us according to his own plan. This is an ongoing process that requires faith on our part and power on God's part. The fact that we are in conflict with our shortcomings and need God to remove them should be taken as a sign of affirmation rather than condemnation. Romans 8:1. It is because the inner man is already perfect in Christ that we desire God to remove the shortcomings of the flesh.

Taking the seventh step simply means that we are humble enough to ask God to remove the shortcomings we have identified up to this point. As was pointed out in a previous article, we cannot know what must be changed until the Spirit reveals it to us. Although our faith may seem small in comparison to the task of removing our shortcomings, all that is required is that we exercise what faith we have. The power to remove these shortcomings as well as those yet to be revealed comes only from God