

Jesus Isn't Someone I Use to Get My Plans Accomplished; He's Someone I Submit to so That His Plans Will Be Accomplished

1st Step – Lesson 2

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1. What kind of life management plans have you tried to use? (“I'll count my drinks, the way a dieter counts calories, to get my drinking under control.” “If I turn my life over to God he'll make my obsessions go away.”)
2. God's ultimate goal for your life is that you receive his love. Have your life goals been different from God's?
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I Need to Have God Set My Priorities

1st Step – Lesson 3

“First Things First” “One Day At A Time” – Did those slogans resonate with you when you first heard them? Do they identify a problem you have in your life?

Matthew 6:31-34 – “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:11 – “Give us today our daily bread.”

Messed-Up Human Priorities

1. *What happens when you can’t sort out what’s truly important, and EVERYTHING seems like it’s a top priority?*
 - *Overload*
 - *Stress*
 - *Relapse*
 - *Truly important things get neglected*
 - *What else?*
2. *Thinking two steps ahead*
 - *When is it helpful?*
 - *When does it get you in trouble?*

God’s Priorities

“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness...”

1. Compare Luke 12:32 – “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” – What does that tell you about becoming a member of the kingdom?
2. Compare Romans 3:21-24 – “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” – What does that tell you about getting God’s righteousness?
3. What’s it going to mean in your life to “seek his kingdom and his righteousness”?

I'm Not Going To Try To Control What I Feel

1st Step – Lesson 4

God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I can not change...
Courage to change the things I can
and Wisdom to know the difference...
Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.
Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it.
Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His will.
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.
Amen.

John 14:27—"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

We get crazy and sick when we try to make sure we have only the "right" feelings:

- Wanting to feel happy all the time (denying or running away from unhappy realities)
- Wanting to feel excitement all the time (becoming undependable, causing chaos)
- Wanting to feel dramatic all the time (trying to impress everybody with how bad you have it or how bad things are)
- What else?

How has this helped keep your addiction going? How does this make your life crazy even when you're not getting high?

Does the fact that you have God's unconditional love and acceptance change your drive to control what you feel?

The peace and serenity that Jesus gives is something way more than just happiness or pleasant feelings. How does Jesus give you serenity and peace even during sad or scary or boring times? How does Jesus' peace change the sad and scary and boring times?

Powerless People Need To Trust The Power Of The Cross ~ A Bible Study on Romans 5:6-11

1st Step – Lesson 5

It's tough to admit you're powerless. That's true no matter what problem you're dealing with. Whether the problem is alcoholism, or having been abused as a child, or depression, or an eating disorder - no matter what you need to recover from, we all hate admitting that we're powerless over it. See if you've ever found yourself saying or thinking one of these things:

- "I'm not an addict; I can quit any time I want to."
- "I should be able to handle this."
- "If I just start praying more and being a better Christian this problem will go away."
- "Only wimps and neurotics need help."
- "I just gotta be strong."

Let's be honest: we've tried all kinds of ways to be in control of our problem, and we've never experienced more than very temporary relief. Eventually the drinking or the drugs or the shame or whatever it is got the better of us. We really are powerless.

But when you come to the true God, the God revealed in the Bible, you don't find him demanding that you quit being such a weakling and get your life under control. His invitation is to come as you are, powerless over your problems, and allow him to be the one in control.

THOUGHT QUESTION: Have you ever experienced the relief of giving up on trying to do something that you just weren't realistically capable of handling?

Romans 5:6-11

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Verses 6 and 7 talk about being powerless to get on God's good side. What are some common ways people use to try to get God's attention and favor?

2. Verse 8 makes it clear that God put his plan to save us into action without waiting for us to deserve to be saved. Have you ever found yourself thinking that you had to deserve God's love and forgiveness before you'd get it? How did that feel?

3. If your salvation depended on how much you deserved it, could you ever be sure of where you stood with God? What does verse 8 tell you about being sure of where you stand with God?

4. Verse 9 says we're "justified by his blood." That means that because Jesus died in your place God declares you not guilty. What does that do for any shame you're feeling about your problems?

5. Verses 10 and 11 talk about being "reconciled to God" by the power of Jesus' death and resurrection life. That means that God is completely on your side. What kind of difference do you think that's going to make in the problems you're dealing with?

6. Verse 11 says that "we rejoice in God" because of the new relationship we have with him through Jesus. What kinds of feelings do you think you'd have if it were your responsibility to get yourself right with God?

What do you have to "rejoice" about, with the right relationship with God that Jesus has won for you?

CLOSING PRAYER: What do you want to say to the God who has accepted you in your powerlessness, and who applies his own power to your problems?

“We Admitted That We Were Powerless” ... To Deny Our Feelings

1st Step – Lesson 6

“If we willingly surrender ourselves to the spiritual discipline of the Twelve Steps, our lives will be transformed. We will become mature, responsible individuals with a greater capacity for joy fulfillment, and wonder... We will begin to feel and will come to know the vastness of our emotions, but we will not be slaves to them... No longer terrified, we will discover we are free to delight in life's paradox, mystery, and awe. We will laugh more.” (from pp 269-270 of Al-Anon publication B-21, ‘From Survival to Recovery’)

- What are some things that get in the way of this happening?

Look at Jesus dealing with “paradox, mystery, and awe” and “the vastness of his emotions”:

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

Jesus wept.

Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" (John 10:34-37)

- Jesus could have tried to avoid his grief by getting intellectual or philosophical (“Everybody has to die sometime.” “I’m sure it’s all for the best.”) What did he do instead?
- Have you ever tried to think away or drink away your feelings? How else have you tried to avoid feeling what you’re feeling?
- Have you ever been a “slave” to your feelings?
- Does it help to know that God accepts you no matter what you’re feeling, and that you don’t have to tell yourself, “You shouldn’t feel this way”?
- What happens when you quit trying to make your feelings go away and just accept them?

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We Were Powerless Over – Our Guilt

1st Step – Lesson 8

One of the reasons behind getting high or other destructive behaviors is the desire to try to get our feelings under control. One of the most painful feelings that we've tried to manage is guilt. And like all our feelings, guilt resists our attempts to control it. The Bible makes it clear that only God has power over our guilt, and that by trusting in Jesus' death for our guilt we get to take part in that power.

Zechariah 3:1-5 – Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?"

Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes."

Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you."

Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by.

"Satan" means "accuser", and he's good at his job! If you try to defend yourself against his accusations, you will lose.

Are there times when you really feel accused (like at 3:00 AM when you can't sleep)? What are some ways you try to defend yourself when you feel accused? What happens when you try to defend yourself?

Satan's accusations are usually right! But God doesn't bother answering Satan's accusations. He doesn't have to. Jesus is the answer to any and all accusations. "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

The 4th and 5th Steps actually suggest agreeing that the accusations against you are correct! What happens when you honestly admit your guilt?

What happens when you let Jesus be the answer to your guilt?

God not only took away Joshua's guilt, he gave him a purpose in life: to go on being the high priest.

Has God removing your guilt through Jesus given you new purposes in life?

"Your mess becomes your ministry" (Jim Kennedy, Prison Fellowship Ministries). Do you see God giving you a job that has to do with the mess you've made in your life?

**“...our lives had become unmanageable” –
Who Is Managing My Life?**

1st Step – Lesson 9

They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him. (Luke 8:26-39)

The man from the tombs had his life “managed” by thousands of demons, who told him where to live, what to wear, what to say, etc. What are some of the things that influence your decisions?

- Need to be accepted, fear of rejection
- Fear of anger, depression, etc.
- Wanting to have it all
- Believing you have to do everything right
- Believing you have to fix whatever is wrong
- Resentments
- Self-hatred
- What else?

Jesus ordered the demons to reveal their name to him. How has it helped you to identify the forces that drive you? (e.g. “My name is Joe. I’m an alcoholic.”)

The man from the tombs was so bound up by the demons that he couldn’t even ask for help, but Jesus helped him anyway. How has Jesus helped you when you weren’t even asking for it?

The man from the tombs had what seemed like a good plan: follow Jesus. But Jesus told him he had a different plan for him. Have you ever had God block what seemed like a perfectly good plan for your life and put you on a different course?