

”To Turn Our Will And Our Live Over To The Care Of God As We Understood Him” – What Is My Understanding Of Him?

3rd Step - Lesson 1

The Third Step is meant to be a step out of Crazy World and into serenity.

Whether it works or not depends a lot on how you understand God

- What happens if your understanding is that God holds back from you until you're worthy of his care?
- How does Romans 8:23 change the way you understand God's love and care? – “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all— how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”

Read Mark 4:35-41 – That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

- Jesus' disciples didn't seem to expect much out of Jesus. Do you find that you don't expect much out of Jesus? Why do you think that is?
- When the disciples came to Jesus they were surprised and disturbed when they found him exhausted and snoring – in other words, Jesus was being very *human*. Do you find that you don't expect Jesus to be listening to your problems with a human heart?
- How do you think things would be different if you expected God to respond to your problems with God-sized power?
- How do you think things would be different if you expected God to have human feelings when you came to him with your problems?

Being Honest With God About My Feelings A Bible Study On Psalm 13

3rd Step - Lesson 2

A lot of families operate by these unwritten rules: “Don’t talk. Don’t think. Don’t feel.” Children growing up in these families get punished for expressing any anger, or ridiculed for showing sadness or fear. All the members of these families learn at a young age that they’d better not even think about telling anyone outside the family about Mom’s drinking, or Dad’s sexual abuse.

The result is that these children grow up pretending they have no feelings, pretending that nothing’s wrong, and believing that even if something were wrong there’d be no need to talk about it; they should just handle it all themselves.

That’s tragic. And the tragedy is even worse when these children are told that God operates by the same rules, that you dare never question God, that you should always be in a positive frame of mind and sound properly religious when you’re in the presence of God.

The real God, the God of the Bible, isn’t afraid of honesty. In fact, he longs to hear his children express their real feelings to him, no matter how unpleasant those feelings might be. And he promises to meet people right where they’re at, without waiting for them to start thinking straight or living right.

THOUGHT QUESTION:

- Have you ever had a person in your life who would listen to you no matter what you needed to talk about, without rejecting you or judging you? What did that feel like?
- How would it feel to really believe that God listened to you that same way?

PSALM 13

1 [For the director of music. A psalm of David.]

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? 3 Look on me and answer, O LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death; 4 my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

5 But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. 6 I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me.

DISCUSSION:

1. Look at verses 1 and 2. David had been through some real pain and horror; what questions did he have for God about his experience?
2. Have you gone through painful times when it felt as if God had failed you or abandoned you?
3. Instead of punishing David for questioning him, God put David's complaint into the Bible! What does that tell you about how God feels about people being honest with him about their doubts and anger?
4. 1 John 1:7 says, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." What does that tell you about not being afraid to "walk in the light" of being honest with God?
5. In verses 5 and 6 of Psalm 13 David expresses praise and confidence in God, right after he got done expressing his doubts to God. Do you find yourself feeling that same way: "I really do believe in Jesus and trust him, but at the same time I have questions and doubts about him"?

What does Psalm 13 tell you about having doubt and belief at the same time?

How does it change your attitude toward God, to realize that you can express your doubts to him without fear of him judging you or rejecting you?

CLOSING PRAYER: What do you want to say to the God who accepts you completely, along with your doubts and confusion?

Can I Trust God's Priorities?

3rd Step - Lesson 3

One of the things that get in the way of Third Step work is a fear of God's priorities. Usually the thought goes something like this: "If God is in charge of my life I'm afraid it will be all religion, all the time. No fun, no wild times, no sex, just church and stuff. I'll probably end up being a missionary in some primitive place that's full of diseases or something."

The Bible does talk about God having different priorities than we have: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isaiah 55:8-9). But that part of the Bible is actually talking about how God's way of thinking is all about grace and unconditional love; what we deserve is not important to him. That's how God's priorities are different.

So what are some things that are important to you that you're afraid to turn over to God, because you're afraid he doesn't think they matter? One example: Reputation.

Someone who really values his reputation might be afraid that God will say, "That's not important, you shouldn't care about that." But look at some things the Bible says about what God can do for a person's reputation:

- Exodus 11:3—The LORD made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people.
- Luke 2:52— And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.
- Deuteronomy 2:25—"This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you."

God is clearly saying, "Your reputation can be a very important thing. Why don't you let me be in charge of it?"

Think of some other things that people might be afraid to turn over to God:

- Your love life
- Your finances
- What you do for fun
- Your resentments
- What else?

What are some Bible promises you know about what will happen when you turn things over to God?

What happens when you try to stay in charge of things instead of turning them over to God?

What happens when you turn things over to God?

Come As You Are, And “Turn Your Will And Your Life Over To The Care Of God”

3rd Step - Lesson 4

Does this sound familiar?

“I can’t go to God for help because...”

- *“I’ve backslid”*
- *“I’m still sinning”*
- *“I don’t have strong faith”*
- *“I’m not 100% committed to him”*
- *“I’m angry with him”*
- *“I don’t think I’ll be able to hold up my end of the deal”*

What does the Bible have to say about those fears and excuses?

- Matthew 11:28 – “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”
- Romans 5:6-8 – You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- Isaiah 55:1 – “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”
- Mark 9:22-24 – “...if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” “If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.” Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”
- Isaiah 65:1-2 – “I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’ All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations...”
- Isaiah 1:18 – “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”

How are you holding back from God? What is God saying to you about it?

Decision Time

3rd Step - Lesson 5

3rd Step: We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

Joshua 24:14-14 – "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve..."

The people of Israel, decades after leaving Egypt, still got stuck in a slave mentality. "I can't help it." "I guess that's just the way I am." **They weren't used to making decisions, and so they let decisions get made for them.**

Can you relate to the people of Israel? God has loved you, bought you with his own blood, and set you free to live the life you were meant to live, the life of a child of God. But do you still find yourself thinking like a slave, and letting your decision be made for you?

- "Dude offered me a rock, and bam! I was gone."
- "She just pushed me over the edge and I blew up. I can't help it."
- "Chick said she wanted to do the deed, so what was I supposed to do?"
- What else?

God is giving us the ability to make decisions! What happens when you start living like a free person and making your own choices?

Matthew 6:24 – "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other."

We fool ourselves into thinking we don't have to make choices. Lies. We must make choices. We're like people with a tiny plate in a serving line, trying to balance two items on a plate that can only hold one.

- "I love my family, so I'll just have to try hard to keep my using under control so it won't hurt them."
- "I love my wife, but this is one hot babe here; I'll just do it this once and let it go."
- "I know I'm on probation, but I can get high this once, it'll be all right."
- What else?

An addict who chooses to relapse might as well give his children a call first and say, "You know what? I don't want you in my life any more." OR you could say that to the dope instead. **DECISION TIME!**

- Where have you had to make hard decisions with God's help?
- Where is God calling on you to make a decision right now?

**I Don't Have Any Confidence In My Goodness;
I Have Complete Confidence In God**
3rd Step - Lesson 6

Romans 3:19-28 – Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

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. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

*Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law
Romans 6:14 – For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.*

1. Our recovery from our addictions and other insanities depends on being able to trust God with our lives. (Step 3 – “We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him”.) What happens when you’re not sure if God accepts you because you’re not living right or your faith isn’t strong enough?
2. The book of Romans has a lot to say about how bad it is to be “under law”. “Law” = anything that says, “You have to...” or, “You’d better not...” or, “Here’s the reward for obedience,” or, “Here’s the penalty for not complying.” Laws can be good and useful things. But laws are worse than useless for getting us right with God. What happens when you’re thinking it’s up to you to obey rules so that you get right with God?
3. Whatever comes after the word “but” is more important than whatever came before it. What does the word “but” do in Romans 3:21 [“But now a righteousness from God...”?] Can you see the difference between these two sentences?
 - “I know God loves me and Jesus died for me, but the Bible says I have to be holy.”
 - “The Bible says I have to be holy, but I know God loves me and Jesus died for me.”
4. The message of God’s grace frees you from fear of God rejecting you because you’re not living right or your faith isn’t good enough. How does that help you live your life without having “sin be your master”?

My Doubts Are Valuable; I Have To Be Careful Whom I Give Them Away To

3rd Step - Lesson 7

Third Step [with comments]: “We made a decision [our wives, our parents, or our PO’s didn’t make it for us] to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him [not “as somebody else understood him” or “as we were told we were supposed to understand him”].

John 20:24-29 – Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.”

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

- 1. Have you ever gotten in trouble because you trusted someone or something that hadn’t earned your trust?**
- 2. Have you ever gotten in trouble because you let someone or something take over your decisions for you?**
- 3. How has Jesus earned your trust and settled your doubts?**
- 4. Have there been times when you refused to believe just because you were hard-headed?**
- 5. How can you tell when it’s time to hold onto your doubts and when it’s time to let go?**

My Will, My Life And My Understanding Turning It All Over To God

3rd Step - Lesson 8

Luke 9:18-24 – Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God." Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."

Third Step: We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

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- Has your relationship with God ever gotten messed up because you were going by someone else's understanding of him?
- Has God ever shaken up your understanding of him?
- Has the cross and the resurrection of Jesus changed your understanding of God?
- Has the cross and the resurrection of Jesus had an effect on your recovery?

Note: When the Bible talks about "taking up your cross" it isn't talking about suffering; it's talking about *dying*. Compare Galatians 2:19-21 – "Through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

- Have there been some ways of thinking and living that have been so much a part of your life that changing them would be like dying?
- The biggest change that needs to happen is the change from thinking that you had to do something to get God to accept you, to believing that Jesus paid the price for your wrongdoing when he died, and now you are completely acceptable to God. How is your life different as the Holy Spirit makes that change in you?

Learning To Rely On The God Who Will Never Abandon You

A Bible Study On Isaiah 49:13-16

3rd Step - Lesson 9

Fear of rejection can be a powerful influence in a person's way of thinking and living. It can be especially powerful if a person has actually experienced rejection or the threat of rejection from people who were important in his life. For instance:

- *"My mother put me in a foster home, but she told me she'd come back for me. I waited and waited, but she never came back."*
- *"I didn't want to have sex with my boyfriend, but I was afraid of losing him. Without him I don't have anything. Without him I'm nobody."*
- *"My mom and dad were fighting a lot. I tried to be really good so they wouldn't get a divorce, but they ended up getting divorced anyway. Dad left us. And I always felt like it was my fault for not being good enough."*

Experiences like these can lead to things like people-pleasing, inability to say "no," avoiding getting close to others, and sabotaging relationships ("I know they're going to reject me sooner or later, so I'll just beat them to the punch.")

People who have had experiences like this may also fear that God might do the same thing to them. The Bible has good news: God's love is absolutely reliable. God never goes back on his commitments. He doesn't give love or withhold love depending on how good we've been.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS: How do you act when you're in a relationship where you don't feel secure? How do you act when you're in a relationship where you feel safe and secure?

Isaiah 49:13-16

13 Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me; the Lord has forgotten me."

15 Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! 16 See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.

DISCUSSION:

1. What good news do you see verse 13 offering?

Why might that seem too good to be true to someone who has experienced rejection before in his life?

2. In verse 14 God's people ("Zion") are saying that the troubles they see in their lives must mean that God has actually rejected them. Have you ever felt that the problems you're having are proof that God is punishing you by abandoning you?

3. What does verse 15 tell you about God's love?

4. Think about how teenage girls sometimes write their boyfriends' name on their hand, and then stare at it and sigh. Think about how some men get their wives' or girlfriends' name tattooed on their arm. Then look at verse 16. What does this tell you about God's love?

5. The New Testament makes it clear that, rather than reject us because of what we've done wrong, Jesus chose to take the blame for our wrongdoings himself. Just before describing how Jesus was arrested and crucified, the Bible says this about Jesus: *Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love [John 13:1].*

What does that tell you about God's love?

6. How do you think being sure of God's love might change the way you look at yourself?

How do you think it might change the way you live your life, to be sure that God hasn't abandoned you?

CLOSING PRAYER: What would you like to say to God, knowing that nothing you have to tell him will drive him away?

“Made A Decision To Turn...”
All Guilt – Mine And That Of Others –
Over To The Grace Of God And The Blood Of Jesus

3rd Step - Lesson 10

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:1-2)

- *Not “less condemnation”, but “no condemnation”*
- *Because of Jesus’ sacrifice, my guilt level doesn’t go up and down, it remains at a constant zero*

How is my life different when Jesus handles all my guilt, and I don’t?

“All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “‘The righteous will live by faith.’” (Galatians 3:10-11)

- *I’m going to experience “a curse” when I try to use the law instead of the grace of God and the blood of Jesus to manage guilt*
- *I can’t afford to use the law to manage any guilt – my own guilt or the guilt of people who have harmed me*

What are some ways I “rely on observing the law” to manage my own guilt?

1. **Trying to use “amends” to decrease my guilt**
2. **Punishing myself and hating myself because of my guilt**
3. **Improving myself as a way to offset my guilt**
4. **What else?**

What are some ways I “rely on observing the law” to manage the guilt of others?

1. **Demanding some kind of payback before I let go of my resentments**
2. **Refusing to let go of my resentments until the other person deserves it**
3. **Secretly hoping for some kind of punishment to happen to happen to the person who harmed me**
4. **What else?**

How have I experienced “the curse” that goes along with trying to use the law for managing guilt?

What happens when I “live by faith” and let Jesus handle all guilt – my own and that of others – by his grace and his blood?

Trusting The God Who Shares My Feelings
A Bible Study On John 11:17-36
3rd Step - Lesson 11

A lot of people are afraid of emotions. It's pretty common to hear it said that it's wrong to get "too emotional." Listen to one woman's experience:

"When my little brother died all of us kids cried for him. We cried for three days, until the day of the funeral. That's when Dad told us, "That's enough crying. No more." So we stopped. We didn't dare cry for our little brother after that."

Experiences like that make it easy to think that it's a weakness to have emotions, and that having no feelings is an ideal to strive for. Very often people even think that God is like that: he never gets angry or sad or happy, that he doesn't have feelings. That makes it hard when a person has some strong feelings, such as anger over abuse, or sadness and loneliness because of death: how can I talk to God about how I feel, when he doesn't experience those same feelings?

The Bible doesn't present a God who has no emotions, but just the opposite: the God of the Bible is a God who gets angry, sad, and happy. That's especially easy to see when you look at Jesus: God who became human. He knows your feelings, shares your feelings, and can be trusted with your feelings.

THOUGHT QUESTION: Think of something you have strong feelings of anger or sadness about. What would it feel like to know God was angry or sad along with you?

John 11:17-36 – On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

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."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What feelings do you see Martha expressing? What feelings do you see Mary expressing? What feelings do you see Jesus expressing?
2. Notice how Jesus doesn't scold or reject Mary and Martha for the feelings they express. What does that tell you about Jesus?
3. Verses 25 - 26 are often read at funerals, when people are feeling a lot of intense emotions. What do you see Jesus promising you in these verses? How would believing these promises make a difference when you're in the middle of intense grief?
4. Look at verse 35. What does the fact that Jesus himself cried tell you about him?
5. Do you find yourself hesitating to tell God how you really feel? Why, or why not?
6. Does it make a difference for you to look at Jesus crying at Lazarus' grave, and know that you're praying to an *emotional* God?

CLOSING PRAYER: What are some things that you are angry or sad about that you would like to get real with God about?

W.W.P.S.F.D.
3rd Step - Lesson 12

IF MY RECOVERY IS GOING TO WORK, WHAT DO I NEED FROM GOD?

- I need a God who will accept me back when I mess up.
- I need a God who won't reject me for my bad attitudes.
- I need a God who will be patient with me.
- I need a God whose love and forgiveness I can count on, no matter what.
- What else?

WWPSFD? – What Would the Prodigal Son's Father Do?

If I'm not sure what God is really like, or I have doubts about how he's going to deal with me, I can look at Jesus' story about the man with the two messed up sons, and ask, "WWPSFD?"

Read Luke 15:11-31.

How did the sons look at their father?

- What did they think he mainly wanted from them?
- What did they think he wouldn't do for them?
- What did they think his attitude would be (or should be) when they messed up?
- What did they think he cared about (and didn't care about)?
- What else?

How do their ideas about their father compare with people's ideas (maybe my ideas!) about God?

What was their father really like?

- What did he really want for his sons?
- How did he treat them when they messed up?
- Did he put any conditions on his acceptance?
- What did he enjoy doing with his sons?
- What else?

What does that tell me about God?

How does that change the way I look at him?

“We Made A Decision...”

3rd Step - Lesson 13

Galatians 6:7- 8 – Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Galatians 5:16-25 – So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Titus 2:11-12 – For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age...

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- Addictions and other compulsions rob you of the ability to make real decisions. How have you seen that happen?
- The Holy Spirit puts this truth into your mind and heart: “You have God’s love no matter what you decide to do. The blood of Jesus covers your guilt no matter what you choose to do.” Have you seen God’s promise of grace actually empower you to make better choices?
- Sometimes Christians sucker into the lie that says, “I’m just a poor miserable sinner; Satan is too strong for me; I can’t help it.” Have you seen that way of thinking show up?
- What has helped you to say “no” to your sinful nature and make new choices?

Third Step: What Do You Have To Lose?

3rd Step - Lesson 14

Mark 8:34-37 -- Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life [or "save his soul"] will lose it, but whoever loses his life [or "loses his soul"] for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Hebrews 2:14-15 -- ...by his death he [destroyed] him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and frees those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Exodus 5:6-8 -- That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and foremen in charge of the people: "You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota."

[Am I thinking that God will be like Pharaoh, and demand stuff from me that I can't produce?]

2 Corinthians 8:12 -- For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

3rd Step -- We made a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God as we understood him.

- What are the things you are scared to death of losing? ("If I had to live without _____ it would kill me")?
- What fears do you have about what God will demand from you when you decide to "turn your will and your life over" to him? (Your real feelings? Your goals and ambitions? Your fun? Your leisure time? Your style?)
- In Mark 8 Jesus is saying that God not only loves and forgives you, he *likes* and *respects* you: he wants your soul, your true self, saved forever. How does that change the way you look at the Third Step?

What have you seen and experienced as you and others turn your will and