

Are You Ready To Have God Get You Ready? 6th & 7th Step - Lesson 1

6th Step: We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

How do you become “entirely ready” to have God come to you to do his work in you? Do you have to put off recovery or anything else about life with God until you’re sure you have a good attitude about it?

Look at Luke’s account about John the Baptist getting people ready for the Messiah’s coming:

The word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation.' " (Luke 3:2-6)

Here’s a helpful hint for reading the Bible: whenever you read something that gets you feeling scared or pressured or ashamed or hopeless, *keep reading*. Because God’s going to take the fear and shame and pressure away from you and give you some real hope. Look at how that works here: First it says, “Prepare the way for the Lord” (Pressure! Despair!), and then it says, “Every valley *shall be* filled in” (No pressure! It’s just plain *gonna* happen!).

God makes you aware that changes need to happen. But he doesn’t just back off then and ask, “So what are you going to do about it?” Look at what it says in Philippians: **He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus** (Philippians 1:6), and **it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose** (Philippians 2:13).

God started something good in you when he made you aware of your problem, and he’s going to finish that good work by making you willing and able to change.

There’s a saying in AA: Maybe you’re not “willing” yet, but are you willing to become willing?

- Where do you see “valleys” (having too low an opinion of yourself), “mountains” (having too high an opinion of yourself), “crooked roads” (dishonesty and hypocrisy) or “rough ways” (being stuck in ruts) in yourself?
- How have you seen God not only give you awareness of the problem, but also willingness and ability to do something about it?
- Jesus actually did the real work of getting you ready for God long before you were even born, by dying for your forgiveness. How does that change your approach to your problems?

Asking For Help

6th & 7th Step – Lesson 2

Step 7: Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

Recovery isn't a self-help program; it's a God-help program. We come into recovery powerless, unable to fix ourselves, and unable to make ourselves right with God. God comes to us with his grace, and accepts us and offers us new life just as we are. Instead of trying hard to change ourselves, we ask God for his help. And we look for his help to come from other people, too.

That's a change for a lot of us. A lot of us aren't used to asking for help. That's another one of our shortcomings that we need God to remove from us.

Here's an example from the Bible of someone who had learned to ask for help:
Luke 5:12-13—While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

Here's an example from the Bible of someone who wasn't good at asking for help:

John 5:5-8—One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"

"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."

- What gets in the way of asking for help?
- What happens when you learn to ask God and other people for help?

Are My Character Defects Hiding My God-Given Strengths?

6th & 7th Step - Lesson 3

*“I honor my personality flaws for without them I would have no personality at all”—
Recovery joke*

It's only half joking, though: there is a real fear for a lot of people that if they give up their resentments they'll turn into complete doormats who never stand up for themselves, or that if they give up their lust they'll be giving up their manhood or womanhood. Some people are afraid that if they truly turn their will and their lives over to God, like it says in the Third Step, they'll turn into some kind of religious zombie.

What character defects have you been afraid to let go of?

The truth is that Jesus died for the *real* you, so that he could have the *real* you, not some generic cookie-cutter Christian, with him forever in heaven. Your character defects are just things that get in the way of the real you.

Look at Step 4: “...made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” That means I'm finding strengths that need to be brought out, not just defects that need to be eliminated. And look at Step 6: “...were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character”, and Step 7: “humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.” Those steps don't talk about getting rid of part of our personalities; they talk about making defects right, and about getting rid of what makes us fall short of being who we're really meant to be.

Look at what Paul says in Ephesians 4 about how God has given gifts to each of his people, and about how character defects get in the way of those gifts:

“But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: ‘When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men’... Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ‘In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (7-8, 25-29).

In Ephesians 4, what strengths are being hidden by character defects?

DEFECT		STRENGTH
• Lying	•	
• Rage	•	
• Resentment	•	
• Stealing	•	
• Talking stupid	•	

What are some strengths you have that are hiding behind defects?

How Is God Removing My Defects Of Character?

6th & 7th Step - Lesson 4

Step 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Step 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Ephesians 4:22-32—You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

"Old Self" stuff

- Being slick
- My anger is in charge of me
- My needs come ahead of everybody else's
- I say whatever pops into my head
- Mess with me and be messed with

"New Self" stuff

- Being honest, accepting consequences
- Jesus and I are in charge of my anger
- I rank other people's needs right up with my own
- I try to use my words for helping and being kind to people I'm with
- I'm in the forgiveness business

How can you tell when you're dealing with "old self" stuff?

What are some things God does to help you replace the "old self" stuff with "new self" stuff?

Are there any ways God has surprised you when you "humbly asked him to remove your shortcomings"?

What Happens When God Gives You A Mental Turnaround?

6th & 7th Step - Lesson 5

Repentance (in Biblical Greek): A changed perspective, a turnaround in the way you think

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character

Step 7: Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings

*I asked God for strength, that I might achieve;
I was made weak, that I might learn to humbly obey.
I asked God for health, that I might do greater things;
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.
I asked God for riches, that I might be happy;
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.
I asked God for power, that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for things, that I might enjoy life;
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing that I asked for
But everything I had hoped for.
I am, among all men, most richly blessed. – Anonymous*

"May all your expectations be frustrated; may all your plans be thwarted; may all of your desires be withered into nothingness, that you may experience the powerlessness and poverty of a child and sing and dance in the love of God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit." -- A blessing prayed over Henri Nouwen by a friend

Expect surprises when you let God be in charge of your thinking. Expect the unexpected.

Did you assume that the changes that God most wanted to make in your life were stuff like no more smoking, no more swearing, start training to be a minister, etc? Did you find that God had some other changes he wanted to make in you that he thought were more important?

Some examples of the kind of thinking that God turns around when he gives repentance:

- "I can sin so badly that God can't and won't forgive me. Maybe I already have."
- "Life is all bad, the world is in the dumper, I'm right to be gloomy and negative."
- "God is always disappointed in me."
- "It's my duty to straighten out all these fools."
- "What I do isn't very important, because I'm not very important."

What else? What new thoughts are replacing the crazy old thoughts?