

Let's continue with Step 2, as we look into the 12 Steps with God

Step 2 – Gospel – We know that a loving God, extending mercy and grace to us, sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin and offers us an abundant life and greater joy than living on our own.

In Step 2, we talked about God's great love and how that makes a lasting recovery for us possible.

Tonight, we will be talking about how Christ is the Light of the world, the Good Shepherd, and the Savior that bore all our sin...making our recovery and victory possible. We are not on our own.

In Lesson 2, we will examine the Old Testament's promise of the Messiah's sacrifice for us, the lengths Christ went to in order to pay the penalty for our sin to make us alive with Him. And when we are alive with Him, a lasting powerful victory is possible.

John 12:46

I have come as Light into the world, so that no one who believes in Me will remain in darkness.

Christ is the answer to the question of how we rise above the darkness of our lives...

In this verse, John describes a vivid picture of the Gospel. Walking in darkness is something many of us have experienced – our lives are difficult and stressful, and we look for relief in entertainment, addictions, vacations, or some other distraction. The reality of this verse is that the darkness is often a result of sin in our lives, and the lives of those around us.

Here we find another description of God's extreme love...

John 10:7-15

So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All those who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly.

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters the flock. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

(Refer to the endnote on the seven "I AM" statements in the book of John.)

When we think about sheep, we normally cringe at the comparison with people, especially those of us in recovery or struggling with issues in our lives. It is true that sheep are fearful, defenseless, and ignorant followers, but in spiritual terms, that is a fair and accurate comparison. For creatures that are susceptible to attack and death, we desperately need a "shepherd" to guide us – God himself is standing in that role. **He can be your shepherd, but only if you accept Him in that position. He doesn't force Himself into your life but waits to be invited.**

There are many people, things, and false gods who we are tempted to accept as our shepherds, but they will fail us. Christ says that they will abandon you as the hired hand does the sheep. As the Good Shepherd, Christ loves you and intercedes for you with the Father – the only shepherd we need.

In Isaiah's prophecy, almost 700 years before Christ, he makes it painfully clear...

Isaiah 53:4-5

However, it was our sicknesses that He Himself bore, and our pains that He carried;

Yet we ourselves assumed that He had been afflicted, struck down by God, and humiliated.

⁵ But He was pierced for our offenses, He was crushed for our wrongdoings; the punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.

This is the extent of Jesus' love for us. His death wasn't quick, painless, easy, or simple. Isaiah is prophesying Jesus' horrific crucifixion. Jesus suffered cruelly at the hands of the Roman soldiers, by the will of the Jewish leadership as a substitute for our required death penalty. You see, we deserve death because of our willful rebellion against God's holiness, and though we may long for a rich fulfilling life, we cannot get there on our own. God is the only one who can give us life, rescuing us from death. This life comes from Jesus, and He took our death on that dark day of His crucifixion.

Colossians 2:13

And when you were dead in your wrongdoings and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our wrongdoings,

Before coming to Christ, you and I were so bound in the sphere of sin, the world, the flesh, and the devil that we were completely unable to respond to any spiritual stimuli, totally devoid of spiritual life. In other words, we might have had the Word of God, but none of the supernatural power of God for our recovery or victory over sin.

In this passage, the Apostle Paul describes the remarkable truth of the Gospel. We could translate this truth into a recovery context – **“You were floundering in life's struggles/heartaches because of your sin and because you were still clinging to your sinful way of life. Then God made you alive with Christ, a new creation, and He forgave all your sins – making a lasting recovery possible”.**

Consider & Confess

1. Having already acknowledged our sin in Step 1, now we have to acknowledge its consequences. Sin results in death, eternal separation from eternal joy and peace. Have you ever paid for something you did wrong? Was that payment fair for the offense? Should it have been worse? Should it have been easier?
2. God's warning about sin's consequences in the Garden of Eden was very clear. To disobey our perfect creator has obvious consequences. Does eternal death seem like a steep price for your sin? Do you think that a perfect God should overlook any offense against His perfection? What kind of God would that make Him?
3. The fact that God gives you an offer of forgiveness at His own expense seems unbelievable, and yet that is exactly what has happened. Have you acknowledged His sacrifice for you? Do you believe that Christ died for you, and that He took your sins upon Himself so that you could have life? If so, how does/did that change your life?

Looking forward:

To set the stage for Step 3 – Faith, it is important to reflect on mercy and grace – not receiving what we deserve or receiving what we don't deserve. When we come to grips with the scope and significance of God's mercy and grace, faith in that loving and caring God begins to make sense. As we begin talking about faith, you will find that faith is a larger part of our daily lives than we often think about - what are the objects of your faith?

ⁱ This is one of the Lord's meaningful "I AM" statements in the Greek text of the Gospel of John. In seven of these I AM statements he joins the I AM statement with a tremendous metaphor which are expressive of His saving relationship toward the world.

1. "I AM the Bread of life" (6:35, 41, 48, 51)
2. "I AM the Light of the world" (8:12)
3. "I AM the Door of the sheep" (10:7, 9)
4. "I AM the Good Shepherd" (10:11, 14)
5. "I AM the Resurrection and the Life" (11:25)
6. "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (14:6)
7. "I AM the true Vine" (15:1, 5)