

Let's Continue...The 12 Steps with God

Step 1 – Confession – Realizing that our lives are unmanageable, and we are powerless to do what is good; we acknowledge that sin eternally separates us from a righteous, loving God and we are helpless to meet His standard on our own.

- In Lesson 1, we talked about the reality of our sin and what sin is all about.
- **In Lesson 2, we discuss how natural man is separated from a righteous/loving God – with consequences now and in eternity.**
- In Lesson 3, we talk about how we are helpless to meet God's holy standard through our efforts.

...We are here to talk about recovery or addiction to _____ so I can feel normal, feel pleasure, or escape the pain...so why are we focusing on God and the fact that we all fall short of God's perfect standard? It is simple, God is the only one that can give us true, lasting victory over the our issue & pain.

After recognizing that our lives are unmanageable, and that we are powerless to do what is good, we want to acknowledge that our problems are much bigger still: we are separated from a righteous and loving God. The fact that He is righteous reminds us of the fact that He knows no sin, has no sin, condones no sin, nor does he initiate sin. When we are living a life of sin, separated from God – God is far from us, and the sad truth is, we are all far from God when in our natural state.

Romans 3:10b-11, “None is righteous, no not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God.”

Apart from God, natural man is unable to comprehend the truth of God or grasp His standard of righteousness. In essence we are avoiding the single source of lasting victory in our lives.

To say that our God is loving is a gross understatement, but it carries immense meaning. In fact, God's *agape* love for us is an unconditional love, a love from the will and as a choice. By this definition we would understand that love is not an emotion, or a state of mind. Love is active, and God certainly is active toward us who are sinful. We intend to develop this point in greater detail and discussion in step two, but it is necessary to understand that love is an attribute of the God from whom we are separated.

I John 4:8b “God is love.”

So, what is the problem? Why are we separated from this righteous and loving God that can help us with all the issues we face? We've already identified the problem: sin. The Bible describes sin in easy-to-understand terms. It is disobedience. It is rebellion. It is withdrawing from God. But what the Bible does not do is to define sin. The word means, *to miss, or fall short of, the mark*. The doctrine of sin is this: if God's perfection, holiness, purity, and righteousness were the bullseye on a target, not only would we miss the target, but our attempts would be directed 180 degrees from it.

Many people are willing to admit that they are inclined to sin, and they see the true nature of themselves in relation to God, but too many are unable to recognize that they are often doing the exact opposite of what God demands.

The point: even the best of mankind is standing in natural opposition to God. We may be exceptional within the culture, environment or civilization in which we live as we compared ourselves to others, but even our best deeds are deplorable to God.

Isaiah 64:6a, “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.”

It isn't that those works are bad in and of themselves (e.g., sacrificing for others is a good work), but no amount of “good works” can cover or erase our sin, even if we only sinned once, before a holy, perfect God.

Titus 3:4-5a, “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...”

We can never do enough good, any sin in our lives remains to pollute the overall picture. It is insulting to God that we would try.

Now the tough truth – because of this sin in our lives, we are doomed to eternity in a place called hell. The Bible talks about this place being the extreme in awfulness. It is a place of eternal fire, sorrowful weeping and grinding of teeth (Matthew 13:50). But we believe the worst thing about having to spend eternity there is that it is the location of God's wrath, not His peace, joy, or bliss. This is the consequence for our sin.

Romans 6:23a, “For the wages of sin is death...”

Death is the reality of eternal separation from the glories of God, and it is the result of our sin.

This is the ultimate in separation. But if we already feel the agony in this life without God, here and now, His Word and a relationship with Him is the answer to the struggles and challenges we face. **We need Him.** We cannot make it any longer without Him. We are at the point of acknowledging our inability on our own, and now are ready to recognize Him as our only hope and help.

Consider and Confess:

1. We acknowledge that not every hardship of life is a consequence of sin, but we also acknowledge that sin has brought hurts, hang-ups, and habits that are causing problems. Can you see the effect of sin in your life?
2. Have you ever thought about being “right” with God or how you might measure up to God's righteous, holy standard?
3. Have you ever considered how God would judge your life or your actions and did that involve comparing yourself to others?
4. Have you thought about the word “sin” and thought that it sounded a little harsh for a loving God, especially when everyone is calling that “sin” a disease or a condition?
5. Have some of your choices or actions separated you from friends and family or those you love? What did you do to repair those relationships or be reconciled with those people?
6. Read Ephesians 2:1-3; these verses are speaking to believers who know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and understand where they have been (dead in their trespasses and sins) and how they got there (lived in the lust of the flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind). Like the first man Adam that made a sinful choice, we have all made poor, self-serving, hurtful choices. What is the sin in your life that separates you from a holy, just God?

Looking Forward:

In our final lesson for Step 1 we will be expanding the thought about our inability to measure up to God's perfection on our own. We may be trying diligently but are falling farther behind. We may be holding on right now, not declining, but not improving either. In any case, next time we will explore the need for open honesty about our inability to measure up to God's perfection on our own.