

Let us finish looking at Step 6, as we look into the 12 Steps with God

Step 6 – Surrender – We were entirely ready to give God control of our lives and help us move from a focus on self to one of humility and a concern for others.

Tonight, we will finish the discussion of giving God control of our lives and begin looking at selfishness and the cost of a focus on self. The truth is that a focus on self often has a huge cost and impact on others in our lives – spouses, children, parents, co-workers, etc.

Let's start with a definition of humility...**the quality or condition of being humble, a modest opinion or estimate of one's own importance, rank, etc.**

One of the more difficult areas of our lives to change is our perspective or viewpoint. In Steps 1-5 we have acknowledged, confessed, and begun the repentance cycle. However, our perspective or the way we see the world is heavily influenced by how things affect us. Because self-centeredness often sneaks in unaware and misguides us into poor choices, we may not recognize that self-focus is sin. And when the consequences begin to mount up, we may be at a loss...what went wrong? We were born with a sin-nature and self-centeredness, and it is not difficult to see it at work. From the moment we wake up we begin asking subliminally selfish questions: "What will *I* wear today?" "What do *I* want for breakfast?" "What is on *my* schedule for today?" So, you can see the challenge in shifting our focus to God and others.

When Jesus was asked about the most important (greatest & foremost) of all of God's commandments, He responded with a profound,

Matthew 22:37-39, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

It is obvious that a life of obedience to God means loving Him first and next we would choose to love the people God has placed around us. God has become the priority of our lives and others become more important than our self. **That is a critical piece of this step.** When we focus on ourselves, we miss the full plan of God.

Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." – Philippians 2:3

God intends that we learn to elevate the needs and desires of others ahead of our own, serving them as a servant of God. You may ask, but how does that work? I mean, how do we serve others if we are serving God?

Well, to that point Paul continued in Philippians 2 by giving us the perfect example.

Philippians 2:8, "And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Throughout His earthly ministry Christ modeled this service to others in obedience to the Father. When we learn to do what God is telling us, we find that we can live for others. Usually that starts with serving those closest to us, and then building outward from there. For most of us that means we begin shifting our focus

from self to those around us – our spouses, children, co-workers, neighbors, and circle continues to get larger and larger. As we already know, the opposite of humility is selfishness – a focus on ourselves quickly leads to chaos in our lives.

James 3:16, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.”

It does not take long for our lives to spin out of control when we start living for ourselves. “Selfish ambitions” lead directly to “disorder” and “vile practice.” Speaking of disorder, it does not take long for those around us to realize that if everything revolves around us, there is little time or energy for anything or anyone else. In terms of vile practices, it is amazing how fast a focus on our pleasure can lead to a variety of substances or activities that can destroy our bodies and our relationships like drugs, alcohol, pornography, or use/abuse of others.

In another verse, we get a glimpse of the alternative to humility...

Galatians 5:14-16, “For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Because of the clear instruction in the scripture used above, let us simply determine to live for God today. He wants us to love, encourage, help, and bless those around us as we submissively love and obey Him. As we yield control of our lives to God, He guides and sustains us through each day’s issues, and we become very productive citizens and saints. Often, we are remarkably blessed as well.

Consider and Confess:

1. If you were to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind...what would you have to change in your life?
2. What does putting others first look like for you today, this week, or this month?
3. Reflect on any jealousy or selfish ambition in your life and inventory the resulting “disorder” or “vile practices”. What was the “disorder” or the “vile practices” a result of?
4. Take a look at your motives...are there things you do or say because of selfish ambition or conceit?
5. What kinds of things do you do because of your love for God?
6. It has been suggested before that eliminating bad practices without adding good ones can be detrimental. With that in mind, what kinds of selfless activities can you do to displace selfish activities currently in your life?

Looking Forward:

Well, this has been a sobering look at our selfishness, the consequences of that self-focus, and what we need to do to focus on God and others first. In the next step we will be working through the exercise of humbly asking for God’s help, in an ongoing basis, to cleanse us from our sin. We need to remember that forgiveness and cleansing from sin is something that God does in our lives each time we come to Him. And with that forgiveness and cleansing, God restores our relationship with Him.

In the next step and lesson, we will take a detailed look at how that happens.