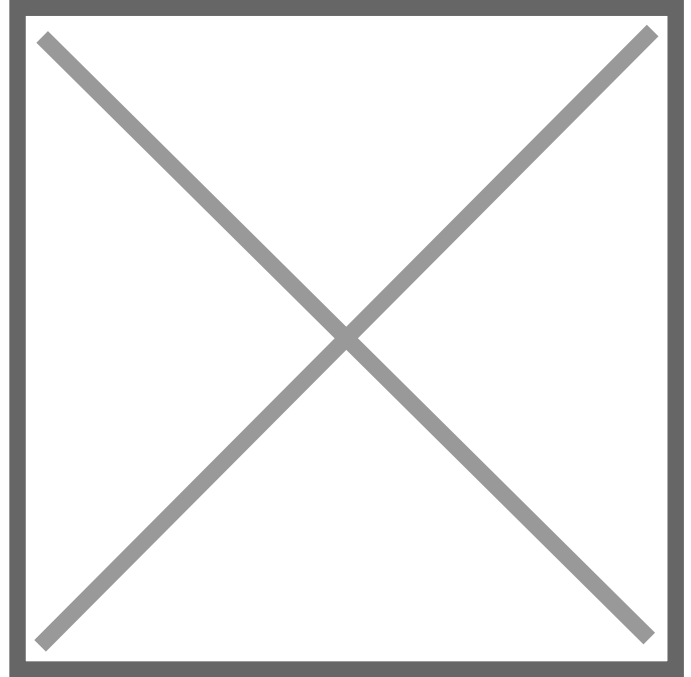


in process_Jesus' prescription for inner peace

By Glen Doss, Major

Struggling to regain his composure as he wiped tears from his eyes, the young man covered his face with his hands. "I'm so ashamed of what I've done with my life," he said. "I came here to sincerely change. I would give anything to learn how to stay clean and sober and to get to know God. Can you tell me what to do?"

Billy was expressing a burning desire shared by virtually every beneficiary who arrives at our adult rehabilitation center doors. Like all the others, he sensed vaguely that the two goals were connected—to remain clean and sober and begin a relationship with God—but wasn't quite sure how.



Emotional pain always drives our addictions, so over the succeeding days I took Billy along Christ's prescribed route to inner peace, shared in John 14:23-27. The outcome: "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid" (14:27 NIV).

I inform the beneficiaries: Jesus died to set us free from emotional distress. We don't have to live like that anymore. His prescription is the one proven method for getting off the vicious addiction cycle: Pain? Reaching out to an Addictive Agent? Temporary Anesthesia? Negative Consequences? Guilt and Shame? More Pain? Reaching Again for the Addictive Agent. And so the ruthless cycle repeats itself.

The first step toward recovery is taken out of love, love for our Creator. Jesus informs us, "If anyone love me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching" (14:23-24). Genuine love for him, says Jesus, results in obedience. Our primary problem all along has been self-reliance: it is pride displayed by trusting only the object that gives temporary relief to our inner torment—be it drugs, alcohol or the one-armed bandit intermittently spitting out money, etc. We have not loved God.

For decades, perhaps, we have been holding love-proof umbrellas firmly over our heads, vainly seeking to keep God's love at bay; yet his great love for us has continued to rain down since before we were born. "For God so loved the world that he sent his one and only son that whoever believes in

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him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Out of desperation, we must finally make up our minds to close those love-proof umbrellas and allow God’s pure love to soak us through and through. “I love you back, Lord,” our hearts cry out finally in obedience—the obedience that triggers our new life.

“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching,” Jesus states quite bluntly. Scottish preacher George MacDonald once said, “A man’s real belief is that which he lives by. What a man believes is the thing he does, not the thing he thinks.”

The Bible never speaks of love as a warm, fuzzy feeling. To love Christ is to obey him. In the Bible, love is an action word. God’s Word teaches that love is always a very active thing, whether love for God or love for our fellowman. Love for God is obedience, while love for others is depicted as acts of service, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

As we obey Christ, we are told in verse 25 that God enters into us. As God takes up residence within us, we can bet he will not leave us as he found us—promptly the Holy Spirit commences a training regimen. “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things” (14:26). The Holy Spirit is going to do some overhauling. His goal is for our will to line up with his. For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose, explains the apostle Paul (Phil 2:13).

We can count on our Lord to provide for us. Our God never gives instructions without equipping us with the provisions needed to carry them out. Jesus said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:8). Through the power of God we finally achieve what we have repeatedly failed to accomplish on our own—to have a full and satisfying life (John 10:10). Sobriety is but one of our many gains.

Through the direction and power of the Holy Spirit, we face ourselves as we really are, uncovering defects of character that have ruled our lives for decades. These resulted in torturing emotions directly contributing to our troubling lifestyles. We have been lost. Plainly speaking, we have been a mess. Jesus sought us out in order to help us. Now as we rely on him, God helps us to find ourselves so that we may finally turn our lives over to him, something we have been vainly attempting for years on our own. I cannot give myself to God, no matter how badly I want to, until God helps me find myself. We cannot give away something we do not possess.

As God gently shows us where we have blindly practiced dishonesty and deceit, acting selfishly, he leads us into a whole new way of thinking and living. This may frighten us at first, for some of us don’t know what it means to live without fear and anger and guilt and shame. These have ruled our lives for so long they have become our identity, and we are frightened at the prospect of losing them—for at least they are familiar. But we can take solace in the realization that God never takes anything away from us without putting something wonderful in its place.

As he removes anger, he replaces it with kindness; he replaces fear with courage; instead of guilt and shame, he gives us peace of mind. Long dreamed of sweet contentment rushes in to fill the void left as we give our inner turmoil over to our Lord. He helps us to finally get out of the driver's seat so that he may direct our lives as he sees fit.

"I do not give to you as the world gives," Jesus reminds us, "so don't be troubled or afraid."