

The Three A's: Awareness, Acceptance, Action

Acceptance and Serenity - Lesson 1

Do you find that you're in such a hurry to do something about your problems that you get in more trouble than you were in to begin with? Do you make yourself crazy about situations by fussing about how "It's not right! It's just not right!"?

One of the elements of successful recovery is the three A's: Awareness, Acceptance, and Action. A lot of our problems come from skipping the second "A". Look at what Paul said about what he learned:

"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

(Philippians 4:11-13)

Look at how Paul put the three A's into action when he was arrested in Philippi, Acts 16:16-40:

1. He was *aware* of the fact that he'd been illegally incarcerated and tortured (how could he not be?)
 2. He *accepted* the reality of his situation (he and Silas held an impromptu worship service instead of a pity party)
 3. Based on his acceptance of his situation he took *action* (he ministered to the jailer, and he forced the city officials to give him justice.)
- What happens to you when you refuse to accept the reality of your situation?
 - What helps you to accept the reality of your situation?
 - Does knowing that a loving and wise God is in charge of your situation make a difference?
 - How does acceptance of your situation make a difference in the actions you take to deal with your situation?

Finding God In The Lowest Times Of My Life

Acceptance and Serenity - Lesson 2

...I didn't even feel I had that much of a drinking problem! Of course, I had *problems*, all sorts of problems. "If you had my problems, you'd drink too," was my feeling. My major problems were marital. "If you had my wife, you'd drink too"...

When I stopped living in the problem and began living in the answer, the problem went away. From that moment on, I have not had a single compulsion to drink.

And acceptance is the answer to *all* my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation—some fact of my life—unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes.

-- Alcoholics Anonymous, pp 407,

417

Look at Matthew 17:1-23.

- What do you think Jesus and his disciples were feeling on top of the mountain?
- When have you had that kind of spiritual experience?
- What have you had to accept about those experiences? (for instance, accepting the fact that these experiences aren't going to last)
- What feelings do you think Jesus and his disciples were having when they got to the bottom of the mountain and got on with their lives?
- What happens to you when you think that something about your life is too frustrating or sad or whatever to be acceptable?
- Have you ever found yourself getting to know and appreciate God better during the annoying and sad and frustrating times in your life?
- What else helps you to accept the people, places, things and situations that seem unacceptable?

Jesus Freed Me To Be Truly Human

Acceptance and Serenity - Lesson 3

“We will begin to feel and will come to know the vastness of our emotions, but we will not be slaves to them.” (“From Survival to Recovery,” p 269, Al-anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. 1994)

In our insanity we have worked hard to get away from our feelings by getting high or other distracting and mind-numbing activities. Even though feelings like anger and grief and guilt are a normal part of human life, we didn’t want to experience them. We didn’t want to live human lives, and we tried to make ourselves less than human. And then when our feelings managed to get past our management systems we had no way of dealing with them, and they took over. We became the slaves of our human feelings, rather than human beings with feelings. How have you seen that happen in your life?

But Jesus came to this earth to completely take on human life. That meant feeling what human beings feel. Can you think of some examples from Jesus’ life that showed his human feelings?

The most obvious and dramatic place where you can see Jesus experiencing his human feelings is at the crucifixion. “They offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it” (Mark 15:23) – in other words, Jesus refused to let his feelings be numbed, even when he was facing murder by torture. He was going to take on the whole human experience – including the punishment sinful human beings have coming to them – so that he could be the human Savior of human beings.

Now read John 19:16-27. What human feelings do you see Jesus having in...

- 17?
- 23-24?
- 25-27?
- 28?
- 30?
- What else?

How is this going to make a difference to you as you face your feelings without your chemical or other feeling management device?

Living With The Consequences Of My Sin/Living In God's Grace

Acceptance and Serenity - Lesson 4

Philippians 3:13-14 – Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Psalms 118:24 – This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Our secrets will no longer bind us in shame. As we gain the ability to forgive our families, the world, and ourselves our choices will expand. – Al-Anon, *From Survival to Recovery*

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. – *Alcoholics Anonymous, "Into Action"*

During Christmas and other holidays it's easy to get into an "if only" state of mind: "If only I hadn't screwed up, I'd be celebrating Christmas with my family;" "If only I'd stayed sober I'd still have that good job and I'd have been able to buy decent presents for the kids." But the Bible's message of grace makes it clear: Your sin doesn't control what happens in your life, God's love does, and you'll see his loving plans unfolding in the situation you're in right now (not the situation you would have been in if you hadn't messed up).

- What is helping you to look without regrets at the ways you've messed up?
- Even though you hadn't planned on being in the situation you're in, how have you seen God's plans work out in this situation?
- Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is you. How is God helping you to be aware of your sins and still live in forgiveness?
- A man in jail over Christmas once said, "You know, this has actually been my best Christmas ever." Have you seen that sort of thing happen in your life?

Serenity And Acceptance

Acceptance and Serenity - Lesson 5

**God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I can not change...
Courage to change the things I can...
and Wisdom to know the difference...
Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.
Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it.
Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His will.
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.
Amen.
(The Complete Serenity Prayer)**

We pray for serenity all the time; how would you define or describe it?

What are some misleading ideas about serenity? (For instance: "Everything is fine" "Nothing bothers me")

Here are some things the Bible has to say on the subject:

Ecclesiastes 4:6 – Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

Psalms 46, especially v 10: "Be still, and know that I am God."

Psalms 23, especially v 5: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

John 16:33 – "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

- Have you experienced serenity because of the fact that Jesus died to forgive you and God completely accepts you? How has that helped you?
- What else does God do to give you serenity?
- How does the serenity God gives help you to accept what you can't change?
- How can you have serenity and strong feelings at the same time?

Serenity With Painful And Guilty Memories

Acceptance and Serenity - Lesson 6

“We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, “Into Action”)

How does God give you the grace to let that happen? After all, we all have...

- Losses because of our bad choices
- Mixed feelings about decisions we felt we had to make
- Memories of pain that we caused other people
- Memories of pain that other people have caused us

Look at Joel 2:24-26—“The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil. I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm—my great army that I sent among you. You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed.”

- What do you see God promising you about your regrets and painful memories?

Look at 1 Samuel 15:35—“Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD was grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel.”

- Do good decisions always make you feel good?
- Does it help to know that God himself sometimes feels bad as a result of the choices he’s made, even though those choices are right?

Look at Revelation 21:4-5—“ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’”

- What do you see promising to do with your choices and your memories?
- How have you seen God’s grace “making everything new” already in this life?

Slowing Down My Racing Thoughts

Acceptance and Serenity - Lesson 7

Psalm 46:10 – Be still and know that I am God. I will be exulted among the nations; I will be exulted in the earth.

Psalm 139:23 – Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

1 John 3:19-21 – This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God...

The 12 Promises of AA

1. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
2. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
3. We will comprehend the word serenity.
4. We will know peace.
5. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.
6. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
7. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
8. Self-seeking will slip away.
9. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
10. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
11. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
12. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

1. What are some of the things that get your thoughts racing? (Resentments, “fear of people and of economic insecurity” [Promise 10], guilt, etc.)
2. How has God used his promise of love and acceptance to still your racing thoughts?
3. “Being still” in the presence of the God of grace (Psalm 46:10) doesn’t necessarily mean being motionless. What are some things you can do to help settle down your anxieties?
 - Writing down your resentments and deliberately forgiving the people you resent
 - Figuring out the worst-case scenario of what you fear, and talking and praying about it
 - Actively avoiding the situations that get your thoughts racing
 - What else?

Look at Revelation 21:4-5—“ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’”

- What do you see promising to do with your choices and your memories?
- How have you seen God’s grace “making everything new” already in this life?