

“Black-And-White” Thinking Vs. Grace Thinking

Lesson 1

Black-and-white thinking – “It’s all good or it’s no good” – can be a big factor in an addict’s “stinking thinking.” Examples:

- “I had a slip; I guess that means I’m just not cut out for living sober.”
- “I wouldn’t have to drink if everybody would just be nice to me all the time.”
- “I’m not going to go to AA; some of those people aren’t Christians, and a lot of them smoke and swear and stuff.”
- What else?

God is perfect, but he’s not a perfectionist. Look at some Bible examples of how God doesn’t think black-and-white, and neither do people thinking God’s way:

Philippians 5:6-8—You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Philippians 4:8—Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.

Matthew 22:9-10—“Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.”

Philippians 4:11-13—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.

Mark 9:38-40—“Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

“Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. I tell you the truth; anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.”

- How has black-and-white thinking been part of your craziness?
- How has God’s grace – his unconditional love and acceptance of imperfect people like you – helped your thinking become sane?

What else?

Claiming My Addiction, Claiming Jesus' Victory

Lesson 2

How does a Christian who is dealing with an addiction describe himself? Can he simply say, "My name is Joe, I am an alcoholic"? Should he avoid saying things like that for fear that his words will set him up for failure? Does he need to find a way to say it that gives glory to God and not to his addiction? What about the need to keep himself out of denial about his addiction?

As with just about everything else, God made very few rules for us here. This is an area of life where God has only given us a few guidelines and left us free to make our own decisions.

Paul's writings help a lot here. Paul made it very clear that it's the blood of Jesus that makes us right with God, not our efforts to follow rules. Because we are free from guilt through Jesus' dying for us, we are free to find ways that work best for us to live out our new Christian lives. He wrote, for instance, in Titus 1:15, "**To the pure, all things are pure.**" Because I am pure through the blood of Jesus I can now use different methods put them to work for God's purposes in working my recovery program. I can work with the Holy Spirit in me to make decisions for myself about what will work best *for me*.

Paul wrote, "**I can do everything through him who gives me strength**" (**Philippians 4:13**), talking about how Jesus gives him victory over limitations. He also wrote about how God sometimes let him live with weaknesses and limitations: "**Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'**" (**2 Corinthians 12:8-9**).

Paul talked about his new identity in Jesus: "**If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**" (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). He also talked about his sinful human condition in the present tense: "**Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst**" (**1 Timothy 1:15**).

So it comes down to this: What helps *me* with *my* recovery? Do I need to...

- Proclaim the Holy Spirit's victorious power over the power of my addiction?
- Claim ownership of my condition so I can hand it over to Jesus?
- Emphasize my powerlessness over my addiction?
- Emphasize Jesus' power over my addiction?
- Confess my sinful condition, to glorify Jesus' power to forgive and heal?
- Claim my new identity, so I don't get bogged down in my old stuff?

What have you found useful in describing your condition?

“Cured”?

Lesson 3

“I’m not obsessed with my dependency any more!” “I have no cravings!” “God took the taste out of my mouth!” “I’m feeling normal!”

Great! Now what?

Philippians 1:6 –... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 13:12 – Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

“Heaven is the only sane place.” – Barry S.

- Cravings are only one part of an addiction. What else is there?

“My problem was 10% alcohol and 90% me.” – AA slogan

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 – So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

- Name some ways that God provides to keep you out of insanity (Obvious example: “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man” – so keep getting together with your fellow recovering human beings and talk about your common problems and share your strengths).
- What else?

Detachment With Love

Lesson 4

“Now I know how to end an argument by simply refusing to participate, to turn to my Higher Power for help with whatever I’m powerless to change, to say, ‘No,’ when I mean no, and to step back from insanity rather than diving into it. Detachment is a loving gift I continue to give to myself and to others.” – *Courage to Change*, p 12

“Detachment. At first it may sound cold and rejecting, not loving at all. But I have come to believe that detachment is actually a wonderful gift: I am allowing my loved ones the privilege and opportunity of being themselves.” – *Courage to Change*, p 124

Galatians 6:1-5 – Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.

Things that keep us “attached” to someone else’s insanity:

- Lust for control – “I need to fix this guy”
- Jealousy – “If I can’t drink, he shouldn’t be able to drink, either”
- Judgmental attitude – “I’m morally superior to this guy”
- Self-pity and “martyrdom” – “Look at what I have to put up with!”
- An excuse for relapse – “How am I supposed to stay sober with all this crap going on?”
- What else?

God does “detachment with love” on us!

- Evicted us from Eden
- Gives us freedom to make our own choices, including the bad ones
- Offers us his love and invites us to receive it, but doesn’t force it on us
- Doesn’t obsess with our faults, but accepts us as we are
- What else?

What happens with we “detach with love” from someone else’s insanity?

- We’re not caught up in the insanity
- We can accept and love them for who they are, instead of judging them for their behavior
- They can make their own mistakes and learn from those mistakes
- God’s peace and serenity can replace our resentments and anxieties
- What else?

*** Fake It 'Til You Make It ***
*** Acting "As If" ***
*** Get Your Body There And Your Mind Will Follow ***

Lesson 5

Does fear of being a hypocrite get in the way of your life with God and your recovery?

- "I can't go to my meeting tonight after I went out and got high yesterday."
- I shouldn't be in a church; I smoke and I swear and I don't always keep my pants zipped up and I'm not 100% sure I believe in God."

The grace of God frees us to **grow into** faith and sincerity, instead of demanding that we be faithful and sincere already.

2 Corinthians 5:7—We live by faith, not by sight.

Mark 11:24—"I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

"Sure, we believe, but do we believe what we believe?" – Mike O'Neil

Ask yourself: How would my life be different if I really believed...

- That I was totally loved and accepted by God?
- That Jesus would really keep his promise to always be with me?
- That the Holy Spirit was actually going to put his almighty power to work to give me a new life?
- What else?

Go ahead and live as if it really were true, that you are totally loved and accepted by God, etc., even if you don't totally believe it! See what happens!

H. A. L. T. –
Stop letting yourself get HUNGRY, ANGRY, LONELY AND TIRED
Lesson 6

Matthew 11:28-30 – "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

God created you with a body and with emotions, and he made you part of a community. But we sometimes ignore our body's needs, as well as our social and emotional needs.

- What happens when you get too hungry, angry, lonely or tired?

- What's going on with you when you let yourself get too hungry, angry, lonely or tired?

"THE BODY IS ALWAYS THERE, in the PRESENT moment. Our minds or feelings can be anyplace - imagining the future, dwelling on the past or ruminating on a fantasy - but our body is always here and now. It cannot be anywhere else". – The Wisdom of The Enneagram by Riso and Hudson

- What helps you when you start getting hungry, angry, lonely and tired?

- What helps keep you from getting hungry, angry, lonely and tired?

Healing For Terminal Uniqueness

Lesson 7

"We've got to either be up high or down low. We can't stand it in the middle. Feeling average doesn't do it for us. God forbid that somebody would tell us that we're average! 'Do anything to me, God, but don't make me average!' Even the word has just a horrible sound to it, you know? Or if we should want to be average, we want to be the most average - the number one average person of the universe. So, we've got to be number one, either at one end of the spectrum or the other. And whatever we use to get us to either end can become our allergy of the body [i.e. addiction]." – Mike O'Neal, *Power to Choose*

Have you ever found yourself doing unhealthy things or resisting help because you thought you were an exceptional case, that the rules that apply to most people don't apply to you? Read this Bible story about how God helped one man who had that kind of thinking, and see how your story is like his:

2 Kings 5:1-14—Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied... So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."

But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage.

Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'" So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

WHAT DO I HAVE IN COMMON WITH THIS MAN?

Naaman

Me

- Had a horrible, incurable disease
- A “chance” encounter with someone turned his life around
- Thought he deserved special treatment
- Was picky about the kind of help he accepted
- Didn’t have a good attitude about his recovery program at first
- Got the full benefit of God’s love and care in spite of his doubts and bad attitude

What do I lose out on by insisting I’m a special case?

What do I gain by humbling myself to admit I’m an ordinary human being?

**“One Day At A Time” “Just For Today”
-- Recovery Involves Learning Not To “Think Big”**

Lesson 8

“God grant me the SERENITY
To accept the things I cannot 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 hardships 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.”
-- Serenity Prayer, long version

Alcoholics Anonymous has always recommended taking recovery, and life in general, “one day at a time.” Some people don’t like that; they think we should be able to say things like, “My drinking days are all behind me. I’m fully recovered.” Look at some of the things the Bible has to say about how to live life:

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:34)

“Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.’ (James 4:13-15)

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” (Matthew 26:41)

“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!”
(1 Corinthians 10:12)

1. Has thinking in big blocks of time, like, “from now on” and “never again” been a problem in your recovery?
2. Have you been afraid that you’re not acceptable until you’re a finished product?

Has God’s grace and unconditional acceptance of you changed that fear?

3. Has it helped your recovery to look at yourself as a work in progress?

Staying Away From “Wet Places And Wet People”

Lesson 9

The things that have made our lives crazy – like drugs and alcohol – didn’t come out of nowhere. Usually we had to make the choice to go *someplace* (like a liquor store) and be with *somebody* (like a drinking buddy) to make it happen.

God is rescuing us from the insanity that used to run our lives. He wants us to live in his love and grace, and to experience the healing and peace that comes from living in his love. And we want to work with him to make it happen. That means doing what it takes to keep people, places and things from bringing the craziness back into our lives.

Matthew 18:7-9—“Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.”

Matthew 19:29—“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”

What are some of the challenges involved in staying away from “wet places and wet people”?

- These people may be family members and good friends
- You don’t want people to think you’re disrespecting them
- There are bars, liquor stores or dope houses near where you live
- You’re used to going to bars just to hang out and talk with people
- Alcohol shows up in a lot of social activities, like dances, bowling, etc.
- Getting blindsided (for instance, going to a church picnic and finding out there’s beer there)
- What else?

What can help you with these challenges?

- Finding sober people and places (AA, Bible study groups, etc.)
- Talking with God and with sponsors before going somewhere you're not sure of
- Being honest about your addiction as much as you can with as many people as you can trust with this information
- Actually giving up valuable friendships when you have to
- Not expecting everyone to understand and support you
- Finding stuff to do that feels as good and exciting, but won't involve drinking or getting high or other insanity
- What else?

“We Are Not Saints” – But Then Again, We Are!

Lesson 10

“Remember that we deal with alcohol – cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power- that one is God. May you find Him now!

“Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.

“Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we *understood Him*.
4. Made a fearless and thorough moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people, wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as *we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

“Many of us exclaimed, ‘What an order! I can't go through with it.’ Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.” – from *Alcoholics Anonymous*

Colossians 1:26-28 – ...the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

- Has “all or nothing” thinking kept the craziness going in your life?
- How has learning the fact that you are “perfect in Christ” changed the way you look at your imperfections?