

Your Spiritual Life in Recovery

Hey everyone, if you don't know me my name is Matt and I've been part of Regroup here for about 5 years. Today marks 1266 days all clear, which by my calculations is about 3.5 years all clear. The reason I share this is not to boast, as I am well aware that numbers mean nothing when it comes to recovering from addiction, but I mention these numbers so that you get an idea of where I am coming from as I jump into this morning's talk. As I was preparing for this talk, I felt the Lord really press into me the need to talk about our relationship with Him in our recovery journey. So, I've titled this talk "Your Spiritual Life in Recovery".

Hi, my name is Matt and I am a much-loved child of God recovering from sexual addiction on my journey to freedom by the help of God and my brothers here.

What do we mean when we speak these words? What are we really saying? What stands out when we say these words? Well, I can tell you that in the approximately 250ish times I've started off a Tuesday morning breakout group check in with those words, for a long time my mind did not catch the most important piece of that sentence: **by the help of God**. You see, for many years I did recovery on my own, alone, like many of you did too. Hiding in my room, my house, crying out to God and feeling like a hopeless failure, and never seeming to be able to progress into true freedom from sexual addiction because I was always all alone.

What I did not realize until I became a part of regroup was the fact that recovery is not possible without Jesus Christ being the focal point of my life. In Isaiah 61, we see this incredible prophecy of future deliverance that goes like this: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,

because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion, to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit." (Isaiah 61:1-3)

This prophecy proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah centuries before the New Testament begins paints this picture of a true freedom and liberation from bondage for ALL of the oppressed, the captives and the prisoners. Would we not fall into that category of prisoners and captives to our addiction? But get this: a few hundred years later, Jesus repeats these same words in Luke 4. Jesus just had come from being tempted by Satan himself for 40 days and nights, and stayed on the narrow path of righteousness. In Luke 4:16, he arrives at the synagogue which was the focal point of worship and teaching much like the churches we have today, he opens the scroll, and proclaims this: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." Then, he steps down and says this to all in verse 21: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Wow. I think we need to sit in that for a moment.

Why do I mention Isaiah 61 and Luke 4? Well, because the implications for today, for all those on this call and all those who battle sexual addiction in hopes to win this fight have this truth to hold on to from Luke 4:21 – "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus proclaims and declares freedom from oppression and releases you and I from the captivity of sexual addiction. This is one of the most significant pieces of scripture for us who are in the

midst of recovery from sexual addiction; we not only have Jesus walking beside us every day of our lives, but we have been declared FREE! So where do we go from here?

For a long time in my recovery journey, God took a backseat. Although I've grown up my whole life around church and reading my bible and maintaining some form of a relationship with God, I kept my relationship with God separate from my journey in recovery. Surprisingly enough, it is still easy to do even though scripture and God are focal points in almost every single one of the talks we hear on Tuesday mornings. I say this, because that is what I did for a long time. My thought process was that all I needed to do was not watch porn, not indulge in the PMO cycle, and tick the days off the calendar until I died. For the first 2 years of recovery, I did not connect my recovery life to my life and relationship to the Lord.

I am here to tell you that everything changes when your relationship with God and your spiritual life become your primary focuses in recovery. When you shift your focus away from "Don't watch porn, stay clean, don't watch porn, stay clean" and instead shift it towards pursuing God with your whole being, your life's priorities shift, and everything that the world offers just fades away. The thing is, there's a reason that the world becomes less appealing when you prioritize your relationship with God, and it's found in John 10:10. Jesus says right here that "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Does a life obsessed over just staying clean and going through the motions of recovery without any higher purpose sound like a full life? Of course not! The desire of everyone here in ReGroup and at DFR is to not only experience freedom but go BEYOND freedom into the full life that Jesus promises!

You see, when you focus on maintaining a healthy relationship with God, your life changes in many ways. All relationships in our lives, whether they be at work, with friends, with your family, or your spouse; all of these relationships benefit tenfold from a healthy spiritual life. It is through God that we will truly learn to live well and pure; it is through maintaining our relationship with God that we will learn to walk in freedom and be the men of God that we have been called to be. We have a higher calling! This higher calling is not just to be a good husband, or a good father, or a good friend; this higher calling is to be a bringer of the Kingdom of God on earth because all those around us will reap the benefits of God bringing us as individuals into the full life that is promised by Jesus in John 10:10!

So where do we go from here? What are some practical ways of stepping into a prioritization of our spiritual life? Here are some of my own suggestions:

- Learn to practice the spiritual disciplines. There is an excellent book called "Celebration of Discipline" By Richard Foster that I think all believers should read. This book provides different ways to put our spiritual lives into practice and is 10x worth more than the 25\$ price tag on amazon.
- Read your dang Bible! Consider adding a small daily reading to your everyday life. Growing in your relationship with God does not have to look like 4 hours spent in a prayer closet every day; you have to start with small steps.
- Listen/watch some sermons online! I am not a podcast guy per se, but if you have an office job I find that I can put on a sermon I find on youtube and listen to it while I go about my workday quite regularly.

- Pray with your family/spouse/others. There's a reason we check in with our breakout groups about how many mornings and evenings we prayed each week! Prayer is a practice that will put you on the right path.

Men, let's begin to enact true change in ourselves and in those around us. Prioritize your spiritual lives and I promise you that you will see God do amazing things in you and through you as you go through this Recovery journey.