



And it shall be said, [Do 3 things:]

1. “Build up, buildup,
2. prepare the way,
3. remove every obstruction from my people's way.”

¹⁵ For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
 “I dwell in the high and holy place,
 and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit,
 to revive the spirit of the lowly,
 and to revive the heart of the contrite.
 Isaiah 57:14-15

3 KINGDOM VIEWPOINTS: THEIR IMPACT ON RECOVERY OBJECTIVES

1. THE "THIS IS MY KINGDOM" VIEWPOINT

God is not a part of the person’s “world and life” view.

Absolute truth does not exist. Each person decides for themselves what is true. The Bible is at most a resource of limited value. Their free will to do what is right in their own eyes is their final authority.

Their standard of well-being is a matter of their own definition, and their primary concern is their own happiness. Recovery means to “return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength” theorizing that there is a better state than the one currently being experienced. However, what constitutes a “better state” is up to the individual.

The pathway to this puts great emphasis upon stopping or managing unhealthy behaviors, depending primarily on a combination of personal will power, self-control and on external influences to assist with compliance to personally defined patterns.

“You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes...” Deuteronomy 12:8

In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Judges 17:6, 21:25

⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes;
 fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
 and do not lean on your own understanding.

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him,
 and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:7 & 5-6

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice. Proverbs 12:15

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
 but the Lord weighs the spirit. Proverbs 16:2

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart. Proverbs 21:2

Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes?
 There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 26:12

Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight! Isaiah 5:21

The heart is deceitful above all things,
 and desperately sick;
 who can understand it? Jeremiah 17:9

2. THE "RELIGIOUS KINGDOM" VIEWPOINT

There is a belief in a divine “higher power” from which comes teachings about the meaning of life and what constitutes right living.

Correct living is dictated by how well one conforms to the teachings of what the group defines as acceptable ways of thinking and behaving. The more one practices these sets of rules and expectations, the more one can expect that life will go better for them. The result will be greater success in life, a more positive sense of being okay, fitting in better with the group, greater divine reward and avoidance of divine displeasure and punishment.

This condition focuses upon personal willpower, self-control, and the external pressure to conform to the religious community norms.

Recovery means to “return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength” as defined by the religious group.

²² So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ ...Acts 5:22-23a

¹ But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. 2 Timothy 3:1-7

They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed. Titus 1:16

3. THE "KINGDOM OF GOD" VIEWPOINT

Faith in the God of the Bible as the creator of the universe, and the teachings of the Bible as absolute truth, are foundational.

Understanding the full implications of bruises, brokenness and bondage is based in the belief that God's perfect creation was corrupted in every dimension by eating the forbidden fruit and this disobedience hurt all relationships including to God, self and others, leaving every human being to now struggle with a sinful nature.

Recovery is seen as a life-long process of being restored to a state of spiritual well-being based in becoming what God created humans to be like, being transformed from the inside out beginning at the deepest level of our being. This involves the power of the Holy Spirit using God's Word to change us along with using the people of God to support us to live God-honoring lives. We begin to grow in living lives of godliness (God likeness) that honors God and blesses others.

...What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,^[c]²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us... Acts 5:23b-27

²⁹Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Acts 5:29-31

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things

[including, in Him, the fulfillment of the 7 desires of every heart]

will be added to you. Matthew 6:33

THE PROGRESSION FROM MINIMIZING TO DELUSION (Believing lies as truth)

THE PROCESS BEGINS WITH MINIMIZING: 1. Reducing or keeping to a minimum. 2. Intentionally underestimate: play down, soft-pedal

DENIAL BUILDS UPON MINIMIZING: 1. A false system of beliefs that are not based in reality. 2. A self-protecting behavior, a defense mechanism, that keeps us from honestly facing the truth.

LEFT UNATTENDED MINIMIZING+DENIAL LEADS TO

DELUSION: A persistent false belief regarding the self, or persons or objects outside the self that is maintained despite indisputable evidence to the contrary.

WHAT DOES DENIAL AND MINIMIZING SOUND LIKE?

- 1. I don't really have any bruises, brokenness, and bondages that impacts my relationships to God, self or others.**
- 2. Compared to "so and so" I'm not so bad.**
- 3. I only do it once in a while.**
- 4. I could be doing something a lot worse.**
- 5. It's okay because I am not hurting anybody else.**
- 6. I can stop any time I want.**
- 7. I don't do it as much as I used to.**
- 8. I am just making bad choices.**
- 9. I can take care of this on my own.**
- 10. This is an isolated problem and once I get it under control, I will be fine.**
- 11. I really don't need God's help or anyone else's.**

THE OUTCOME OF DENIAL (Genesis 3 & 4)

1. Even when we know our true condition has been exposed, minimizing, denial and/or delusion will keep us from dealing with it in a God-inclusive way.

⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:7-8

"They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity [destructive habits]—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him." 2 Peter 2:19

- 2. Energy and time are lost by wasting it on hiding and covering-up.**
- 3. Problem solving and decision-making will deteriorate as the entire focus of energy becomes the maintenance of the denial.**

⁹But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹²The man said, "The

woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Genesis 3:9-13

4. Often complicated by fear, denial undermines healthy relationships between us, God and others, causing us to be more concerned of protecting our reputation than considering the consequences of blaming someone else.

⁶ The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?”⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”

(Review lesson 4 for more background about what led up to the following.)

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?”¹⁰ And the Lord said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” Genesis 4:8-12

5. Denial can lead us to extreme lengths to “cover our tracks”, that can become so delusional that we think we could even to outright lie to God without consequences, which only lengthens the pain and puts us on a course of wandering with no effective antidote to our condition.

GRACE, DENIAL, AND DROPPING THE MASK

www.rjgrune.com/blog/grace-denial-and-dropping-the-mask

Grace frees us to drop our masks.

Sin is a problem, but it's not a problem worth hiding. Grace frees us to come out of hiding and to be honest about our sin. Jesus frees us to drop our masks in order that we might be a community that says, "Me too." Good behavior is not what makes us belong, it's our collective need for and rescue by the Savior. We are all worse than we want to let on.

While denial might give us one more day of pretending there is no problem, it's only in the honesty of the problem that we experience the freedom of grace. Jesus rescues us from denial. It's in the work of Christ that we are assured that no depths of our depravity will make Jesus deny us.

Jesus is not just for the well behaved,
he's for the train-wrecks too.

I am convinced that the hardest language for some to speak is the truth and not live in the shadows of denial or blinding darkness of delusion but live in the penetrating light of god's truth.

³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness.³⁵ Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness.³⁶ If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.” Luke 11:34-35

¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.” John 3:19-21

¹¹ Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. Romans 13:11-14

⁸ [For] at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. Ephesians 5:8-11

**SO WHAT KIND OF KINGDOM
WILL YOU CHOOSE TO HAVE?**

- 1. A "THIS IS MY KINGDOM" where God is excluded or at least minimized, you are the sovereign, free to do whatever is right in your own eyes?**
- 2. A "RELIGIOUS KINGDOM" where you have an appearance of knowing God, but at best you are just trying to look the part of being good either to impress others and/or as a cover for hidden sins or believing you must be good in order for God to love and like you?**
- 3. A "KINGDOM OF GOD" where the Lord Jesus is King, you live in His light humbly trusting & obeying His Word so that you may please Him, experience His best for you and grow in being a blessing to others?**

AT LEAST ONE WAY THIS WEEK I WILL TRY TO PUT LESSON #5 INTO PRACTICE IS:

**Weekly Going Deeper Study Guide
FOR LESSON 5: MINIMIZING AND DENYING**

- Before beginning each day simply ask God to help you see things that He would have you to see.
- When finished, pray again asking for the faith and the courage to follow His lead in areas He speaks to you about.

DAY 1: 1. Without rushing, read through this week's lesson.
2. Paraphrase in 2 or 3 sentences what in your mind is the main message you get out of this lesson.

DAY 2: 1. Carefully read and meditate on each of the scriptures in this week's lesson.
2. Identify the one that stands out the most to you and rewrite it in your own words.

DAY 3: Pick out one verse or passage from this week's lesson (**How about the verse/passage from day #2**) that means the most to you or some other verse that comes to mind related to this week's lesson. Write it on a small card, and try to memorize it or at least read and meditate on it several times through the next days.

The verse(s) I chose: _____

DAY 4: 1. Reread the lesson.
2. Write down any things you see that God would want you to avoid, change, or give up.

DAY 5: 1. Reread the lesson.
2. Write down the most positive thing you see that you would really like to see become part of your life.

HERE IS WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE IN GROUP AS TO HOW PUTTING LESSON #5 INTO PRACTICE WEN