

Lenten Devotional 3

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Meditation Verses: [Psalm 147:1-6a](#)

Binding up the Broken Hearted

1. We admitted we were powerless over the alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

From the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

It is widely known that the *12-step program* has been successfully used by countless people who have suffered from addiction to alcohol and or/drugs. Those of us who have not experience this addiction cannot fully understand it. There are still people who think this is just a matter of making up your mind to stop and those who don't are weak-willed, selfish, or simply bad persons. Other people who have learned about addiction as a disease are no so judgmental but cannot really understand what drives the addict to stay on such a destructive path

Reaction to the current opiate crisis has rightfully focused on saving lives, making treatment available to all, and stepping up prevention efforts. Yet ech time I read that a young person has died, or has been sent to jail, or I see a young woman in the park waiting for the next man to come along, I think of the people we don't see. They are mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents and children of these folks. They are the people who live in constant state of fear that every time their loved one walks out the door, they may never see them alive again. They are the people who had to make that person leave to protect other family members. They are the people who remember who that person used to be, full of life of hope for the future.

Many parents of addicts suffer guilt over what they did wrong, why they didn't see this coming, and why they haven't been able to stop it. Their minds race with worry over where their child is, who they're with, and what are they doing to be able to buy the drugs. They keep explaining, arguing, threatening, but things just get worse. Other family relationships often suffer because of all the emphasis placed on the addict. I have heard people say, "My son said, 'Mom, I see why Dad acts crazy; he's an alcoholic. But why do you?'"

It is a frightening and lonely place to be. Like the addict, family members are stigmatized by many people in the community. These families are often hiding in plain sight. As Christians wondering what we can do to help in this crisis, we can and should become educated about addiction and about the feelings of the families. Let's replace judgement with love. Reach out to family members. Learn about resources in the community. Al-Anon and Nar-Anon family groups are available in most communities. These groups practice the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous because those who love the alcoholic/addict also need the tools and coping skills which to provide a path to healing.

Prayer:

*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;
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
And supremely happy with Him
Forever and ever in the next.*

Amen.

[Rev. Reinhold Niebuhr](#)

If sharing this devotional or citing, please reference: Miriam Cartner