

The mountain is great

If someone charged you with the most impossible task you could imagine, and you had no choice in the matter, you are the one, you can't get out of it, you have to get the task done what would you do?

Most likely after we got over the initial shock and accept the challenge, the most common expression would probably be "I have no idea where to start". Most of us feel this way when we are beginning our recovery or healing process; we have an insurmountable task set before us we have no idea where to start. We may know inwardly that we need to start something but we just keep putting it off. We've probably tried to handle our problems at times, without success and avoided or delayed dealing with them. There's usually always something we can use as an excuse to rationalize getting started.

- If I didn't live in that neighborhood
- My job is a bad atmosphere
- My schedule is hectic, I don't have time
- As soon as... _____ then I'm going to... _____

We may see our life in ruins and the possibility of any good coming out of it impossible. All our options may seem bad. We may feel there is no hope, and yet there's something in us that still wants to at least consider the possibility. That little bit of hope is all God needs to work with to get us on a pathway of a life of peace.

*Anyone who is among the living has hope--even a live dog is better off than a dead lion!
Ecclesiastes 9:4 NIV*

Sometimes part of the struggle with starting something is that we set our focus on the end result. This can cause freedom to seem a long way off, be discouraging and even depressing at times. **The sense of dread that can come with focusing on the end result can delay us starting the process.**

When I began recovery, it seemed unattainable in the first few days, weeks, and even months, that some day I would be able to say I had 9 or 10 years free from alcohol. Not to mention all the other things I had to deal with such as anger, pornography and sex, depression, spending, eating, smoking, and so on. The mountain of issues in my life seemed so great that it felt almost out of reach, but I knew I had to start somewhere. I had tried staying clean and could generally do it for sometimes, up to several months. But that was just it; it was me, just trying to not drink. I had never really "started" on a true healing process.

Other than God everything has a starting point. Everything we do in life has a starting point

- If you are doing a home project such as a remodel, building a deck, remodeling a kitchen or even a new house you have to start somewhere. You need a plan, you have to purchase the property, and you have to begin the excavation. You have to do all these things and more, if you expect to get to the end result.
- If you are taking a long trip and there is same sense of dread before you start, but you still have to drive the first mile, you need a map, you have to follow the route intended to get to your destination.
- If you're trying to lose weight, 10, 50 or even 100 pounds you have to start with the first pound. Athletes spend months and even years getting to the desired level of shape they need to be in, but they have to start somewhere.
- Christmas tree farms – 7 years is average time to grow a mature Christmas tree.

No matter what our stuff looks like or where we are going we can't get there if we don't choose to start the journey. **We have to start somewhere.**

Something's Missing – I'm hungry and thirsting for something.

"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." ~ C.S Lewis

"There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus" ~ Blaise Pascal

There's something inside all of us that's crying out, hungry and thirsting to be satisfied and we've probably spent years trying to satisfy it with _____. It's why we say we have an addictive nature, going from one thing to the next. It's the vacuum hungry to be filled, never being satisfied.

Most of our problems have some spiritual basis and we don't realize it. If you're not a Christian it's understandable because you really don't know.

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Cor. 4:4 NIV

A joyful heart is good medicine, But a broken spirit dries up the bones. Proverbs 17:22 NASB

*The spirit of a man can endure his sickness, But as for a broken spirit who can bear it?
Proverbs 18:14 NASB*

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. 13 Even in laughter the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief. Proverbs 14:12 – 13 NIV

We start by admitting – something's missing. And even though we admit this as a starting point, that still doesn't fill the emptiness or void. **We need something to fill the void that will last.**

Jesus is the only complete answer – He alone can satisfy

We usually try everything we can to deal with our issues on our own and save God for last. He's sort of our back up plan. In reality He should be our plan instead of the back up plan.

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. 3 Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. 4 See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples. 5 Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor." 6 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. 8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:1-9

Why did he say that his ways are not our ways and thoughts are not our thoughts? Our thoughts and ways have wrong motives and limited understanding. With all our wicked ways and the evil things in our lives, we expect to be punished by coming to him. However, he's saying that's not how he is, he freely pardons and has mercy. **This is our first big hurdle.** Understanding this is our starting point for true and lasting freedom.

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? Romans 2:4 NASB

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." John 4:13-15 NIV

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." 28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." 30 So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." 35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. John 6:26-37 NIV

What will my life look like if I start?

*You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. **13** Instead of the thorn bush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed." Isaiah 55:12-13*

Look at the contrast in change here from one extreme to the other. It will be the same in our lives and we will be signs that others will see and gain hope from.

Remember Jesus said he would give us peace and joy (John 14:27).

Where or how do I start?

Christ

Christ

Christ

- Start by having a willingness to be free, choosing Jesus, and believing you can be free
- Start believing in who I am in Christ
- Start investing in my new life – learning who Jesus is and what it means to walk with him.
- Start allowing God to direct your paths – Proverbs 3:5-6
- Start by letting others invest in your life, to come along side you – You can't do this alone. You can move forward on your own but we are designed to be connected.

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. **25** Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV*

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Ecclesiastes 4:10 NIV

- Start setting boundaries or guardrails in those areas you will be tempted. Something that will give red flags to steer you away from danger zones. We may be free from or struggles but the temptations may still be there.

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." 1 Corinthians 15:33 NIV

- Start...making no provision for the flesh

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. Romans 13:14 NASB

- Start living in truth, not deception

*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. **23** Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror **24** and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. **25** But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does. James 1:22-35 NIV*

It's like listening to great insights and teachings, reading scripture, hearing from God with some insight into our life and continuing to live in sinful behavior while saying...Yea, I've read that and heard that but I'm good. At some point we must start to respond to truth

- Start by pursuing answers to your questions
- Get over the fear that if no one else accepts me as a result of my transparency for my struggles that God accepts me and will never leave me or forsake me (Hebrews 13:5).
- Start by having a willingness to take whatever steps are necessary to allow God the opportunity to change your life.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9 NIV