

Lesson 14

READY

Principle 5: Voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask Him to remove my character defects.

*“Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires.”
(Matthew 5:6)*

Step 6: We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

*“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”
(James 4:10)*

Introduction

Congratulations! If you are ready for Principle 5, you have already taken some major steps on the road to recovery. You admitted you had a problem and were powerless over it; you came to believe that God could and would help you; you sought Him and turned your life and your will over to His care and direction; you wrote a spiritual inventory and shared that with God and another person. You’ve been busy! That’s a lot of work—hard work!

Maybe you’re thinking that it’s about time to take a breather and relax for a while. Think again!

In some recovery material, Step 6 (Principle 5) has been referred to as the step “that separates the men from the boys”! I would also like to add “separates the women from the girls”. So tonight we are going to answer the question, “What does it mean to be entirely READY?”

Ready

One of the reasons that Principle 5 “separates the men from the boys”—or the women from the girls, for that matter—is because it states that we are ready to “voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life.”

Most of us, if not all of us, would be very willing to have *certain* character defects go away. The sooner the better! But let's face it, some defects are hard to give up.

I'm an alcoholic, but there came a time in my life, a moment of clarity, when I knew I had hit bottom and was ready to stop drinking. But was I ready to stop lying? Stop being greedy? Ready to let go of resentments? I had been doing these things for a long time. Like weeds in a garden, they had developed roots!

We've formed our defects of character, our hang-ups, our habits over periods of ten, twenty, or thirty years. In this principle you and God—together—are going after these defects. *All* of them!

Tonight's acrostic will show you how to get READY to allow Him to do that.

Release control

Easy does it

Accept the change

Do replace your character defects

Yield to the growth

The first letter tonight stands for RELEASE control. That reminds me of a story I heard.

A man bumped into an old friend in a bar. He said, "I thought you gave up drinking. What's the matter, no self-control?" The friend replied, "Sure I've got plenty of self-control. I'm just too strong-willed to use it!"

God is very courteous and patient. In Principle 3, He didn't impose His will on you. He waited for you to invite Him in!

Now in Principle 5, you need to be "entirely ready," willing to let God into every area of your life. He won't come in and clean up an area unless you are willing to ask Him in.

It has been said that "willingness is the key that goes into the lock and opens the door that allows God to begin to remove your character defects." I love the way the psalmist invites God to work in his life: "Help me to do your will, for you are my God. Lead me in good paths, for your Spirit is good" (Psalm 143:10 TLB).

Simply put, the *R*—release control—is "Let go; let God!"

The *E* in ready stands for EASY does it. These principles and steps are not quick fixes! You need to allow time for God to work in your life.

This principle goes further than just helping you stop doing wrong. Remember, the sin is the *symptom* of the character defect.

Let me explain. The sin is like a weed in a garden: It will keep reappearing unless it is pulled out by the roots. And the roots are the actual defects of character that *cause* the particular sin. In my case, the major sin in my life was abusing alcohol. That was the act, the sin. The defect of character was my lack of any positive self-image. So, when I worked Principle 5, I went after the defect—my lack of a positive self-image—that caused me to sin by abusing alcohol.

That takes time, but God will do it. He promised! “Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him to help you do it and he will” (Psalm 37:5 TLB).

The next letter is A: ACCEPT the change.

Seeing the need for change and allowing the change to occur are two different things, and the space between recognition and willingness can be filled with fear. Besides that, fear can trigger our old dependency on self-control. But this principle will not work if we are still trapped by our self-will. We need to be ready to accept God’s help throughout the transition. The Bible makes this very clear in 1 Peter 1:13–14 (GNB): “So then, have your minds ready for action. Keep alert and set your hope completely on the blessing which will be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. Be obedient to God, and do not allow your lives to be shaped by those desires you had when you were still ignorant.”

As I said, all the steps you have taken on the road to recovery have helped you build the foundation for the “ultimate surrender” that is found in Principle 5.

James 4:10 says, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” All we need is the willingness to let God lead on us on our road to recovery.

Let’s move on to the *D* in ready, which is extremely important: DO replace your character defects.

You spent a lot of time with your old hang-ups, compulsions, obsessions, and habits. When God removes one, you need to replace it with something positive, such as recovery meetings, church activities, 12th-Step service, and volunteering! If you don’t, you open yourself for a negative character defect to return.

Listen to Matthew 12:43–45 (GNB): “When an evil spirit goes out of a person, it travels over dry country looking for a place to rest. If it can’t find one, it says to itself, ‘I will go back to my house.’ So it goes back and finds the house empty,... then it goes out and brings along seven other spirits even worse than itself, and they come to live there.”

I said that one of my major defects of character was a negative self-image, a nonexistent self-esteem, to be more exact. I wasted a lot of time in bars, attempting to drown it. When I started working the 12 Steps, I found I had lots of time on my hands. I tried to fill it by doing positive things that would build my self-esteem, rather than tear it down.

In addition to working my program and attending meeting after meeting, I fellowshiped and worked with “healthy” people. I volunteered. As the months passed, I got more involved at church, too. That’s when God called me to start to build Celebrate Recovery. I started going to seminary.

You don’t have to start a ministry, but you do have to replace your negative character defect with something positive. There are many, many opportunities to serve and get involved in at church.

The last letter in ready is the Y: YIELD to the growth.

At first, your old self-doubts and low self-image may tell you that you are not worthy of the growth and progress you are making in the program. Don’t listen! Yield to the growth. It is the Holy Spirit’s work within you.

“The person who has been born into God’s family does not make a practice of sinning, because now God’s life is in him; so he can’t keep on sinning, for this new life has been born into him and controls him—he has been *born again*” (1 John 3:9 TLB).

Wrap-up

The question is, “Are you entirely ready to voluntarily submit to any and all changes God wants to make in your life?”

If you are, then read the Principle 5a verses found in Participant’s Guide 3 on page 28, and pray the following prayer:

Dear God, thank You for taking me this far in my recovery journey. Now I pray for Your help in making me be entirely ready to change all my shortcomings. Give me the strength to You. Allow me to accept all the changes that You want to make in me. Help me be the person that You want me to be. In Your Son’s name I pray, AMEN.