

Reflection Questions

- What has been the reaction of your family to your recovery efforts?
- Is there a particular family that has shared hope with yours regarding the problem of addiction?
- How would you describe your role within your family system?

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Addiction does not happen in a vacuum and impacts much more than the individual engaging in dangerous compulsive behavior. Furthermore, addictive tendencies often span across generations within families. Therefore, the whole family system is affected and involved in the process of both addiction and recovery.

This idea does not need much explanation for those of us whom have struggled through the pain of addiction. Although different types of compulsive behavior stir up unique levels of mistrust and reaction among family members, fractured relationships seem to be a common theme among those seeking to take some personal action. We may believe that we are shielding others in the family, but the lingering effects of addiction and our unhealthy responses to them create confusion and fraction among others in the family.

This week's first reading is taken from the second chapter of Genesis where we find Adam in hopes of a suitable partner. God creates Eve from the rib of Adam, making her "bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh," describing the intimate union between husband and wife. "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh."

The fall of Adam and Eve, along with their eviction from the Garden of Eden, point toward the resounding effects of our behavior on our families. Shame, fear, and isolation immediately ensue. Adam blames his wife, Eve, who in turn sheds blame on the snake that tempted her. Years later, the first family to walk the earth still had plenty of problems, climaxing when their son Cain killed his brother Abel.

Frustration can come when we begin taking steps to change our own behavior and reactions. Out of mistrust and shattered hope for change, those around us are often skeptical when we begin recovery.

Some may comment that it's not our problem and the addict ought to deal with the problem themselves. Others in our families might be too eager to help and be involved in dictating how things are going to be fixed. Either way, we focus on our side of the street in order to move our families toward wholeness.

Unfortunately, not everyone comes around to embrace spiritual convictions at the same time. As we experience the love of God significantly changing our lives, we wish that others around us could find the same outlet. Sometimes we find ourselves taking a risk and implementing the principles of recovery into our relationships. We may even lose the fear of discussing Jesus openly with others close to us.

A Christ-centered family has the freedom to detach from the things of this world and cling to one another. At the same time, we must not allow the family to cave in on itself but rather share the fruit of our findings with others, even if we are still a work in progress.

In the chapter titled 'The Family Afterward', the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous explains:

"This painful past may be of infinite value to other families still struggling with their problem. We think each family which has been relieved owes something to those who have not, and when the occasion requires, each member of it should be only too willing to bring their former mistakes, no matter how grievous, out of their hiding places. Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worth while to us now."