

Reflection Questions

- What has been the reaction of your family to your recovery efforts?
 - How is this different or similar to their reaction to your behavior while active in your addiction?

- 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, patterns of alcoholism and other addictive tendencies often span across generations within families. Therefore, the whole family system is affected and involved in the process of addiction and recovery.

This idea does not need much explanation for those of us whom have struggled through the consequences of addiction. Although different types of compulsive behavior stir up unique levels of mistrust and reaction among our family members, fractured relationships seem to be a common theme among those seeking recovery for all types of addiction. We might think we are only hurting ourselves, but the lingering effects of our behavior, even if only done in isolation, change us and create confusion and fraction among those around us.

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 behavior. Out of legitimate mistrust and shattered hope for change, those around us are often skeptical when we begin recovery. For years, roles have been shifted to make up for our absence while active in our addictions.

Some may comment that our dark circumstances were of our own making and must be dealt with individually. Others in our families might be too eager to help and be involved in dictating our recovery while ignoring how addiction has impacted their behavior patterns. 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 discussion Jesus openly with others close to us.

A Christ-centered family has the freedom to detach from the things of this world (unhealthy attachments and addiction) 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."