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"Dealing with life..."

Maintaining our joy can be extremely difficult at times, absolutely impossible at others. I am alcoholic, prone to addictions of every sort. Why? Because at a young age I found that mind altering substances allowed me to deal with aspects of life I could not deal with. Fact of the matter is, addiction saved my life, but it also cost me my life, a paradox? Substances stopped working or chances are I would still be active in my addiction. But what about God? Oh, trust and believe God is in my contemplation at every step. I am now sober, drug free, and at times completely overwhelmed by life.

I have been incarcerated for well over twenty of my fifty-three years of life. In prison - I hate to sound negative - a person is surrounded on all sides by violent, predatory people looking for a way to get you. This may sound paranoid. It is not. If a person is just to survive he must learn to behave in a way that would not serve him well "outthere". In here if you allow yourself to be pushed around you will be consumed, or at least leave yourself open to that possibility. I have just discovered a few unpleasant facts about myself. I have learned a few ways of being that have allowed me to be somewhat successful here. I do not get pushed. Ever. Fact is if I am pushed I push back twice as hard without any regards for repercussions. Rage is a successful coping strategy in here. They will back off and you will be safe if you meet predators with Rage. That's just a fact here. Along with that is the more subtle forms of "pushing up on" that happens. I do not accept any of that either. I can (and often do!) grow "seven foot tall and five hundred pounds" in the blink of an eye. That skill has served me in here. But it is now time to transition to an "outthere" mentality.

So this morning in prayer I asked God what I need, because I had no clue. We had a good "talk". He helped me see what I absolutely most need in life in this season.

#1 I need the ability to NOT raise to a challenge. I need the ability to allow others to challenge me, to not allow it in, to turn away and accept the fact I do not need to accept the challenge. The very idea to me seems impossible. I've spent twenety plus years learning to attack. Not cool.

#2 I need the ability to accept others will not be open to change even when it is "a no brainer." Like my cellie who is not open to discuss cell cleanliness, courtesey or consideration. He actually thinks hes an enlightened being or something. I am powerless to change this, so when he said "I don't want to hear it" I used my learned way of dealing with it. And I won. but did I. Does a ragin A hole ever win? In here, yea, outhtere, not so much.

So, these are my needs, please pray for them.

Ok, another thing. I am spiritual. I spent two full hours in prayer, devotional readings, a yearly reading plan, contemplation & mediation this morning, which is somewhat normal for me. I do not talk about my spiritual pratices because thats all I did for years, is talk. I was a turn or burn Bible thumper. My own son, my first born, cut me off after my last season of trying to turn him to Christ. I deal with that pain, real pain, every moment of life. So I don't preach, or spout off about my walk with Christ anymore, I just try to be honest, authentic and to be, not say. It means I am not pretty (see above issues-amen.) but thats who I am.

So I get a letter from the man who Baptized me accusing me of "having not yet surrendered my heart to Jesus." becasue I guess I don't talk the talk anymore. That has me in a deep state of emotional pain. But what the hell can I do about it? I wiull not go into fullishness and bragging about what a great Christian I am, I am not always sure I am a good Christian. What I am sure of is I am fully and powerfully engaged in becoming the best version of me, with Gods constant help and guidance. I started to say 'and if thats not good enough for a person, I don't care". But I do, so I hurt.

I have a cellie '... is friends with a supervisor at my job. He disagrees with my stance that men married to men should not serve as inmate leaders in our Church. (he is a hindi/christian/buddist or something) So he goes and tells my supervior that I want gays kicked out of church, am a homophobe, and hater.

I can not even begin to figure out how to deal with this! It may well cost me my promotion to a top pay slot.

I know, snivel, snivel :)

It recently came to me, this is what is meant by the term "facing life on lifes terms". Real, normal people deal with this all the time, its everyday stuff to people who have not spent their lifes incarcerated or addicted! Oh OH. My way of coping has been to get high or get a hammer, niether of which I now realize is a vaible option. :)

But, I found this amazingly empowering secret. Even with all this crude in life, if I am sober, constantly on gaurd against open sin, or rebellion to His percepts in life, even in the midst of what seems at times "loosing" I can still have joy. I am not sure how my efforts to unlearn what I need to unlearn will turn out, but I do beleive in Rm. 8:28, so I will keep on keeping on. I'll not try to hide my struggles or wa~~r~~e the mask others want to see, and I will rejoice in this wonderfully complicated journey of growth he has me on, do my best, feel my pain, make my apologizes, love my loves and pray my prayers.

Life IS good!

amen

Love & Prayers,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a large, cursive 'R'.

robert R.

aka Russ