

Hooked On Recovery

January 21, 2005

Remodeling

A few years ago, a few weeks before the holidays Sandy asked me if I would paint the dining room. A reasonable request since we wanted to have family and friends over and our dining room needed some sprucing up. Our house was built in 1919 and the people we bought the house from had lived in it for 60 years! I think the wallpaper in the dining room had been hung when they first moved in.

I gathered my painting gear, moved furniture out and looked at the ceiling. We had these old (probably asbestos) ceiling tiles and I decided to see what was under one of them. Major error. Major. I took one down and the plaster above it came tumbling down into my face and all over the floor. So... that led to taking all the ceiling tiles down, which led to taking two layers of plaster off the ceiling, which led to knocking the wall down between the kitchen and the dining room, which led to ripping out the kitchen cabinets, which led to hauling out all the appliances, which led to gutting the entire area. After two days of demolition and hauling debris out, we were left blinking in the dust, wondering what we had just done. Two months later working many late nights, two days before Christmas, we had a new kitchen and dining area. It seems that a lot of 'simple' projects end up in major home renovation. I heard one story where a guy had to redo the entire kitchen to match his wife's new teapot.

Recently, with the addition of child number four into our home, we had to make some more changes. We expanded our bathroom, turned the back porch into office space, upgraded our washer/dryer and carpeted some rooms. I haven't decided yet if home equity loans are a good thing or a bad thing. And thanks to Trading Spaces, I personally have ventured into the world of Venetian Plaster having plastered our entire foyer, upstairs and downstairs. Plastering is cool, I like it. Better than getting plastered. I'd also like to redo the TV room. I'm talking all wood paneling, wood ceiling, thick drapes, leather recliners and a door that locks on the inside. Turn it into a man cave. To complete the vision, we're talking a 60 inch flat screen HDTV with surround sound. Yeah, Sandy's not buying it either.

As I was seeking inspiration for this piece, I sensed the words, "Look around." I was in our new bathroom at the time. On a side note: Sandy worries when I get inspired in the bathroom. And then it came to me. The Bible refers to our bodies as temples. Now let's push that concept to compare our souls to our homes. In active addiction our souls, or homes, have no electricity. No power. When we first step into recovery, our homes regain power. We flip the light switch on, stand blinking in the bright light and take a good hard look around. "So, this is where I have been living." "I had no idea it looked like this." "It was always so dark." As our eyes get accustomed to the light and we begin to assess the condition of our home, we're left with two choices; turn the light back off (and many of us do) or begin remodeling and getting our house back in order. Sometimes we look out the window at other homes, get discouraged and then turn our light back off. However, I believe in keeping the light on. I believe that with a lot of hard work, and taking each project step-by-step (no groans please), my home will end up more than livable. It will end up comfortable. It will end up beautiful.

Hey, people in recovery are the original examples of Extreme Makeover Home Edition.

“We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order”. – Alcoholics Anonymous, pg. 164.

Hooked on Recovery is a biweekly message from CCAR Executive Director Phillip Valentine, person in recovery since 12/28/87, devoted husband, now a father of five and just another surf fisherman. These thoughts, views and opinions reflect on his personal recovery and are not meant in any way to speak for the entire recovery community. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him at phillip@ccar.us. Visit the website at www.ccar.us to read the entire series.