

# *Life With God In Recovery*

## RELAPSE PREVENTION



## Book One

### LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY RELAPSE PREVENTION

BOOK ONE

#### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Evelyn Leeburn, Elsie Quick

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Scriptures taken from:

Holy Bible, Contemporary English Version (CEV), Copyright © 1995 by American Bible Society  
Holy Bible, Easy-to-Read Version (ERV), Copyright © 2006 by Bible League International  
Good News Translation (GNT), Copyright © 1992 by American Bible Society  
The Living Bible copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.  
New American Standard Bible (NASB), Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation  
New King James Version® (NKJV), Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.  
Holy Bible, New International Version®(NIV),\* Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.\* Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.  
New International Reader's Version (NIRV), Copyright © 1995, 1996, 1998, 2014 by Biblica, Inc.\*. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.  
Holy Bible. New Living Translation (NLT) copyright© 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.  
New Life Version (NLV), Copyright © 1969, 2003 by Barbour Publishing, Inc.  
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.  
The Message (MSG), Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson

#### PHOTOS

Cathie Bolan © 2020 Cathie Bolan  
Elsie Quick, Evelyn Leeburn, Linnea Groom © 2020 Partners in Hope Recovery Society

© 2020 Partners in Hope Recovery Society. All rights reserved. Printed in Canada.

Partners in Hope Recovery Society  
1906 – 615 Belmont Street, New Westminster, BC V3M 6A1  
Email: [pihrecovery@gmail.com](mailto:pihrecovery@gmail.com)  
Phone or text: 604-215-0335  
Website: [www.partnersinhope.ca](http://www.partnersinhope.ca)

## LIVING ONE DAY AT A TIME

A key principle we often hear in recovery circles is "living one day at a time." In many meetings someone will read "Just for Today" - a list of positive actions that we may give focused attention to each day. When we pray the full version of the Serenity Prayer we quickly come to a line that says, "living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time." God's Word encourages us to continuously surrender our will and our life into His care. As we take time to reflect on our on-going life in recovery, the Lord will give us knowledge and understanding to sort out any problems that arise. He will also give us the strength to endure as we follow through with healthy choices.

***Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you.*** (Psalm 37:3-5 NLT)

Over and over again we hear doctors encouraging us to exercise every day. Simply walking 25 minutes a day has been shown to keep us fit and add years to our lives. This is useful advice for our physical well-being only if we put it into practice. In our life with God in recovery we need to develop healthy spiritual muscles for our spiritual well-being. "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it" is one spiritual exercise that many have found to be beneficial. We need to let the principles of God's Word, as recorded in the Bible, challenge, stretch, and develop us as we draw close to Him and live in the light of His presence.

***Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.*** (2 Timothy 3:17 MSG)

As we learn to live one day at a time, it's essential that we come to God with a willingness and intention to surrender our will and our life into His care. What does that mean? What does this way of living daily surrendered to God look like? What steps can we take to implement it in our daily lives?

## RELAPSE PREVENTION BOOK ONE

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

	CONTENTS
4	Living One Day At A Time
8	Overcoming A Victim Mentality
12	Moving From Thriving To Surviving
16	Dealing Well With Stress
20	Establishing Healthy Boundaries
24	Victory Over Depression
28	Why Do I Feel Guilty?
32	Integrity
36	Denial
40	Discernment
44	Dealing With Low Self-Esteem
48	Some Areas of Addiction and Dependency
49	Just For Today
50	How to Enjoy New Life With God In Recovery

1. ONGOING FORGIVENESS: It's important to daily confess our sins and receive God's mercy, forgiveness, and fresh cleansing.

***But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.*** (1 John 1:7 NLT)

2. DAILY GETTING TO KNOW GOD'S WILL: What are we doing from day to day, even moment by moment, to train ourselves to listen and respond to the Word of God? What tools are we using to help us learn and grow? In what ways are we challenging ourselves to do what needs to be done, particularly when we don't feel like doing it?

***The Son can't independently do a thing, only what he sees the Father doing. What the Father does, the Son does. The Father loves the Son and includes him in everything he is doing. "I can't do a solitary thing on my own: I listen, then I decide. You can trust my decision because I'm not out to get my own way but only to carry out orders.*** (John 5:19-20, 30 MSG)

3. MAKING GOD'S AGENDA FOR ME, MY AGENDA FOR TODAY: Our new life in recovery may differ from the way of life we see many people in our society exhibit. Some people make power, prestige, or money their idol. In the past some of us made sex, drugs, and alcohol our idols. Today, all of us are invited to make God's priorities our priorities, and in so doing gain a life that is good, pleasing, and perfect.

***Tell those rich in this world's wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage—to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they'll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life.*** (1 Timothy 6:17-19 MSG)

One of the greatest gifts of this new life in recovery is that having had a spiritual awakening we can now share this message of hope with others who "silently suffer" in what appears to be reasonably good life circumstances. Amazing but true, living one day at a time in relationship

with God, is the only lifestyle that results in a truly good, pleasing and perfect life for all – the wealthy and the poor.

4. GIVE UP WORRY AND REGRET: It is easy to slide into worrying about tomorrow, dwelling on the "what ifs" and the "if onlys" of our life. It is tempting to deny present happenings and try to escape reality. This is part of the insanity of an addict's way of life. Each day brings with it a host of things which we personally cannot change. We need to come to terms with the limitations of our humanity. We are human beings confined within the slice of time we call today. We have some training, certain talents, and a few resources. God has promised to take care of all our todays and tomorrows. We simply need to live one day at a time under His guidance and care to ensure it all works well, according to His plan.

Jesus said, ***"Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?... But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things."*** (Matthew 6:25, 33-34 NKJV)

Each day will bring us something in which we can find joy because God has promised to give us power and strength to handle any difficulties we may encounter. Since God's grace comes in daily doses, we can be sure of this, "one day at a time" is the best way to face life.

***Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*** (Lamentations 3:22-23 NIV)

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. How am I welcoming God's word to shape my life today?
2. What challenges me as I seek to live "one day at a time" – the past, the future, loneliness, daily needs, regrets, worries, resentments?
3. What helps me refocus and practice living "one day at a time, one moment at a time?"

Heavenly Father, Your Word tells me not to worry about my life or the things of tomorrow. Forgive me for my lack of confidence in Your daily guidance and Your ability to work everything into something good. Please help me to deal with those things I can, and make changes where necessary. Help me to leave those things I cannot change in Your care. I choose to seek first your kingdom and your righteousness as I live one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time. Thank You for Your great mercy which is new every morning and for being faithful to me even when I have not been faithful to You. You truly are an amazing God. AMEN

## OVERCOMING A VICTIM MENTALITY

In our society, and particularly in the world of addiction and recovery, a victim mentality is quite widespread. People with a victim mentality struggle with emotional intimacy in relationships, and often have no idea why. They repeatedly sabotage life and relationships by their way of thinking and believing.

God created each person with a need for intimacy, both with Himself and with others. The life God wants us to recover includes the ability to overcome a victim mentality.

The Bible tells us: ***whatever is in your heart determines what you say.*** (Matt. 12:34b NLT)

A victim is a person who has been abused or hurt or oppressed, and was without power to change their circumstances. They developed a way of thinking and interpreting life that comes from unresolved offences, grief, and bitterness. Even though physically the abuse is no longer happening, in their minds they live and behave as though it is. As a result, the person now believes that the experiences they suffered left them so marred that they are unable to take responsibility for their life. They blame others for what they are experiencing today.

God says, ***I have swept away your sins like a cloud. I have scattered your offenses like the morning mist. Oh, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free.*** (Isaiah 44:22 NLT)

Instead of embracing the solutions God is offering, victims remain obsessed with the pain and injustice of the past. Some isolate and live behind high walls. They complain and blame. Others live with frustration and are prone to get angry. Some bury their feelings, opinions and desires. Some allow others to control them and tell them what to do, believing they are unable to break free. Some believe that others "make them" live as powerless victims in their current circumstances and their life can only improve if someone else fixes what is wrong. They expect others to rescue them and take on their responsibilities.

How does one with a victim mentality break free? By asking God to help us let go of the fear and insanity that resulted from events in the past, and by embracing healing and restoration through the renewing of our minds to the truth of God's word.

***Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep." No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*** (Romans 8:35-37 NLT)

These verses name several difficult, challenging, and very painful situations. While our experience of pain may not be specifically mentioned here, the intent of the writer is to tell us that whatever injustice and trouble we have suffered, God's word applies in our situation. As amazing as it sounds, God promises us that we will not just survive and cope with what life has handed us, but we will thrive and live with great victory. Our future success has not been stolen by the events of our past. God offers us abundant life today and Jesus has made a way for us to have that life. No one and no circumstance can rob us of that life. Our lives and well-being come from God, not another person.

Jesus suffered and died on the cross to take away our sin and enable us to have life with God forever – a life that is full and satisfying. Jesus dealt with all sin and injustice on the cross. Jesus assumed all the evil and victimization of sin and injustice, so you and I could be free. His death in our place covers sins done by us and injustices done to us.

***Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*** (Isaiah 53:4-6 NIV)

God's way for us is to live in love and not in fear and God asks us today, "Do you want to get well?" Implied in this question are two promises:

1) I know all about your trouble but my love in you can overcome it. ***In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*** (John 16:33 NIV).

2) If you will trust me with your life, I can make something good out of everything that has happened. ***And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*** (Romans 8:28 NLT)

What's my part in overcoming a victim mentality?

- 1) Held safe in God's powerful protection I will take responsibility for my life today
- 2) I will quit blaming others for not protecting me or meeting my needs.
- 3) I will work with God to resolve my grief, anger, resentment, and roots of bitterness and trust God to forgive and heal me.
- 4) I will renew my mind and describe myself as God sees me: I am an overcomer, not a victim.

### Questions for Reflection and Group Discussion

1. In what ways do I recognize a victim mentality in me?
2. What does Jesus' death on the cross have to do with the injustices I've experienced and their impact on my life?
3. How is God's unfailing love changing me from being a victim to an overcomer?
4. In what areas do I still need to surrender to God's truth?
5. What step can I take today to make progress in letting go of a victim mentality?

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your word. I ask forgiveness for the times I have rejected Your word in favour of my own self-pity. Help me to reject my stinking thinking and acknowledge that Your word is truth. Please comfort me as I seek to overcome my victim mentality by the renewing of my mind. I want my life to reflect Your love and saving grace. I ask that You work everything together for my good and Your glory. Thank You for Your love and care for me. AMEN

### Moving from Surviving to Thriving

All our lives God has pursued us with His love but we were often too busy living life our way to stop and listen. Sometimes it's only after a season of dysfunctional lifestyle and addiction that we are willing to listen and respond to the plan God has for us. Because of our slowness to respond to God's direction we often spend large chunks of time surviving when we could in fact be thriving. To transition to a meaningful life requires the discarding of our self-centered ways and welcoming the path God wants to lead us into. As we intentionally seek God's will for our lives, we will find that it is God's desire that we thrive and not simply survive in recovery.

***His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*** (2 Peter 1:3-4 NIV)

As we allow God to do in us what we cannot do for ourselves, a new and pleasing way of life will come about. We can fill our hearts and minds with the hope of this new way of life, even though it may currently seem impossible to achieve. God will make everything beautiful in our lives as we continue to seek Him in all our ways.

***He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*** (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV)

Humans beings are unique from everything else God has created because they have a spirit. God wants to bring our spirit to life so that every other part of our human experience is authentic and blessed. It's in our spirit that we experience God's goodness, and find safety, security, love and caring. Out of that place of being loved and protected by God, we make life-giving choices that result in healthy behaviour. God is prepared to come and give life to our spirit today if we will simply invite Him in and let Him show us this new way of living. This is what we were created for.

***For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.*** (Romans 8:15-17 NKJV)

One of the slogans we hear often in recovery is, “progress not perfection”. Learning to be grateful and appreciate all we have is one area where we can practice this principle. There will always be some things that are right and good in our lives and some things that are yet to be sorted out. Some days we will wake up feeling energetic and other days we’ll wish we could just pull the blanket over our heads and turn over. Things aren’t so different around us each day but what makes life full and rich is that we are conscious of the grace that God is pouring into our lives day by day. It’s a good practice to intentionally record in a journal or speak out our gratitude for life’s daily blessings. This discipline will help us see our life in recovery as thriving, rather than just surviving.

***Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever. The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?*** (Psalm 118:1,6 NLT)

Someone has said, “You look the best when you wear your smile. There is no beauty like the one that comes from inside you.” Mother Teresa got it right when she said, “A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love.” Joy is a gift from God. Joy results when we surrender every part of our lives to God and entrust every detail to His care. Joy bursts forth when we know we have no confidence in ourselves or anything else, but wholeheartedly trust in the Lord. Joy is a sign that a person is thriving rather than just surviving.

***Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!*** (Psalm 34:8 NLT)

It’s up to us to call on God when we are in trouble so that we can move beyond surviving to thriving. Even in times of illness or hardship, God is our refuge and strength. Giving up on God should never be an option. God invites us to live in dependence on Him, resting in the ultimate security that He provides. People are joyful when they follow the

instructions of the Lord and live a life of integrity. There is nothing to dull their spirit when their faith is in God alone.

We often get discouraged when things do not work out as we think they should. We find ourselves unable to communicate with God, to hang in there, to believe God, to trust, to hope, to grow. At times like these we need to stop what we are doing and ask ourselves, “How is God teaching me to thrive in this situation? When we acknowledge that God is still teaching us, we will be assured that He is at work in the thing that concerns us, and our peace will return.

***God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.*** (Psalm 46:1,10 NLT)

In order to move from a lifestyle of surviving to one of thriving we must empty ourselves of anything that keeps us from living totally dependent on God. We have to peel back the layers that might include denial, deceit, unfaithfulness, lying, cheating, stealing, anger, impatience, hate, lust, and self-pity. True joy and satisfaction comes when God looks down and says: “Well done, my child. You have not just survived but you have thrived.”

### **Questions For Discussion and Reflection**

1. In my daily life am I thriving or just surviving?
2. What difference does the word of God or the advice of caring friends make in my thriving?
3. How am I practicing the principle of being grateful?
4. Do I make space for joy even in imperfect circumstances?
5. What do I need to let go of so that I may thrive with God regardless of my circumstances?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for inviting me to live beyond just surviving. You want me to thrive and be filled with joy and purpose. Forgive me for the times I've stepped away from Your truth about a situation and followed my own understanding. I turn to you again and acknowledge that You are the source of life. You are my hope. You know the ongoing direction I need for a rich and productive life. I choose to listen to You. I choose to follow your principles. I turn my will and my life over to Your care and ask You to teach me how to live life to the full. Give me the desire to welcome success in my life. I am thankful for the love You lavish on me and for the fact that You call me Your child. AMEN

## **DEALING WELL WITH STRESS**

Stress has become a universal problem and many medical professionals consider it an underlying cause of numerous health problems. In our personal lives, pressure and stress come from a variety of reasons including, family trouble, financial difficulty, job pressure, health issues and many other factors.

***Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*** (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NIV)

There are lists that compile stress factors and assign points to each one. For example, the most stressful events are: death of a spouse, divorce, marital separation, a jail term, death of a close family member, illness or injury. These events cause legitimate stress and sometimes require lifestyle changes to be dealt with even while we are still in emotional pain and feeling overwhelmed. These are not times to isolate! These are times to rely on God's promises and seek comfort and help from family members and friends.

***Don't panic. I'm with you. There's no need to fear for I'm your God. I'll give you strength. I'll help you. I'll hold you steady, keep a firm grip on you.*** (Isaiah 41:10 MSG)

Some of us obsess over past events which cannot be changed and allow those events to control our present and future wellbeing. In our minds we endlessly replay the unkind words others have said to us or envision painful incidents which caused us shame. Sometimes we are concerned about future events which we feel unable to cope with. Sometimes we are fearful about meeting our own physical needs, or the needs of our family, and feel overwhelmed by our responsibilities.

God says: ***"Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you. I've called your name. You're mine. When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you. When you're in rough waters, you will not go down. When you're between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end—Because I am God, your personal God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*** (Isaiah 43:1-3 MSG)



There are many reactions to everyday stresses. Some people try to ignore or flee from the problem, in the hope that the irritation will go away. Some internalize the pressure, seeking to suppress it. However, the compression usually spills over into some other area of life. Others crumble emotionally, giving way to despair and depression or addictive behaviour.

One of the best responses we can have to stress is to pray. This one seems obvious, but sometimes it's harder than it seems. Praying requires us to focus on who God is and what God is doing rather than obsessing on the problem.

***Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.*** (Philippians 4:6 NLT)

God will never permit circumstances to break or shatter us. He knows our frame and will not allow us to be overloaded beyond what we can bear. Rather, He seeks to use our stressful times as opportunities for us to gain His perspective, lean on His strength, and develop perseverance with which to endure the ups and downs of life. God may not change the circumstance that is pressing on us. He may not remove the person who seriously bothers us. He may not heal the condition that daily grates away at our body and soul. But God will dramatically alter our emotions and responses as we turn to Him instead of running or exploding in anger. As we trust in God's power and wisdom to support us and show us appropriate solutions, we gain new spiritual maturity and hardness of spirit.

***When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.*** (Psalm 56:3 NIV)

There are a number of practical things we can do to help minimize stress.

1. *Admit we're stressed.* As long as we tell ourselves we don't have a problem we're not positioning ourselves to seek a solution.
2. *Make a list of what's causing stress right now.* There are some things that cannot be changed and others that can be dealt with. We need to sort those out, and taking action where possible or necessary.
3. *Review our list with someone we trust.* If it's stress from being too busy, we need to seek help in setting priorities. If there are situations that require boundaries or some other action, a wise person can help us sort things out.
4. *Ask for help from God, family, friends, or co-workers.* We have a limited amount of strength and wisdom. As we do all that we can, God will give, and bring alongside us, support and help.

5. *Think about our use of time.* Maybe procrastination or poor organization is the root of the problem. We can start using a diary or daytimer or talk to a counselor or organized friend for tips on how to use our time better.

When we are under stress from an event in our lives, we need to take a more focused approach to all that is going on. We need to be careful not to project into the situation things that don't exist, but are formed by our worries or fears. We need to look realistically at the whole situation and not let the problem become bigger than it actually is. We need to let go of past events and hurts and accept God's love and grace as He heals our wounds. When old wounds are healed, we will only have to deal with today's happenings. God knows the end from the beginning and has promised to provide everything we need for the challenges we incur in life.

***The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. I say to myself, "The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!"*** (Lamentations 3:22-24 NLT)

The key to handling stress is to lean on God's power at the initial stage of any problem. God's strength comes as He stabilizes our emotions with His peace, infuses our hearts with His joy, and provides us with His all-sufficient wisdom to deal with any hardship in life. Even in our worst day of trouble we will get through, find the rest we need, and face each new day with fresh resources. "This too shall pass" is a helpful principle to remember. Good days will return!

***The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.*** (Isaiah 40:28-30 NLT)

### **Questions For Reflection and Discussion**

1. In which areas of my life am I particularly vulnerable to allowing stress and anxiety to control my decisions and actions?
2. What strategies am I willing to implement to help me deal with stress in a healthy way?

Heavenly Father, When I feel overwhelmed and life has lots of stress, help me to first seek Your perspective on the troubling issues. Help me to be obedient to what You say and rest in Your promise to make a way forward, even when I believe there is no possible way. Lord, I choose to honour You in everything I say and do. Open my heart and mind to receive Your wisdom, comfort and strength. I am forever grateful that You love and care for me and are always there to help in times of trouble and stress. Amen.

## **ESTABLISHING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES**

***But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head.*** (Psalm 3:3 NIV)

People who struggle with addiction are often those who have been exposed to life altering situations. The events may have occurred when they were children and unable to correctly process or reason why these events happened. Due to the impact of these situations their boundaries were weakened, and they learned a pattern of unhealthy responses when faced with circumstances in life that were similar. Family breakdown, abuse, discrimination, and bullying are examples of situations to which many of us have been exposed. We were forced by others to do things which did not contribute to our own well-being. We simply learned to cope in whatever way we could.

Our Heavenly Father is aware of all the events of our lives and when we enter a relationship with Him through Jesus, He will help us rebuild safe and healthy boundaries. As we receive healing for past hurts, and are enabled to forgive our offenders, we will experience the fullness of life God created us to live.

***A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.*** (Proverbs 25:28 NLT)

Boundaries help us live respectfully and safely in our relationships. When we define, and uphold personal boundaries, they contribute to our peace of mind. They eliminate resentful feelings which form when we feel compelled to do things that we do not want to do, and which do not contribute to our well-being. How do we follow God's way in the freedom which boundaries provide?

***Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*** (Psalm 1:1-2 NIV)

Two actions that will contribute to a healthy lifestyle are: 1) setting personal limits; and, 2) setting limits on those we are in contact with. Both are equally important for a healthy and happy life.

**Personal Boundaries:** As we come into a personal relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, we discover satisfying living in a surprising form – life within limits. Imagine how our road systems would be without rules for driving. It would be utter chaos for road users. So it is with personal boundaries. Our lives will be chaotic and at risk if we do not follow God's rules. Setting and living within personal limits is essential in helping us build our identity as beloved sons and daughters of God.

Following are some methods we can use to establish or strengthen our personal boundaries:

- ✚ We say “Yes” to those behaviours that God says bring love, joy and peace to our lives.
- ✚ We say “No” to negative behaviours that rob us of the satisfying life that God offers us.
- ✚ We rid ourselves of destructive resentment and buried anger. We find peace through forgiveness and letting go.
- ✚ We say “No” to good desires which are just not wise to pursue at this time.
- ✚ We determine to wait for healthy alternatives instead of gratifying our momentary desires with damaging sinful activities.

***Live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit you are free.*** (Galatians 5:16-18 NLT)

**Boundaries With Others:** We cannot actually set limits on others but what we can do is set limits on our exposure to people who are behaving poorly. We can't change others or make them behave right. We need to let people be who they are but separate ourselves from them when their behaviour is destructive and negatively impacts us. It's beneficial for all concerned when we do this. We are not being unloving. Separating

ourselves from damaging events protects love, because we are taking a stand against those things that destroy love.

***Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.’ This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself.’ These two commands are pegs; everything in God’s Law and the Prophets hangs from them.”*** (Matthew 22:37-40 MSG)

How do we set healthy limits and separate ourselves from harmful events? We do whatever it takes to honour God in each situation and choose to wholeheartedly follow His ways. We purposefully choose to live in an atmosphere of safety, blessing, and encouragement. Following are some actions we can take that will help us establish healthy boundaries with others:

- ✚ We name behaviours that are safe and unsafe for us, so our expectations are known to others.
- ✚ We take responsibility for our part in creating a safe and respectful environment.
- ✚ When words become heated or harsh we stop and step away until emotions calm down and thoughts become clear.
- ✚ We take time out to seek God's guidance and ask for counsel from a trustworthy person.
- ✚ We seek forgiveness for our role in any problem.
- ✚ We learn how to communicate and act with love and respect and ask for the same in return.
- ✚ We refuse to gossip and slander no matter how difficult the situation is, and instead entrust the person with whom we are having difficulty to God.

***Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*** (Luke 6:28 NIV)

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Which of these two are harder for me, setting boundaries for myself or setting boundaries for those whose behaviour may impact me?
2. How does God help in my boundary setting?
3. Where am I doing well and where do I need to grow in living with healthy boundaries?

Loving God, I come before You today and present my life, past, present, and future. I desire to live in the safety of Your love. Please bring healing to those wounds in my past that caused my boundaries to be broken down. Help me to forgive those who hurt me either knowingly or unknowingly. I am thankful that your grace is greater than anything that has wounded me. Give me the desire, the courage, and the strength to follow Your principles in all my affairs. Open my heart to receive Your love so that I may love others as You love me. Give me the wisdom to establish healthy boundaries in all my relationships. I am forever grateful that You love and care for me. Amen

## **VICTORY OVER DEPRESSION**

***He led them from the darkness and deepest gloom; he snapped their chains.*** (Psalm 107:14 NLT)

We all experience times in life when we are feeling down. Under perfectly normal circumstances we can get tired and emotionally drained. Satan will try to use anything for evil against us, including normal “down times”, which are probably indicating the need for rest and renewal. This is particularly true for individuals in early recovery. At low times, and any time, in whatever way he can, Satan seeks to fill our minds with negative thoughts and emotions. He is a discourager. He is the giver of despair and he wants to pull us down and keep us down. But Jesus is our encourager. He knows our weaknesses. He gives strength to the weary. Our lives are guided into righteousness, peace, and joy through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus came to earth that we might have life and have it to the full.

***The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.....you, O Lord, are a shield around me; you are my glory, the one who holds my head high.*** (John 10:10; Psalm 3:3 NLT)

Everyone experiences times of frustration and distress when life doesn't go according to our plans. When hopes and dreams are unfulfilled it is normal to feel disappointed. Memories and all sorts of things may make us feel sad but, for our own well-being, we must not STAY sad. If we do, Satan will take advantage of the open door and push his way into our lives so our sadness becomes discouragement, then disillusionment, then depression, then we end up in despair. God knows that we will experience periods of difficulty from time to time and, in His tenderness and kindness, He invites us to come to the light of His love. As we draw near to Him, we will experience joy as surely as night becomes day by the light of the dawn.

***Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.....The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.*** (Psalm 30:5b; Isaiah 9:2 NLT)

When we do an initial set of steps we often feel overwhelmed with everything we are learning about ourselves. Many people become

depressed because they determine they can't face the truth. However, the God who came to fill our lives with joy is the same God who came to reveal truth. God is a tender loving God who promises to **"heal the broken hearted and bind up their wounds."** (Psalm 147:3 NIV) As we continue to turn our will and our lives over to God's care, He will heal and bring restoration to whatever we uncover in our step work.

However, avoiding and blaming give the devil's lie a chance to flourish in our hearts. This lie says, "Living with the truth will be more painful than concealing it." We will overcome depression when we quit making excuses and stop blaming everyone else for our circumstances and how we feel. Depression can be the product of suppressed anger. When we acknowledge the truth, and bring the hidden things of our heart to God's light for healing, God will forgive us and help us leave the dark clouds of depression behind.

**"I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.** (Isaiah 42:6-7 NIV)

When we choose to live in depression, our number one enemy is our emotions. We tend to be led by how we feel, regardless of the fact that feelings are unreliable. Feelings change from day to day and they often don't convey the complete truth. We have needs, including emotional needs. Our emotional state gets depleted for a variety of reasons. When we feel low we do not have to withdraw and believe there is no solution in sight or no source of comfort and strength to draw on. Rather, we can allow these feelings to draw us close to God's heart and let Him embrace us, comfort us, strengthen us, and help us get through these challenging moments.

**As for me, I look to the Lord for help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me. Do not gloat over me, my enemies! For though I fall, I will rise again. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light.** (Micah 7:7-8 NLT)

Acknowledging to God the truth about any negative feelings we have, and asking for His help, will bring wisdom, healing, encouragement, and blessing into the situation. When we awaken in a day feeling tired or discouraged, we should not tell ourselves "I feel depressed, or, it's too hard for me to face

this day." God invites us to look at the very same feelings and say, "God, I feel tired and discouraged so I place myself into your care. Comfort and strengthen me. Fill me to overflowing with a sense of Your goodness. Thank You Lord that Your unfailing love and tender mercy are available to me all through this day."

**You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.** (Psalm 23:5-6 NIV)

Living with God in recovery does not mean we deny that we have feelings of discouragement and sadness. Sometimes we will have negative feelings, but we can make our feelings line up to the truth of God's Word. This new way of responding takes practice because we are used to reacting negatively to difficult feelings. God will help us as we seek Him to teach us new ways of coping honestly and positively with each situation we encounter.

To find victory over depression the Bible teaches us: **"we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."** (2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV) This is a two-part process. 1) We resist depression and feeling sorry for ourselves because the devil delights in discouragement. **Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** (James 4:7 NIV) 2) We fill ourselves with gratitude and focus on how God is working in us, and for us. **Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!** (Philippians 4:4 NIV) This is not being fake. It's not suppressing the truth. It's bringing all that we are before our caring God for His help, and then trusting His promise to meet all our needs. We can then intentionally shift our focus from our needs to observing and thanking God for all He is doing on our behalf. If we stay filled up with gratitude, there is no room for depression.

We can't control every circumstance that presents itself in our lives, but we don't have to let what happens around us spoil our day and lead us into the darkness of despair. God is with us. God knows all about our struggles. If we seek and acknowledge that God is working for good in all our affairs, we will have victory over depression every time.

### Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. When am I most vulnerable to feelings of sadness, discouragement, or despair?
2. What familiar negative responses lead me into the darkness of discouragement and depression?
3. In what ways do I seek God's help in times of despair?

Heavenly Father, When I feel discouraged, I ask you to draw me close to your heart and fill me with Your peace. You are a kind and compassionate God and I trust You to comfort and strengthen me as I seek You in times of frustration and distress. Help me to recognize the work of the discourager in my life and instead allow You to heal and restore those things that concern me. I am forever grateful that Your presence is ever with me and Your goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life. Amen

## WHY DO I FEEL GUILTY?

Many of us are plagued by a nagging sense of guilt with no definable reason why. We feel discontent and troubled but have no idea what we can do about it. Where do these feelings come from? Following are some sources that may enlighten us.

**Unrealistic Expectations** We crawl into bed exhausted after a hectic day of work frenzied by attempts to accomplish everything on our "to do" list. Our minds drift to thinking about the work we didn't accomplish rather than the things we did. We think thoughts like, "in spite of all I do, somehow it never seems to be enough" and we live in guilt and discouragement. This misplaced guilt is the result of placing high expectations on ourselves about what we want to achieve and focusing on that, rather than being realistic about what is reasonably possible to do in any given day. In our frenzy, we may miss opportunities to hear how God is directing us.

We need to remember Jesus' words to the people who asked Him, "***What must we do to do the works God requires?***" ***Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent"*** (John 6:28-29 NIV).

The actual work of God is simply to believe in the saving work that Jesus has accomplished on our behalf. It has nothing to do with the many works we may busy ourselves with to prop up our self-image or gain God's favour. Our belief in Jesus' death and resurrection for removal of our sins is the only condition for our acceptance by God and the only thing that will remove nagging guilt from our soul. When we have the assurance of forgiveness of our sins, we can then live in the love and acceptance of God. We need no longer be slaves to fear for we are children of God. If we seek God, He will show us those things He has prepared for us to do.

**The Accuser** When we permit our thoughts to be controlled by any power other than the Holy Spirit, we allow that power to accuse us of our former "deeds of the flesh" and we live in endless guilt. Condemning thoughts flood our minds such as, "You will never really be free from those sins. You will never really be what God wants you to be. God is deeply disappointed in you. How long can you expect Him to put up with

you?” These assaults are vicious accusations from the devil who seeks to discourage and devour us.

***So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God. When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death. But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.*** (Romans 7:4-6 NLT)

We should encourage ourselves with the words of scripture rather than allowing feelings of inadequacy and lingering guilt to control our thoughts. Action on our part is required to control and bring these thoughts captive to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. As we learn to accept that we are united with Christ, forgiven by God, and empowered to do good by the Holy Spirit, we will grow and produce a harvest of good deeds for God. “Progress not perfection” and “Let go and let God” are slogans that remind us that God seeks a heart that is surrendered to Him, rather than a self-driven, guilt-ridden effort to do what is right.

***So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.*** (Ephesians 1:6-8 NLT)

Jesus currently sits at the right hand of God and is our advocate before His Father. He says, “This one is my child! I shed my innocent blood for him, for her.” Though we are inadequate in ourselves, we are more than conquerors through Jesus. He has not left us as orphans to live on our own. Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to be with us and in us. As we allow ourselves to be controlled by the Spirit, He will guide us out of false guilt and into all truth.

***In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us***

***through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.*** (Romans 8:26-27 NIV)

**Conviction of the Spirit** Does this mean we should never reflect on guilty feelings when they arise? No! There is a third source of guilt, valid guilt which comes from disobeying God’s commandments. The Holy Spirit will relentlessly convict us of sin in our lives until we repent and turn away from it. We would be wise to stop and consider what the Spirit is saying and the consequences of continuous rebellious actions.

***And when he (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment.*** (John 16:8 NLT)

When the Holy Spirit convicts us of the gravity of our sin, we will hopefully experience remorse over what we have done. Satan may want us to wallow in our guilt, believing we have pushed God’s grace beyond its limit. However, God’s grace is always much greater than sin and He wants to free us, restore us, and lead us back on the path of righteousness. Restoration is always the intent of the Spirit’s conviction. We need to promptly recognize and resist condemnation and false guilt from the accuser. Similarly, we must acknowledge genuine guilt and promptly surrender to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

***People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.*** (Proverbs 28:13 NLT)

The more quickly we confess, repent, and make amends, the more quickly the weight of guilt will be removed from our shoulders. We can then get back on the joyful road of living life to the full.

**Walking in Freedom** When we are struggling with guilt and are uncertain of the reason for our feelings, we need to ask ourselves these questions:

1. When I tell myself I “should” be doing something, am I secretly hoping that by my doing it God will love me more than He already does?
2. Does guilt drive me into God's arms for mercy and restoration, or drive me away from Him, believing He condemns and banishes me?
3. Is the Holy Spirit convicting me of something I have done today? Is there a command in the Bible that I am disobeying which accounts for my guilty feelings?

Gracious God, You know me inside and out. You know the underlying motive behind what I say and do. When the evil one seeks to discourage me by false accusation, help me to stand firm on Your word and challenge my thoughts with the truth that, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Thank you for dying on the cross so that I can be free from the guilt and shame of my sin. When I have done wrong, help me to quickly repent and receive forgiveness. I am forever grateful that Your grace is greater than all my sin. AMEN

## INTEGRITY

***Righteousness guards the person of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner.*** (Proverbs 13:6 NIV)

Integrity is one of the most valued character qualities a person can have. A person of integrity has strong moral and ethical principles. They are known to be honest regardless of their circumstances or the company they are keeping or when alone with no one watching. What you see on the outside is the same person they are on the inside. People of integrity keep their word, even when it is not convenient. They are honest in all their dealings, personal and business. They practice morality in their sexual life, both in mind and with body. They are not perfect. They occasionally make mistakes and sin, but they do not cover up their offences. They confess them, and deal with any consequences that may arise.

Integrity is not a character quality most of us could claim when we lived in addiction. It's not something that automatically appears when we come into recovery either. However, integrity can and will be developed in a person who lives according to the Word of God, and who stands with confidence before God.

***I know that you are pleased with me, for my enemy does not triumph over me. Because of my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever.*** (Psalm 41:11-12 NIV)

The story of Daniel in the Bible gives us an example of a man of integrity. Daniel was a man who experienced all sorts of injustice and unfair treatment that could have resulted in bitter resentment and a desire for revenge. In his teens, through no fault of his own, Daniel was made a Jewish captive. In spite of many challenges he became a high government official in Babylon, but the injustice continued. His enemies were jealous of him and tried hard to find a way to get him charged and punished for misconduct in his handling of government affairs. Try as they might, his enemies could find no grounds for charges against Daniel. Daniel did not live in reaction to unfair circumstances. Daniel lived with integrity before God.

***...They couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy. So they concluded, "Our only***



***chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the rules of his religion.”*** (Daniel 6:4-5 NLT)

The only way these schemers could undermine Daniel’s influence with the king was to prey upon Daniel’s devotion to God. They convinced the king to issue a law which could not be revoked. This law banned prayer for 30 days to anyone, divine or human, except to the king himself. The penalty for not complying with this law was that the person would be cast into the den of lions.

Because of his faithfulness to the living God, Daniel would not obey this unjust law. Daniel went home and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom. When this was brought to the king’s attention, even though he regretted having to do it, the king ordered Daniel to be thrown into the lions’ den. The next morning when the king discovered that God had delivered Daniel from the lions, he worshiped Daniel’s God and ordered all in his kingdom to do the same.

Daniel’s integrity, in spite of unjust accusations and unfair actions, brought him the blessing of the king’s high regard, lifted him to a position of honor and influence, and brought honour from a foreign culture to the living God.

***Then King Darius sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world: “Peace and prosperity to you! I decree that everyone throughout my kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel. For he is the living God, and he will endure forever. His kingdom will never be destroyed, and his rule will never end. He rescues and saves his people; he performs miraculous signs and wonders in the heavens and on earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.”*** (Daniel 6:25-27 NLT)

What does integrity look like in our lives, in our time, and in our city? People of integrity are known to set a good example for the children and youth of our society. We may think our children don’t know when we cheat, take advantage of a customer or employer, lie to the boss, or abuse paid benefits. They see more than we realize. Our misdeeds, whenever they are exposed, will cause our children to lose respect for us, or even worse, to pattern their own actions and lives after ours. People of integrity live honestly in all situations, whether others notice or not.

People of integrity have the peace of a clear conscience. When we live according to the Word of God we experience a deep inner peace knowing that we have not violated our conscience or hurt someone else. We can be confident that when someone examines us, we will be proven innocent of wrongdoing. In contrast, when our lives lack moral wholeness we live in constant fear of being “found out”. If our thoughts and desires were exposed today, would we be seen as persons of integrity?

***Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.*** (Proverbs 10:9 NIV)

A person of integrity experiences the favor of God and His blessings. These flow down, even to the person’s children.

***Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man. Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice. A righteous man who walks in his integrity – how blessed are his sons after him.*** (Psalm 112:4-5 NIV; Proverbs 20:7 NASB)

People of integrity gain the respect of others. Men and women of integrity can be depended upon. People look to them with trust and respect. Neighbours speak highly of them and they are helpful in their community or place of work. Few things are more valued than a good reputation.

***A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.*** (Proverbs 22:1 NIV)

Integrity is built over time as we diligently apply God’s teachings to the choices we make. Regardless of any unkind words or the behaviour of others, we remain faithful to God’s principles, and leave all the consequences of others’ actions with God. The result of living with an undivided heart and being a vibrant witness for Jesus to the world around us is truly worth the effort.

***May integrity and honesty protect me, for I put my hope in you.*** (Psalm 25:21 NLT)

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion:**

1. What situations influence me and cause me to lack sound judgment?
2. What are my personal challenges in living for convenience versus being a person of integrity at all times?
3. People of integrity have a clear conscience – is there a confession I need to make?
4. How does loving God with all my heart, soul and mind and loving my neighbour as myself help me to acquire the quality of integrity?

Heavenly Father, You are an awesome God who loves me unconditionally. Forgive me for the times I have reacted negatively to circumstances and the behaviour of others. Please help me to consider the impact of my actions and behaviour on those around me. My desire is to love and care for others as You faithfully love and care for me. Help me to follow Your principles in all my affairs and to become a person of integrity. I am forever grateful that You are a God who is faithful in all Your ways. Teach me to be like You. AMEN

## **DENIAL**

***For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.*** (Romans 7:18-20 NIV)

The first step towards recovery is in recognizing and admitting that we have a dependency on a substance and/or a person. Denial of that fact is the first obstacle we must overcome. When we are in denial, we truly believe that we do not have a problem with dependency, and we don't need help. Others may have communicated that they have observed our dependency, but we continue to deny and maintain that the problem does not exist. We believe no action on our part is required. However, the truth is, things will not remain as they are, they will deteriorate.

***The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives.*** (Jeremiah 17:9-10 NLT)

In an attempt to cover up, we lie to others, even though our addictive behaviour is glaringly evident. Denial keeps us in slavery because we are lying to ourselves. As we become slaves to our addiction, we lose the ability to choose any other way of life. It is only when we break the cycle of denial, when we become brutally honest with ourselves about our bondage, that there is any chance for real freedom.

Denial comes in many forms. How can we identify denial in ourselves or in someone we love?

1. Avoidance: We either withdraw from others to avoid talking about addiction or we try to manipulate the conversation to talk about “anything but MY problems.”
2. Arguing: Addicts easily get into arguments about their addictive behaviour and somehow think that by strenuously denying their problems they will go away.

3. Complete Denial: Addicts refuse to admit they have a problem. They believe others have misrepresented their situation.

4. Minimizing: The addict will minimize how much or how often they use their substance of choice or how bad the problem actually is. They are unwilling to see that using is destroying their relationships, ability to work, and other aspects of their lives. They may admit a slight problem exists and even attempt to change by their own efforts, but, they will not admit they need help.

5. Rationalizing: Addicts make excuses for their behaviour hoping that their reasons will be enough for them to avoid taking any action. "I can do what I want because I'm not hurting anyone except myself."

6. Blaming: Addicts try to shift responsibility for their behaviour to the behaviour of others.

7. Comparing: Addicts attempt to show that because someone else's problem is greater than theirs, they don't have a serious problem.

8. Bargaining: Addicts often make deals with themselves or others, "I'll just have one more. I'll stop tomorrow. I just need a little to get through today."

9. Manipulating: Addicts pretend to take positive steps, hoping others will leave them alone. Addicts may admit they have a problem but do nothing, expecting others to get involved and solve their problem.

When we come to new life in Christ, God will reveal truth in all our affairs. We need to know what is good and helpful for our journey forward. We also need to identify what is foolish and harmful, so those things lose their power to negatively impact us.

***Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*** (Psalm 139:23-24 NIV)

When we seek God's help to confront denial, God will expose where our thinking and perceiving have become confused, and where our ways and His ways differ. God's wisdom and power will help us make changes according to what He shows us.

***For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.*** (Hebrews 4:12 NLT)

In recovery we learn to accept responsibility for our actions. We come to realize that our actions yield consequences. Some of us may have deceived ourselves into thinking we could escape the consequences of the former things we did. But, with time, we have become aware that God has made accountability a necessary element of our healing, and healthy living.

***Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*** (Galatians 6:7-8 NIV)

The good news is that God will be with us as we face the things we need to deal with. God will show us His life-giving ways to resolve the issues with those we have harmed. We often fear the humiliation and pain of admitting the truth about our shameful past. However, when we confess and receive God's forgiveness for our sins, we will experience a deep peace within us, because the truth will set us free. Deceit and denial lead to bondage and death. Revelation and truth lead to freedom and life.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. When challenged, do I tend to deny the evidence associated with my actions?
2. Have others tried to help me face reality? What denial techniques do I use to maintain the lie that I don't have a problem?
3. How does God's presence in my life help me overcome denial and walk in life-giving truth?
4. In what way do I allow God to search me and name any thoughts, motives, or behaviours that are offensive to Him? What do I do with what God reveals?
5. Have I noticed peace in my life while living in truth rather than denial?
6. What lingering problems with denial do I still struggle with?
7. What action do I need to take so I can live in the freedom that God promises?

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, I confess that my heart is deceitful. Forgive me for the times I have sought to escape responsibility for my actions through denial and other devious measures. Please draw me close to You and comfort me. Tonight, I acknowledge the truth that denial of my actions has had a harmful impact on those around me. Please fill me with the courage and strength I need to do what is necessary to make amends to those I have harmed. My desire is to live in the truth of Your word. Purify me with Your truth. Strengthen and uphold me as I choose to follow You in all my ways. Thank You for Your unfailing love and care for me. AMEN

## **DISCERNMENT**

**“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the *wisdom to know the difference.*”** The final phrase in this prayer which asks for wisdom is really a request for discernment.

Discernment is more than learning or physical sight. Discernment is the ability to have understanding and sound judgment in knowing and doing the right thing. Spiritually discerning people have the capacity to separate and sift what is good based on their knowledge of God and His ways.

From the very beginning God planned that we would know Him and live with Him forever. The Bible tells us ***“God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end.”*** (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NLT)

As humans we operate from day to day as though we are going to live forever. We don't consult God about the best way for us to go because we think we already know. Then we end up suffering painful consequences. The truth is that without God's wisdom, we don't know how to live successfully in this life, or what will happen to us in the next. What are we to do? God has given us the answer in the Bible.

***Deal with your servant according to your love and teach me your decrees. I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes.*** (Psalm 119:124-125 NIV)

God invites us to know Him personally. His desire is that we understand and receive salvation through Jesus Christ. He also wants us to know the good plans He has for us. When we spend time in God's word, He will give us a discerning heart to know His ways. As we seek God for direction He will give us discernment in our spirit about the right way to go.

**If someone is wise, they will realize that what I've said is true. If they have understanding, they will know what it means. The ways of the Lord are right. People who are right with God live the way he wants them to. But those who refuse to obey him trip and fall.** (Hosea 14:9 NIRV)

Discerning the ways of God is the work of the Holy Spirit who comes to live within us when we accept Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. The Holy Spirit directs our path and guide us into all truth. Some helpful steps to take in this process are:

- ✓ list the known pros and cons of each choice.
- ✓ pray with this list, trusting that God will direct our steps in the way we should go.
- ✓ pray and seek guidance from someone who knows us well (pastor, parents, counselor) about the way we are sensing to go. Consider the gifts God has given us and seek confirmation from the person we are seeking counsel from.
- ✓ Remember that we may plan our course but if we listen attentively to God, He will direct our path.

***For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be found by you,” says the LORD.*** (Jeremiah 29:11-14 NLT)

In order that our own imagination or desires do not mislead us, we need to make an honest assessment of our own will versus God’s revealed will. Things we need to look at include:

1. Humility: Acknowledge that our own understanding is not enough. We need God’s perspective and guidance in the small and large decisions of life. ***He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way.*** (Psalm 25:9 NIV)
2. Faith: Believe that God will speak to us. ***Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*** (Hebrews 11:6 NIV)
3. A Clean Heart: Sin blocks us from hearing God’s voice, so ask God to reveal any way we’ve been living in self-will and going against His principles. ***If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*** (Psalm 66:18 KJV)
4. A Yielded Will: Intentionally place our trust in God by committing to His way. Guidance from God becomes clearer through obedience. Jesus

said, ***If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me.*** (Mark 8:34 NLT)

5. Waiting before God: Give God time to speak into our situation. ***God says: But my people would not heed my voice and Israel would have none of me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart to walk in their own counsels. Oh that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways.*** (Psalm 81:11-13 NKJV)
6. Recognize the source of the voice: God’s voice is consistent with His word. If we submit our reasoning to Him, He will convey His answer through our spirit. Satanic and demonic powers can bring impressions to our minds. However, we can sift our thoughts by being willing to surrender our heart’s desires to God, asking only to know His will. ***We are human, but we don’t wage war as humans do. We use God’s mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.*** (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NLT)

To better recognize God’s will for our life, we need to let go of whatever hinders our vision. Sorrow over a loss in our lives can hinder our discernment. Fear of change can also rob us of the ability to go forward in the next season of our lives.

***There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build.*** (Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 NIV)

When we have made a decision, peace and joy may be a sign that our choice is in keeping with God’s plan. Choosing our way forward based on the wisdom and discernment that God gives will result in a life lived to the full as God intended.

### Questions for Discussion

1. In what ways do I consciously make God a part of my decision-making process?
2. Is there evidence of growth in sound judgment and discernment in my life?
3. Which practices that help develop discernment do I still need to adopt?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, Thank You for rescuing me from the darkness of my past life and bringing me into the light of Your presence. Forgive me for the times I have ignored your guidance in favour of my own self-will. I ask You now for the gift of discernment, so I make wise choices as I move forward in the plan You have for my life. Lord, give me eyes to see and ears to hear. Help me to be attentive to Your word. Give me courage and strength to respond to the guidance of Your Spirit, so I make good decisions in all do. AMEN

## **DEALING WITH LOW SELF-ESTEEM**

Low self-esteem. No self-worth. We hear these words said about many who suffer in an addictive lifestyle and often we are reluctant to admit that we also have self-condemning thoughts in our own heads. We make a mistake and we feel like we are a failure. When others don't approve of us we can't seem to cope. We feel like no matter how hard we try we can't ever measure up. What are we left with? A general feeling of hopelessness that God never intended us to have. When God looked at the humans He created He said they were "very good". Our self-worth should be based on what God says, not on what we think, and not on what others say.

***When God created human beings, he made them to be like himself. He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them "human."*** (Genesis 5:1-2 NLT)

In the very beginning, the devil approached Adam and Eve and implied that humans were not "very good" because they lacked the knowledge of good and evil which God did not give when He created them. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's instructions and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was not Godly wisdom they received but a distorted perspective of life based on self-rejection, guilt, fear, and separation from God.

***For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*** (Psalm 139:13-14 NIV, Ephesians 2:10 NLT)

The devil continues to whisper lies to us. Because we don't feel good about ourselves, our circumstances, or our future, he tells us we're defective and we need something to make us fit in, be accepted, and feel better. The temptation is often towards an addictive substance or a relationship that is destructive. When life unravels around our unhealthy life choices, the devil then emphasizes how flawed we are and how hopeless it is for us to change. Our self-esteem bottoms out as we so

easily identify with our mistakes, our shattered dreams, and the pain we feel inside.

Our Heavenly Father, through Jesus, offers to restore the loving relationship with Him that we were always intended to have. The Bible tells us that God loved us so much that He sent His beloved son Jesus into the world to pay the price of our sin and rebellion, which is death. Jesus overcame death on our behalf and because He lives, we can have life forevermore in the Kingdom of God. When we put our trust in Jesus and in what He did for us, we become cherished children of our Heavenly Father. We need to listen to God and believe what He says, rather than pay attention to the deceiver who is trying to steal, kill and destroy the new life we have been given through Jesus.

***..to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.*** (John 1:12-13, 10:10 NLT)

Self-esteem can be rebuilt. How?

1) We need to find out the facts – those things that God says about us such as: “You are forgiven. I, the Creator of the universe pay attention to you when you pray. Nothing can separate you from My love. You are created to do good work. My plan and purpose for your life is to give you a future with hope.”

2) We need to inform our hearts and minds of these truths until our negative thought patterns are reshaped and painful feelings are healed and settled in God’s comfort.

3) As beloved children of God, we need to listen to and do those things which please God. Fear and insecurity lead to self-absorption and addictive lifestyles as we feverishly try to cover-up, or cope with inferiority feelings. When we focus on what God says works and put that into practice, we begin to experience a life that is good, satisfying and meaningful.

***Don’t shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that’s where the action is. See things from his perspective. Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life—even though invisible to***

***spectators—is with Christ in God. He is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you’ll show up, too—the real you, the glorious you.*** (Col. 3:2-4a MSG)

God has given us gifts and talents to share with others. In the same way that hands and feet and eyes co-operate in the body, God planned for all of us to work and support one another in community. God has prepared a lifetime of adventure for us as we support and bring hope and healing to one another.

In the strength and peace which God’s acceptance and forgiveness brings, we can begin to see ourselves and others with different eyes. We will no longer need to live in chaos and addiction, searching for self-satisfying love. Instead, we will begin to experience loving and satisfying relationships as we share and give in community with others. This is life as Jesus taught us to live it.

***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself”.*** (Matthew 22:37-29 NIV)

When we question our worth, we need to remember who God our Creator says we are. A one-hundred-dollar bill whether it is in prime condition, or is crumpled and dirty, is still worth what the creator of the bill has determined. God, our creator, has clearly demonstrated the value he puts on each person by giving His beloved son to die for us. In our relationship with God, do we see Him as a loving Heavenly Father and ourselves as His precious children? God’s word says:

***For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.*** (Zephaniah 3:17)

We have a choice today – to live in low self-esteem with negative thoughts about past actions or, to welcome a new life of peace and purpose that God has prepared for us. What will we choose?

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Who or what determines my value and how I think about myself?
2. How do I allow the unfailing love of God to impact my life?
3. What facts (such as those noted above) are useful to me as I move from low self-esteem to a new place of dignity and value before God?

Heavenly Father, Thank you that, when we believe in Jesus' finished work on the cross, the price of our sins has been paid and we are adopted into Your family as precious children. We are freed from all condemnation and Your Holy Spirit lives within us to guide us into the knowledge of all truth. Help us to renew our minds and hearts to these facts. Help us to stand on the truth that when we are in Christ, nothing can separate us from Your love. We are grateful that we are valued as precious in Your sight. Amen

### SOME AREAS OF ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCY

For a variety of reasons, many of us have an underlying structure of disorder that is damaging us and others. We invite God to show us the truth about ourselves so we can personally receive God's forgiveness to set us free and healing to make us strong.

<p><b>SUBSTANCE ADDICTIONS:</b></p> <p><b>Alcohol</b>  <b>Caffeine</b>  <b>Injected or smoked substances such as:</b>  Crack, Crystal Meth, Heroin  <b>Marijuana</b>  <b>Prescription Medications</b>  <b>Sugar</b>  <b>Tobacco</b></p>	<p><b>BEHAVIOUR ADDICTIONS:</b></p> <p><b>Anger/Rage/Bullying</b>  <b>Cutting</b>  <b>Crime</b>  <b>Eating Disorders:</b>  Bulimia, Anorexia,  Binging, Obesity  <b>Gambling</b>  <b>Hoarding</b>  <b>Sex/Pornography</b>  <b>Verbal Abuse:</b>  Gossip, Lying, Accusing  Blaming, Condemning  <b>Violence</b> (physical, verbal, cyber)</p>
<p><b>SOFT ADDICTIONS:</b></p> <p><b>Digital Use: (Time or Content)</b>  TV/Phone/Tablet; video games, Social  Networking; Cyber-bullying; Online shopping;  Gambling, Pornography  <b>Exercise</b>  <b>Food</b> (See Eating Disorders)  <b>Isolating/Sleep</b>  <b>Money: Debt/Fraud</b>  <b>Religion</b>  <b>Shopping</b>  <b>Sports</b>  <b>Work/Achievement</b></p>	<p><b>RELATIONSHIP ADDICTIONS:</b></p> <p><b>Abusive Relationships:</b>  Includes: Intimidation, Isolation,  Domination, Blaming, Humiliation,  Withholding, Forcing acts against  one's will  <b>Approval dependency</b>  <b>Attention Seeking</b>  <b>Codependence/Rescuing</b>  <b>Power/Control</b></p>

### PRAYER FOR HEALING AND RESTORATION

Loving God, Thank You for rescuing us from the dark power of Satan and bringing us into loving relationship with Your Son, Jesus. We ask for wisdom and understanding from Your Spirit in order to live as people who honour You. Heal us. Make us new. Make us strong followers of Christ. Root us deeply in Your love. We place our trust in Your power that can do far more in us than we dare ask or imagine. Amen.



## **JUST FOR TODAY**

*Just for today I will try to live in conscious contact with God praying only for knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out.*

*Just for today I will strengthen my mind. I will take a few minutes to read and meditate on God's word, seeking God's perspective for my life today. I will take note of one helpful thing God is saying to me and seek to behave accordingly.*

*Just for today I will be joyful, optimistic, and grateful. I will take time to notice the gifts in me, in others, and in my surroundings and let the rest go.*

*Just for today I will adjust myself to what is and not try to adjust everything else to my desires. I will trust that God is working all things for good in my life.*

*Just for today I will be agreeable. I will not criticize, not find fault, and not try to improve or control anybody except myself. I will pray blessing on one person with whom I struggle to relate.*

*Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself to relax and enjoy all that God is giving me.*

*Just for today I will be unafraid, believing that as I trust in God with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding, He will lead me along a good path.*

*Just for today I will seek to serve others with kindness, doing what is right, and walking humbly with God.*

**For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:10 NLT**

## **How To Enjoy New Life With God In Recovery**

*God created us to have a wonderful life. In love, God planned for us and carefully put us together. God has always been calling out to us to enter into a relationship of love with Him. He doesn't force us but He invites us. Many of us have learned what a painful and confusing wreck our lives become when we try to live independently from God. Today is a good day to begin to live the full and rich life God intended for us. Nothing in our past can keep us from this life, if we want it and choose for it.*

*The 12-Steps remind us that our lives are unmanageable without the loving care of God and that we can get to know and come to believe that He is a power greater than ourselves. As we turn our will and our lives over to God's care, we find a solid foundation upon which to build a new life.*

*When we confess our sin and brokenness to God, repent and turn towards God, He gives us new life. When we invite God to come into our lives we find that He is ready and waiting for us. A simple prayer like the following, offered sincerely, establishes this new relationship with God that will last forever.*

***God, my life is unmanageable without you. You created me to live in relationship with you. There really is no good way to live on my own. Forgive me for not including you. I turn from my independent ways and surrender my will and my life to you. Thank you Jesus for dying on the cross for my sins and making a way for me to have new life and be filled up with Your Holy Spirit. Come into my heart and wash me clean. Teach me to do your will. Transform my way of thinking. Strengthen me to obey You in all I do. Amen***

*If you prayed that prayer sincerely from your heart, God forgives you and receives you. God makes you His son or daughter. God wants to show you how to live well and give you strength to do that every day. We would love to provide you with some information to support you as you move forward in your journey with God. Please contact us. You'll find our contact information on the front cover of this booklet.*