

Life With God In Recovery

GROWING STRONG (Beyond Step 12)



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Book 7

*Partners in Hope Recovery Society
is a Christian community
outreach organization
offering hope, support, and healing
through Jesus Christ
to victims of
harmful circumstances and dependencies,
as they reclaim the gift of their life.*



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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

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Partners in Hope LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY MEETING

THE WELCOME: We are a Christian 12-Step Recovery Group. We practice the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and welcome individuals seeking healing and recovery from a variety of destructive and addictive lifestyles. The only requirement for membership is a desire to love and be loved regardless of one's current condition in life.

We choose to affirm God, the Creator, as our higher power. We believe He has revealed Himself to us through His Son Jesus Christ, who said, **"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. I am the way, the truth, and the life."**

We share through stories, discussion, singing and prayer, the experience, strength and hope we have found in relationship with God and with each other. We seek to gain strength from one another in order to carry this message of hope to others who suffer. We gratefully acknowledge God's presence and pray for His guidance and direction in all we do and say.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and
Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

SOME AREAS OF ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCY

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

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.

12 STEPS AND BIBLE PRINCIPLES

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our dependencies -- that our life had become unmanageable.	1. I know nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. (Romans 7:18)
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.	2. For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. (Philippians 2:13)
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God as we understood Him.	3. Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God -- which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.	4. Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord. (Lamentations 3:40)
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.	5. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:16)
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.	6. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.	7. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

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| 8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. | 8. Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Luke 6:31) |
| 9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. | 9. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother. Then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24) |
| 10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. | 10. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. (1 Corinthians 10:12) |
| 11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out. | 11. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. (Colossians 3:16a) |
| 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs. | 12. Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (Galatians 6:1) |

**Taken from: The Twelve Steps -- A Spiritual Journey, ©1988 RPI Publishing, Inc, San Diego, CA*

LIFE AFFIRMATIONS:

- 1. I am loved by God, always. I am loved without condition.*
- 2. My life is of great beauty and infinite value. God has a plan for my life that is meaningful, purposeful and joyful. There is a work for me to do today that will bless others and give me deep satisfaction.*
- 3. God is always with me. I need never face my problems alone. Together with God, any difficulty can be worked out and overcome.*

SERENITY PRAYER:

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. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as a pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.

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..." Many of us have found wisdom as we specifically practice the Tenth Step of AA and take daily inventory of our lives. 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 wisdom to sort out any problems that arise. He will also give us the strength to endure and make healthy choices.

We live in a world that says, "If it feels good do it." In our addictions, many of us ran after numerous destructive things in order to try and feel good. As we leave this life behind, we may struggle to do what is right instead of what is convenient. We want to "feel good fast." However, God invites us to assess the quality of our lives based on our daily following of His proven principles.

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 many have found to be beneficial.

Train yourself to be godly. Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come. (Timothy 4:7-8 NLT)

How many times have we watched athletes and marveled at the ease with which they perform their sport? We understand that they developed their ability through rigorous training, which is what sets the true athlete apart from the spectator. This type of daily dedication to discipline is required if we are to live one day at a time in God's will, under God's direction. 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?

1. ONGOING FORGIVENESS: It's important to remember our daily need of God's ongoing mercy and forgiveness, and to confess our sins and receive a 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. Each day brings with it a host of things which we personally cannot change. The continual reality of circumstances beyond our control is something everyone has to face. 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. 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. God has promised to take care of all of our todays and tomorrows. We simply need to live one day at a time.

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 we can find joy in, and God has promised to give us power and strength to handle any difficulties we may encounter.

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) 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.

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?"

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, Forgive me for my lack of confidence in You. Your Word tells me not to worry about my life or the things of tomorrow. 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

EQUIPPED FOR GROWTH

Life in addiction is often described as a slow death. Therefore, to enjoy a healthy and satisfying life in recovery we recognize that we need to grow in the many areas of our being which have been compromised. The primary places to start equipping ourselves for growth is in our thoughts and in the attitude of our heart.

You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:20-24 NIV)

What are some choices we can make that will support growth? We need to determine in our minds that we will put off our old self and our former way of life. By a conscious choice of our will we need to abandon and be healed from those things that keep us in bondage to our addiction. We need to give up co-dependent relationships that supported a physical or emotional need or longing. We need to surrender our will to God and seek His help to put on our new self. We need to determine that we will walk in God's way, doing those things which will help us grow in righteousness and holiness. We need to get to know our Heavenly Father so that we will trust Him.

Give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall. (Psalm 55:22 NLT)

In the Bible we read the story of a young man named Joshua. After the death of Moses, the leader of God's people, Joshua set out to lead the people into the Promised Land. As he started his journey God gave him instructions which are timeless for all who set out on a new path, including us, as we go forward in recovery:

“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:8-9 NIV)

As we look to God's word to direct our path in recovery, we will find dependable guidance and hope for our journey. God is faithful to do everything He has promised.

God has said that He will guide us and help us grow. Our part is to seek to know God, to learn God's ways, and then to follow God's plan. How do we do that? As we learn about God in the Bible and put our trust in Jesus, God's Holy Spirit comes to live in us. The Holy Spirit helps us know and understand God's ways. ***When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.*** (John 16:13 NLT) Our own information and understanding is limited and so we allow ourselves to be trained by the Holy Spirit in new ways of doing things with these tools. All the training and equipment we need has been provided. Our part is to use the tools provided and regularly consult our teacher, the Holy Spirit, to ensure we are using them properly.

At the same time, we need to be aware that we have an enemy, who does not want us to grow and become all God intends us to be. Jesus said that the enemy of our soul comes to steal, kill and destroy. We can take comfort in the truth that the evil one has power over us only as we choose to give it to him through disobedience or leaving our tools in the toolbox. If we fail to fill ourselves up with the fullness of God and choose to not be doers of God's Word, then we open ourselves to relapse.

Jesus said, ***“When a corrupting spirit is expelled from someone, it drifts along through the desert looking for an oasis, some unsuspecting soul it can bedevil. When it doesn't find anyone, it says, ‘I'll go back to my old haunt.’ On return, it finds the person swept and dusted, but vacant. It then runs out and rounds up seven other spirits dirtier than itself and they all move in, whooping it up. That person ends up far worse than if he'd never gotten cleaned up in the first place.”*** (Luke 11:24-26 MSG)

God is very clear that there is a battle going on within us and around us. The good news is that the battle has already been won and the enemy has been defeated. However, the enemy is still prowling around looking for individuals he can lie to and then destroy as they listen to His harmful directions.

We prepare ourselves for battle when we surrender ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit. It is His power and authority working through us that sends the forces of darkness fleeing. We equip ourselves for victory when we bring an open ear to God's voice and remain self-controlled and alert to His instructions throughout the battle. We employ effective weapons to resist the devil when

we stand firm in our faith in God's goodness and strength. We put the enemy to flight by consistently remembering and relying on God's word, just as Jesus did when He was tempted.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:12-13 NIV)

Growth comes when we choose to trust in God regardless of our circumstances. God's word says that He works all things together for our good. The enemy of our souls is a created being with limited power. God has ultimate power and will deliver us from anything that comes against us, if we look to Him.

Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us. (2 Corinthians. 1:9-10 NIV)

God has provided tools and instructions to equip us for effective growth today. Are we willing to pick up these tools and follow His instructions in the manual - the Bible?

Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. (Colossians 2:7 NLT)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. In what ways am I equipping myself for growth in my new life in Christ?
2. What tools am I using? What other tools am I realizing might be useful?
3. How have I prepared myself to recognize and have victory over the deception of the enemy of my soul?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I come before You, acknowledging You as my Higher Power. You are an awesome God and Your power is infinite. All life and all growth comes from You. I am Your masterpiece created in love to do the good work You have prepared in advance for me to do. Fill me with the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that I get to know You and Your plans better. Help me to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Your beloved son, Jesus. I am forever grateful that You care. AMEN

ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.
(Ephesians 1:3-6 NKJV)

At some point in our lives each of us will experience some form of rejection. When something negative is repeatedly said about us and we hear it over and over again, we begin to believe what is being said. Our thoughts dwell on those negative words which influence our self-worth. Rather than centering our self-worth on the truth of what God says, we dwell on the opinions of others. We begin to give more weight to human words than to God's word. Our feelings and actions follow what we believe, and our self-image reflects this.

God calls out to us: ***I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts.***
(Isaiah 65:2 NKJV)

There are three assurances humans need in order to be healthy. They are: 1) I belong; 2) I have worth; 3) I am adequate and/or competent. Feelings of rejection tell us the opposite of each one of these.

Jesus understands our feelings of rejection. In fact it is His experience of ultimate rejection, through death on the cross, which brings us eternal acceptance. He had no sin but chose to become sin for us. On the cross He bore our sin, our shame, and our feelings of worthlessness and abandonment. Jesus was rejected so that we could be accepted.

You were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions, yet now he has brought you back as his friends. He has done this through his death on the cross in his own human body. As a result, he has brought you into the very presence of God and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. But you must continue to believe this truth and stand in it firmly. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. (Colossians 1:21-23 NLT)

Jesus died the death we should have died in order that we might enter into unbroken relationship with our loving Heavenly Father. God's eternal acceptance of us was purchased through Jesus' death and resurrection. When we believe and accept what Jesus did for us, we are assured that we are holy and blameless in the sight of our loving God. Through Jesus we truly are "accepted in the beloved". As accepted ones we can rest in the assurance that we belong, we have worth, and we are adequate/competent to live successfully. How does all of this help me deal with self-rejection?

I BELONG: God's sacrifice of His only Son for us speaks clearly of how precious and valuable we are to Him. Belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus forever guarantees our acceptance by God. When we choose to make Jesus Lord of our lives then God acknowledges us as His cherished children. We belong.

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12 NLT)

I HAVE WORTH: We have worth because God created and cares for us. We are precious in His sight. Regardless of what others may say about us, God's word proclaims we have worth. We are HIS workmanship and, HE is a skilled craftsman. That's what counts!

Make sure no outsider who now follows God ever has occasion to say, 'God put me in second-class. I don't really belong.' And make sure no physically mutilated person is ever made to think, 'I'm damaged goods. I don't really belong.' (Isaiah 56:3 MSG)

I AM ADEQUATE/COMPETENT: God's plan for our successful living is more amazing than we can even imagine today. We are so much more than what others may see. We need to believe and affirm that God has already declared, ***My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.*** (2 Corinthians 12:9 NLT) Believing is a choice. Growing confident as one who is "accepted in the beloved" is the result of consciously speaking the truth of God's word to our own soul until our emotions agree.

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8 NIV)

God has already established our worth and our place with Him forever. Through Jesus the work is done. We belong. We are accepted. We are adequate. As

we settle into this wonderful reality, we come to experience that we are more capable than we ever thought possible. With the Holy Spirit living inside of us, we have the power to accomplish whatever God calls us to do.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13 NKJV)

The world is wrong when it says we don't matter or we are worthless. The truth is, we are valued by God who created us, who places great significance on each of our lives, and who invites us to live each day fully with Him.

What can we do when feelings of rejection arise? First, identify them. Then, even as we experience the feelings, perhaps even to the point where they may be overpowering, choose to reject them based on what God says. Finally, replace these thoughts by speaking to God and affirming His truth: "God I thank you I am unconditionally loved. I am completely forgiven. I am totally accepted. I am complete in Christ." Remember, Jesus called the devil the father of lies.

God says that we are unconditionally loved and very precious. God doesn't lie. God never leaves or forsakes His children. We are totally accepted by Him. God's acceptance is assured as we confess: we believe in the finished work of Jesus and receive forgiveness for our sins; we embrace the unfailing love and care of God for us who believe; we believe His written word in the Bible is truth. The Bible assures us that we are complete in Christ. Our searching for acceptance and belonging finds contentment only when we enter into a loving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing else will ever give us satisfaction in life like He does.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What causes me to reject myself?
2. When I feel rejection from others, how do I cope?
3. How does the phrase "I'm accepted in the beloved" impact my view of myself?

Heavenly Father, I come to You today, in the name of Jesus, acknowledging that I am "accepted in the beloved". Thank you for accepting and loving me. Thank you for your invitation to belong. I accept your invitation and say a resounding "Yes" to belonging to you. Thank you for creating me with talent and ability. I surrender all that I am to you. Help me to look to You for solutions to my problems. I confess that my own way of doing things does not work and leaves me filled with pain and regret. Help me to closely follow your guidance when you show me Your way. Transform my thoughts and beliefs so that I may know what your pleasing and perfect will is for my life. Thank You for the incomparable riches of Your grace, expressed in Your kindness to me in Christ Jesus. Thank you for being my Abba Father. Help me to fully understand that I am your child. I am forever grateful for all you have done for me. Amen

THE GIFT OF 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, asking 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 and what is best 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 in this world. We don’t consult God with regards to what is best for us, because we think we know that intuitively and so 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 answers in His word 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 plan He has for each of our lives. When we spend time with God in His word, He will give us a discerning heart to know His ways. God wants us to seek Him for direction and, as we desire to know the plan He has prepared for us, He will give us discernment in our spirit about the right way to go.

Let those who are wise understand these things. Let those with discernment listen carefully. The paths of the LORD are true and right, and righteous people live by walking in them. But in those paths sinners stumble and fall. (Hosea 14:9 NLT)

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 guides us into all truth. Some simple steps we might take to help us 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, priest, parents, spiritual counselor) about the way we are sensing to go. Consider the gifts God has given us
- ✓ 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 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, time where we focus on God alone and allow Him 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)

We need to let go of preconceptions, biases, stereotypes or whatever hinders our vision so we can better recognize God's will for our life. 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 a 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 signs that our choice is in keeping with God's plans. 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. Where do I see evidence of growth in sound judgment and discernment in my life? How do I consciously make God a part of my decision making processes?
2. Which practices that help develop discernment are part of my daily life? What practices do I still need to adopt?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for bringing me from the darkness of sin and shame 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 that I may make wise choices as I move forward into the plans that You have for my life. Lord, give me ears to hear that I might be attentive to Your word. Help me to respond to the urgings of Your Spirit in all that I do and say. 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 the circumstances they are in, 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 make mistakes and occasionally sin, but they do not cover up offences. They confess them, and deal with any consequences.

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 injustices 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 King Darius 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, King Darius 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 God as the living 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 to the living God in a foreign culture.

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 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 worse, to pattern their own actions and lives after ours. People of integrity live honestly in all situations, noticed or unnoticed.

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” as frauds. 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 unfair words or the behaviour of others, we remain faithful to God’s principles, and leave all the consequences of others’ actions with Him. The result of living with an undivided heart and being a vibrant witness for Jesus to the world around us, is 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 can cause me to lack sound judgment?
2. What are my personal challenges in living for convenience or being a person of integrity at all times?
3. People of integrity have a clear conscience – is there any clearing I need to do?
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, and have personally neglected to behave in ways that I know to be right and just. 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 have faithfully loved and cared for me. As I walk in Your ways, help me to become a person of integrity. I am forever grateful that You are a God who is faithful in all Your ways. AMEN

FULL OF JOY

Chapter 9 in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous discusses rebuilding relationships and the need to rebuild joy into our daily living. *"We aren't a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life."* On page 133 we even read this confident statement, *"We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free."* We don't even have to read the chapter very carefully to notice that the founders of AA link our misery to our self-will and addictive habits and our joy to our relationship with God. They found this truth in God's word and recognized its value in their daily living. Now they recommend it to all of us as we journey forward in our life with God in recovery.

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. (James 1:2-4 NLT)

Life in recovery can be challenging at times. We have joy in the fact that we are no longer in the pit of our addiction, but, we are now treading waters that are unfamiliar to us. People around us are encouraging us to stay the course but we are unsure, and, even fearful of our new environment. Those who have walked this path before us will reassure us that this is a natural reaction. We are unfamiliar with our daily lifestyle and are learning new ways to cope with what goes on inside us. We have been the "experts" in surviving our dysfunctional lifestyle but now we are the "newbies" in coping with life in recovery. Thankfully, God has promised to be with us throughout the transition process and show us that new way of life that is "happy, joyous, and free."

Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust. You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:1; 11 NKJV)

The key to this new way of life that is "happy, joyous, and free" is in our focus – our motivation -- as we now live each day for the glory of God rather than for self-fulfillment. Is there truly joy in walking in the ways of God? Sometimes we can easily say a definite "yes" as we experience the joy that results from making good decisions. At other times however, we find ourselves in a battle with our will, being tempted to do those familiar dysfunctional things of our past which caused us to grovel in the darkness of addiction. God has called us out of the

darkness we were in and invites us to now walk in the light of His presence. Like a good Father, God rejoices with us when we walk steadily forward, and, when we stumble and fall down, He encourages us to get up and keep going. God is always calling us to fullness of joy in our daily walk with Him.

How happy are the people who know the sound of joy! They walk in the light of Your face, O Lord. They are full of joy in Your name all day long. And by being right with You, they are honored. (Psalm 89:15-16 NLV)

Surrendering our minds to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is another key to bringing joy and peace to our whole being. God is a God of order; He is not a God of confusion. When we let confusion reign in our minds we live in turbulent waters and allow ourselves to be tossed about to and fro. Choosing for the calm waters where the Captain, the Lord of hosts wants to steer us, brings joy to our hearts and delight to those around us. Thinking and acting on our own self-centered thoughts brings confusion to us and grief to those who love and care about us. There is confident hope when we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. There is only despair when we choose again to follow our selfish ways and ignore the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

For God is not the author of confusion but of peace. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 14:33a; Romans 15:13 NKJV)

What steals our joy and causes us to stumble? The underlying trait that steals our joy and jeopardizes our life in recovery is pride. We begin to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to. We start to find fault in our recovery program, in the people around us, and in our leaders and mentors. We blame our environment and others for our discontent. We start to feel confident in our own ability to manage our own recovery. We begin to believe that we could return to our old habits and lifestyle and handle life more successfully than we did in the past. Sadly, our prideful thinking makes us feel we can succeed on our own. We forget that it is due to the help and guidance of our awesome God and those around us that we feel stronger.

You have felt secure in your evil ways. You have said, 'No one sees what I'm doing.' Your wisdom and knowledge lead you down the wrong path. You say to yourself, 'I am like a god. No one is greater than I am.' (Isaiah 47:10 NIRV)

When we start to think we are so great that we can do recovery alone, we need to share these thoughts with a trusted friend or mentor. Those in recovery

circles will understand what is happening within us. Physically we are now in a better place than we were when we came into recovery and we are more alive to the world around us but we will need the ongoing support of wise counselors to learn and establish safe boundaries in order to maintain this positive lifestyle. As we share our thoughts with those who know us, we will begin to laugh at ourselves as we acknowledge how ridiculous our prognosis of recovery on our own is. We came from a lonely forsaken place and now, by the grace of God, are coming to terms with the real person we are. Our joy in recovery will be restored as we rightfully give thanks for our current well-being to the God who brought us out of the mud and set our feet on solid ground.

The path of the virtuous leads away from evil; whoever follows that path is safe. Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall. (Proverbs 16:17-18 NLT)

If we desire to be joyful in our recovery, we need to always be mindful of our thoughts and actions. We need to find out what God's principles are for successful daily living and reshape our behaviour around them. We need to surrender pride in self every time it raises its ugly head. We need to remember that the Holy Spirit is always with us to give us wisdom and guidance. We need to admit our need of His power to change us and be willing to accept the fact that we cannot live a joyful life on **our** own.

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:10-11 NKJV).

As we practice these principles in all our affairs we will be able to say with the founders of AA, "We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What changes have I needed to make to experience joy in my daily living?
2. What steals my joy and causes me to stumble?
3. In what ways am I noticing the truth that as I walk with God, my life is happier, more joyous, and I feel free to be me?

Heavenly Father, Thank You for loving and caring for me even when I was in darkness and unaware of who You are. Forgive me for being prideful and for thinking that I could live a joyful life in recovery without You, and without those who counsel and mentor me. Thank You for pursuing me with Your unfailing love and for keeping me in the reality of the truth that You alone give fullness of life. I am forever grateful that You, the God of hope, will fill me with all joy and peace as I trust Your ways to move forward in my recovery. AMEN

LIVING WITH HONOUR

Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.
(1 Chronicles 29:12 NKJV)

Honour delights a person. It is nice to be told that we are appreciated for something special that we have done or achieved. Our desire, even as children, was that our parents, or others charged with our care, would love, value and honour us for who we are. When our care givers neglected our basic needs or caused harm to us in some way, we lost respect for them. As the years passed, we withdrew emotionally or physically from them and started to seek our worth in someone or something else. We got lost in a desperate search for love, affirmation and approval. Then, because of our actions when we were in bondage to our addiction, we seldom did anything that others would consider as honourable.

Regardless of our life's circumstances, God continues to love and care for us and He has declared, if we will turn to Him, He will bring us the honour our hearts long for.

At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you. I will rescue the lame; I will gather the exiles. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they have suffered shame. (Zephaniah 3:19 NIV)

To seek respect, worth, dignity, belonging or honour in or from another person is useless. Only when we see ourselves as God sees us can we truly know self-respect and value. God created us in His own image and He is the amazing creator of this universe we dwell in. Jesus demonstrated our significance in God's sight by giving up His life on the cross so that we could be reconciled to God and live with Him forever. The Bible tells us that we are precious in God's sight.

You made them [humans] a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor ... But we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, so that through God's grace he should die for everyone. We see him now crowned with glory and honor because of the death he suffered ... God says: You are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you.
(Hebrews 2:7 NIV, Hebrews 2:9 GNT, Isaiah 43:4 NLT)

We find it difficult to see value in ourselves because we are flawed persons. However, our flaws are no surprise to God and, just as a skilled artist can restore a valuable old painting to its original lustre, so God can restore our true beauty and worth. Once restored, we can live life with honour and be useful to God, our families, and our communities.

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord ... If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work. (Act 3:19 NIV, 2 Timothy 2:21 NLT)

It's time to live as honourable people. A life of honor begins when we choose to acknowledge that we are new creations when we accept Jesus into our lives. As we follow God's principles we are strengthened in the core of our being to do the good works that God prepared in advance for us to do. God will honour us as we honour Him by obeying His commandments.

We do not have to live any longer in unhealthy co-dependent relationships either anxiously seeking approval and affirmation, or, desperately hiding our worthlessness behind arrogant positions of power and control. We can confidently enter into God's original design for our life -- a life of love, honour, purpose, and peace. This is life at its best.

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 NIV)

HOW TO WELCOME HONOUR INTO MY DAILY LIVING

APPROACH GOD: Moses then said to Aaron, This is what the Lord spoke of when he said: Among **those who approach me** I will be proved holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored. Leviticus 10:3 NIV

WALK BLAMELESS: For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose **walk is blameless.** Psalm 84:11 NIV

CHOOSE WISDOM: The **wise** inherit honor, but fools get only shame. Proverbs 3:35 NIV

HUMILITY: Wisdom's instruction is **to fear the Lord**, and **humility** comes before honor. Proverbs 15:33 NIV

AVOID STRIFE: It is to one's honor to **avoid strife**, but every fool is quick to quarrel. Proverbs 20:3 NIV

APPLY CORRECTION: Whoever disregards discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever **heeds correction** is honored. Proverbs 13:18 NIV

SHOWING KINDNESS: Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is **kind to the needy** honors God. Proverbs 14:31 NIV

DO THE RIGHT THING WITH LOVE: Whoever **pursues righteousness and love** finds life, prosperity and honor. Proverbs 21:21 NIV

DO GOOD: ... but glory, honor and peace for **everyone who does good**: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. Romans 2:10 NIV

SERVE JESUS: Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor **the one who serves me**. John 12:26 NIV

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What lies am I believing which keep me from living as an honourable person?
2. In what ways are my actions reflecting God's principles which result in an honourable life?
3. In what ways am I honouring God with my life today?

Heavenly Father, All my life I've felt a need for approval and acceptance but have often looked for it in all the wrong places. Tonight I affirm the truth of Your word that as I follow You in all my ways, life, prosperity and honour will naturally flow to me. Thank you for your forgiveness, salvation, and acceptance. Thank you for naming me precious and honored in Your sight and for loving me unconditionally. I choose to honour You as my God, see myself as Your beloved child, and strive to love those around me as persons who are also made in Your lovely image. Amen

SHOWING RESPECT

Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. Fear God, and respect the king. (1 Peter 2:17 NLT)

When some folks were asked on a blog what makes a person worthy of respect they listed qualities such as: integrity, trustworthiness, adhering to a code of honour, goodness, decency, being respectful of others. Most of us would agree that qualities like these would be evident in people that we would respect. However, even in our new life in recovery, we often find ourselves behaving in ways that are totally opposite to what we deem is worthy of respect in others. We believe that we have good reason for not treating others with respect. When someone behaves badly, we judge they are not worthy of it. Politicians, church officials, and other leaders make faulty decisions or behave badly, and we reason they don't deserve respect either. People may do things that anger or frustrate us and we react with disrespect. In so many ways, we justify our disrespect even though God says to respect everyone.

Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs. (Proverbs 19:11 NLT)

Respect shows high regard for authority, other people, self, property, and country. We show respect by treating others as we want them to treat us. All people have value as human beings, regardless of their status or behaviour and we commit ourselves to living that way. Showing respect and being worthy of respect matters to God. The "Ten Commandments", (Exodus 20:3-17) given by God to His people, were instructions which, when followed, empowered God's people to honour God, and live respectfully and honourably with each other. The first four commandments were given to help people know how to respect and honour God, their creator. The following six were given to help them show respect to their parents and live morally and in peaceful harmony with their neighbours.

People who despise advice are asking for trouble; those who respect a command will succeed. (Proverbs 13:13 NLT)

It is God's will that we be respectful of our parents, of others, and of others' property. It is also God's command that we obey those He has placed in authority over us. This is difficult when we face others who have been disrespectful to us in a way that has harmed us. Some of us may attribute our low self-esteem or addictive lifestyle to the disrespectful ways others have

behaved towards us, either in word or deed. However, no matter how badly we have been treated by others, this does not nullify the commandments of God.

It is God's standard that as we forgive those who have been disrespectful towards us, God will forgive us when we ourselves have been disrespectful. Forgiveness breaks our bondage to the events that caused us to stray from being the person God created us to be. God is a righteous judge and He can be trusted to judge the other person's harmful actions. That person is accountable before God unless they also repent.

Servants, respectfully obey your earthly masters but always with an eye to obeying the real master, Christ. Don't just do what you have to do to get by, but work heartily, as Christ's servants doing what God wants you to do. And work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you're really serving God. (Ephesians 6:5-7 MSG)

The book of Genesis in the Bible tells us the story of Joseph, Abraham's great-grandson. Joseph was loved by his father but hated by his brothers who hurt him, schemed against him, and eventually sold him into slavery. While his sibling's treated Joseph horribly, God was still with Joseph. When Joseph was put up for sale at a slave market, he found favour in the eyes of an important official who bought him and made him his attendant. While the official was away on business, his wife tried to seduce Joseph. Because of his obedience to God and his respect for his master, Joseph refused her. In her subsequent disrespect towards Joseph, the official's wife unjustly accused him of attempted rape and he was thrown into prison.

While in prison, Joseph continued to honour God and respect those around him. With God's help he was able to correctly interpret the dreams of two of the inmates, one being Pharaoh's cupbearer. Pharaoh's cupbearer's dream was favourable and he was reinstated into Pharaoh's service. Joseph requested the cupbearer to bring his devastating circumstances to the attention of Pharaoh. The cupbearer promised to do so. Sadly, in yet another example of unfair treatment, the cupbearer failed to keep his promise. (Read the story in Genesis 39-42)

The frustration of being forgotten and let down was one more thing that Joseph had to deal with and overcome. However, he didn't stop living an honourable life of dignity and respect among his fellow prisoners, even though he must have

been feeling desperate for things in his life to change. Joseph lived to honor God and therefore he continued to respect others around him.

My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me. (Psalm 62:7, Psalm 50:15 NIV) In God's time, God honoured Joseph and He will do the same for us. Jesus said: ***Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*** (Luke 6:27 NIV)

Two full years later Pharaoh had a dream and none of the wise men of Egypt could interpret it. It was only then that the cupbearer remembered Joseph. God helped Joseph interpret Pharaoh's dream and the outcome was that Joseph was put in charge of the whole land of Egypt, being second-in-command to Pharaoh himself. This place of honour and respect was the beginning of the fulfillment of the dreams God had given Joseph as a child.

Joseph may have had some pity-parties over the disrespectful people and unfair events that took place during his life, but he continued to be obedient to God even through the darkest of days. When we follow the ways of the living God, He is faithful to do all that He has promised in His word. He will honour us before others when we honour Him with our lives.

But now the Lord declares: 'Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained.' (1 Samuel 2:30 NIV)

We have all heard the saying, "actions speak louder than words". This is extremely important in the matter of giving respect to those around us and over us. As God has been kind and merciful to us, he commands us to be kind and compassionate towards others – all others. God's standard is not, "some of the people some of the time". God's standard is, "all of the people in all circumstances". It seems an impossible standard and, without God's grace and forgiveness, it is. With God's grace and forgiveness, we will be able to grace others as we have been extravagantly graced by God.

Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets. (Matthew 7:12 NLT)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION and DISCUSSION

1. In what situations am I challenged to show respect? When do I justify my own disrespectful words or behaviour?
2. What would it take for me, in “less than perfect” situations, to practice ongoing respect? What changes do I need to ask God to make in me so I can live this way?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I ask you to give me the desire and the wisdom to obediently follow You regardless of my circumstances. Your word says, both riches and honour come from You and You hold strength and power in the palm of Your hand. When hard times come, help me to remember Your word. Help me to honour and respect you not just in what I do, but also in my thoughts, motivations, and desires. Strengthen me and help me to show respect to each person I meet, even when I disagree with their ways. I am forever grateful that You care for me. 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 sometimes occurred when they were children and they were unable to correctly process or reason why they happened. Without knowing an effective way to express the impact of these events, their boundaries were weakened and they learned a pattern of responding that was unhealthy. Family breakdown, abuse, discrimination, and bullying are examples of situations to which many of us have been exposed and found ourselves feeling forced to do something which did not contribute to our own well-being. We simply learned to cope in whatever ways we could.

Our Heavenly Father is aware of all the events of our lives, and when we enter into a living relationship with Him through Jesus, He will help us rebuild safe and healthy boundaries so we can experience the fullness of life He created us to enjoy.

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 ways 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, created to live with meaning and purpose.

Here 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 steal the satisfying life that God offers us.
- ✚ We get rid 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 protects love, because we are taking a stand against 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 every situation and choose to

wholeheartedly follow His ways. We purposefully choose to live in an atmosphere of safety, blessing, and encouragement. Here are some actions we can take that will help us set healthy boundaries with others:

- ✚ We name behaviours that are safe and unsafe 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, 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 on my own wants or setting boundaries on those I am in contact with?
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 to You today and present my life before You, past, present, and future. I want to live for You. I want to live in the safety of Your love. Heal me from those things in my past that impact my current relationships. Forgive me for ignoring those boundaries that bring safety to my life. Give me the desire, the courage, and the strength to follow Your principles each day. I am so thankful that your grace is greater than anything that has wounded me. Teach me how to love You and to love others, so that my relationships are healthy and balanced. Jesus, you are the way, the truth, and the life. I choose to follow you from this day forward. Amen

ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Practicing an attitude of gratitude – is this just a happy little catchphrase or is it a way of facing each day that changes our perspective on life? Is being thankful in all circumstances an impossible command to fulfill, or, is it the key to a fulfilling life?

Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. (1 Thess. 5:16-18 NLT)

There's a wonderful story in the Bible that illustrates the gratitude principle. A king and his people were being attacked by some armies who were much bigger and stronger than they were. The king and the people were under intense pressure and filled with fear. The king's FIRST response was to speak to God about his situation. He called the people together, led them in a prayer which included GIVING THANKS to God for His presence with them, His supreme power over them, and His history of helping the people who worshipped Him. Is GIVING THANKS our first response when trouble lurks in our minds and circumstances?

God's heart was touched by the king's gratitude for things He had done in the past and also by his trust in coming to Him for help in this situation. Through a prophet God told the king that he wouldn't have to fight this battle and, in spite of the challenging circumstances that were clearly evident, they were not to be afraid or discouraged. They chose to believe God and to act courageously on what God said, and, true to His word, God took care of them. Their part? Sing and give thanks to God. Really?

The king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising him for his holy splendor. This is what they sang: "Give thanks to the Lord; his faithful love endures forever!" AT THE VERY MOMENT THEY BEGAN TO SING AND GIVE PRAISE, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves. They began attacking each other. So when the army of Judah arrived at the lookout point in the wilderness, all they saw were dead bodies lying on the ground as far as they could see. Not a single one of the enemy had escaped. (2 Chron. 20:21-22, 23b-24 NLT)

When is the last time you tried to sort out a problem situation by singing and giving thanks to God? Sound ridiculous? Maybe, but trusting in God's supreme control and God's plan, and going forward with confidence in God's ability to sort out any problem, is certainly a life recovery principle we need to start

applying to our challenging situations. Together, with this particular king and his people, we may be able to return home from our battle with much joy, recognizing that God fought for us and eliminated our enemies.

There are many battles in our lives that are much bigger than we can handle. Often our first response is to worry, work, lie, cheat or scam our way through circumstances, which we project are overwhelming. It's time we did what this king did. We need to FIRST GIVE THANKS for God's goodness to us in the past, then consult with God about our current problem, listen for His direction, act on it, and leave the results with Him. His direction may come through His word, His promptings from the Holy Spirit within us, or another person. Our part is to just do those things that God tells us to do, even if we have to force our minds and hearts to do so. To overcome worry and fear in the face of our difficulties, we must see our great God as He is -- much bigger than our most troublesome problems.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV)

This same GRATITUDE PRINCIPLE was demonstrated by Jesus one day when He too faced an overwhelming problem. More than 5000 tired and hungry people were before him in a remote area and His disciples were not feeling hospitable. The disciples told Jesus to send the crowd away so they could find food and lodging in the nearby villages and farms. The disciples were aware of the needs of the crowd and the physical constraints of the area and assessed that it was best that the crowd provide for their own needs. The disciples were unable to see how these needs could be met otherwise. They brought to Jesus the only resources available which were five small loaves (probably bun sized pita bread) and a couple of small fish.

What was Jesus response? ***"Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over."*** (Luke 9:16-17 NIV)

God knows each of us, what resources are available, and the true nature of our need. God promises to supply all our needs so that we may have enough to generously share with others. ***And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*** (Philippians 4:19 NIV)

WHY GIVE THANKS WHILE STILL FACING CHALLENGES? That's how we acknowledge the truth that God is our provider and that everything we have comes from Him. That's how we remind and encourage our hearts that God truly is with us and we do not face our problems alone. Believing and acting on these truths, WITH AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE, will eliminate fear and produce stability and security within us.

As we practice an attitude of gratitude, regardless of our circumstances, we will find courage for the day before us. We will join with people who through thousands of years have reaped the blessings of thankfulness -- people, such as those noted in the Old Testament, pilgrims in North America, old timers in AA, and others known to us. These people have practiced an attitude of gratitude and have shown us the way forward in our recovery with Jehovah-Jireh, the God who provides.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. When do I have an attitude of gratitude? When don't I?
2. What's my default reaction when I face overwhelming problems?
3. How would I need to change in order to face overwhelming problems with thanks and trust in my Heavenly Father, like Jesus and this king demonstrated?

Heavenly Father, Thank You for pursuing me with Your love and for bringing me out of the pit of addiction into recovery with You. Thank You for caring for me, even when I was not aware of You, or of the death and resurrection of Jesus to pay the price for my sin. Help me to move forward in recovery in the sure knowledge that whatever circumstances come my way, You will be with me. I am so grateful I don't have to face my problems alone. Help me to develop a consistent attitude of gratitude. Thank You for being a faithful God on whom I can rely to meet all my needs. AMEN

PERSEVERANCE

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.
(James 1:2-3 NIV)

In a world where quitting has become chronic, God says persevere! Persevering through the tough times is the surest pathway to building a life that has meaning. In the Bible we read an example that compares competing in a race to living life. When a person runs a race they do not put on extra clothing or carry things in their hands or on their backs. That would be ridiculous. Runners usually strip down to the minimum clothing they can wear because they want to be free to run and not to have to worry about excess baggage which may cause them to stumble. That's what we need to do in our everyday lives. We need to strip away everything that would hinder us in freely moving forward.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1 NIV)

Training for a race is painful for any runner because muscles and ligaments are being stretched and built to sustain the runner throughout the race. Persevering through stress and pain is how runners build their bodies and fortify their stamina. When we begin to change our ways and choose to run the race that God has marked out for us, we will undergo difficult and painful experiences. We may need to train our minds to overcome the cravings of our bodies. Our feelings may rebel against our mind as we say "**NO**" to our body and those things that would cause us to stumble. Like the runner, the only way we can build the stamina to live life to the full is to persevere through whatever challenging circumstances we may encounter.

Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:4 NIV)

When a race is scheduled there is a plan, rules, an itinerary, a date with starting place and time, the route, and the finish line. Many people register to run in the race. There may be a gold medal to be achieved at the end of the race or some similar prize. In life, God has a plan for each of us. This plan sets out the date, time and place of our birth, the rules that will enable us to live life to the fullest, places where life will take us and the number of our days on earth. As believers in Jesus there is also a prize of eternal life with Him. Like a determined

runner, run the race God has set before us, regardless of whatever pain and discomfort we may encounter. Alternatively, we may lose heart when pain and discomfort challenge us and unwittingly stray from the chartered path of the race God has prepared for us. By straying from the path that God has planned for our lives we may delay, or maybe never know, the good things that He has prepared in advance for us.

....he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:25-28 NIV)

When a runner is serious about training for a race they may arrange for a coach or trainer to help them. In a similar way we can seek help from our Lord Jesus and those who follow Him closely. Like the runner, we need wisdom and knowledge so that we can prepare ourselves for the task ahead. We need to pray and draw close to God. We need the Lord's guidance. We need help from family, counselors and friends.

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16 NIV)

God has told us to give all our cares and anxieties to him because He cares for us. God will never give us more than we can handle. He promises to give us grace that is sufficient in our time of need. Just as the runner relies on the wisdom and knowledge of a trainer or coach, we need to rely on the word of God. We need to resolve in the deepest places of our being that the promises of God are true.

For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!" And through Christ, our "Amen" (which means "Yes") ascends to God for his glory. It is God who enables us, along with you, to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything he has promised us. (2 Corinthians 1:20-22 NLT)

Trust in God requires that we hold on to what is true even when circumstances, for a time, may challenge that. We need to pray and then pray some more. We need to look for what is good alongside what is troubling. We need to resolve

to persevere, even when we feel like giving up. In times of trial it is easy to believe that the meeting of our current need is at the center of the universe. In reality, the primary challenge is, do we truly believe that God will give us victory over trials and troubles if we persevere in doing what is right and good?

God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. (1 Corinthians 1:9 NIV)

Question for Reflection and Discussion

1. What am I hearing in my head when I am ready to give up on something tough?
2. What have I needed to "strip off" (thought patterns, relationships, habits) in order to run the recovery race well?
3. What new ways am I exercising and training my mind and emotions to live well with God in recovery?
4. How am I inviting God and other wise people to coach me in this new life?
5. What helps me to persevere when I encounter trials and trouble today?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, You are an awesome God and I give you thanks for your unconditional love for me. Thank you that you never leave me nor forsake me. Thank you that you persevere with me, even when I deliberately choose to go my own way. Forgive me for the times I've blamed you for my difficult circumstances that are directly the result of my poor choices, or the poor choices of others. Thank you for sustaining me when things are tough. I choose follow your ways regardless of my circumstances. Help me Lord, to persevere. Amen

CHOOSING WELL

So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.. (Genesis 1:27 NLT)

God created women and men in His image and in His wisdom, included the supreme privilege of free will – the ABILITY TO CHOOSE. It was God’s intention that humans would have a relationship with Him built on holiness and righteousness. In the creation process humans were made last, not because they were unimportant but rather because they were the great masterpiece of God’s work. They were not made in the likeness of anything that had already been made but in the likeness of the creator Himself. God breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life, and he became a living being. When God saw what He had made He said it was “very good.”

God made men and women true and upright; we’re the ones who’ve made a mess of things. (Ecclesiastes 7:29 MSG)

When Adam and Eve CHOSE TO DISOBEY God’s instructions they separated themselves and all humans from God, and from the relationship He had planned with them. Jesus came to earth to do what was impossible for us – to give new life to all of us and restore the broken relationship with God. Reconciliation with God can only be attained through CHOOSING TO BELIEVE AND TRUST in the death and resurrection of Jesus as payment for our sins. Humanity once again has the OPTION TO CHOOSE whether or not we will believe what God says.

Then they asked him, [Jesus] “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 choices we make affect our own life and the lives of our loved ones. When we do not acknowledge that God exists then we are CHOOSING TO REBEL against God. We may not be aware that our actions reflect this rebellion towards God as He may not even be on our horizon. However, if we are not loving God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength and loving our neighbor as ourselves, then we are CHOOSING TO DISOBEY God and that has a negative impact on every relationship. Our unkind actions and the gaps created by failing to reach out with care and blessing, affect everyone in our circle of family and friends.

God describes this condition this way: ***Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster ... love the Lord your God and keep his commands, decrees, and regulations by walking in his ways. If you do this, you will live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you ... But if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and if you are drawn away to serve and worship other gods, then I warn you now that you will certainly be destroyed.*** (Deuteronomy 30:15-18a NLT)

To a sensible person these would seem like easy choices – life over death; prosperity over disaster; blessings over curses. Unfortunately, many of us CHOSE TO FOLLOW OUR OWN WAYS AND DESIRES and suffer the harmful consequences. Why? We don’t want to give up our sinful pleasures, and we want to maintain control of our circumstances. Many of our sinful practices are destructive and yet we CHOOSE TO CLING to them because we enjoy them. Sin can be very pleasurable for a time! Getting our own way seems like the most convenient and pleasant path for a time. That’s why we choose for it. God, through the death of His beloved son, has shown us the cost of our sinful choices. Jesus died a punishing death on a cross to pay the price for our sin. God desires us to come to Him and CHOOSE TO ACCEPT HIS FORGIVENESS. He is pursuing us with His love. His grace is sufficient to fulfill the deepest longings of our soul. When we CHOOSE TO WALK IN GOD’S WAYS and become a doer of His word, our hearts will be filled with His peace and our lives with His blessings.

Regrettably many people who come to God think they can live any way they choose as long as they attend church, read the Bible, complete an honest set of steps, pray on occasion, and call Jesus “Lord.” They believe these activities put them in right standing with God regardless of the fact they consciously continue to sin knowing they are disobeying the word of God. We cannot serve both our sinful nature and God at the same time. Our God is a Holy God and will not accompany us in the presence of sin.

The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil. Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. (1 Peter 3:12, Matthew 7:21 NLT)

Too often we CHOOSE TO DO JUST WHAT WE FEEL LIKE DOING when we feel like doing it. If our desire is to have a relationship with God, we cannot behave in this way. A person who chooses to live for God must surrender their life to

the ways of God. They must CHOOSE TO FOLLOW GOD'S PRINCIPLES as the Spirit of God directs them.

When we are truly surrendered to God, regardless of our feelings, we will CHOOSE TO OBEY Him because we are committed to doing what He says. We will study and reflect on His Word in the Bible and seek guidance from our pastor or other responsible Christians to understand what God is saying. When we do things God's way our lives will demonstrate the fruit of the Holy Spirit who lives within us. However, if we CHOOSE TO RETURN TO OUR FORMER WAY OF LIFE we will no longer exhibit the qualities of the Kingdom of God.

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
(Galatians 5:22-23 NLT)

If we are missing any of these attributes in our lives, it's likely because we are making SELF-WILLED CHOICES and doing things our own way rather than God's way. A CONSCIOUS CHOICE TO FOLLOW GOD'S way brings change in our lives. It may not be instant change but as we choose to obey God, our relationship with Him and others will prosper and we will grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus and be complete in Him.

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. (Isaiah 55:6-7 NIV)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What effect has my history of choices in pre-addiction, in addiction, and now in recovery had on my life?
2. How has making a conscious choice to learn and follow God's ways supported my new life in recovery?
3. ***"Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster"*** -- what does this choice look like in my life today?
4. What needs to change in my beliefs and desires so my choices more and more reflect God's life in me?

Heavenly Father, You made me and know me. You know all my ways and are familiar with the former path I chose. My relationship with You, my family, and my friends have suffered because of my fleshly desires and self-centered choices. Your Word says You will give me the desire and power to do what pleases You. My desire is that the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control would be evident in my life. From this day forward I choose life because I choose You. Thank You for caring for me. AMEN

How To Enjoy A 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 them independently from God. This is a wonderful 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 over to God's care, we find a solid foundation upon which to build a new life. All it takes is a confession of our sin and brokenness to God and a decision to turn away from that towards God's loving care. When we invite God to come into our lives we find that He is ready and waiting. A simple prayer like the following, offered sincerely, establishes this new relationship of God that will last forever.

God, my life is unmanageable without you. You created me to live filled up 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 filled up with Your Spirit. Come into my heart and make me clean. Teach me your will. Transform my way of thinking. Strengthen me to obey all that you show me.

If you prayed that prayer sincerely from your heart, God receives you and forgives 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 helpful information to help you move forward in your journey with God. Please contact us. You'll find our contact information on the front cover of this booklet.