

**LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY**

# **Daily Meditations**



**AUGUST 2023**



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*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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## JUST FOR TODAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## SOME AREAS OF ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCY

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

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

## 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.



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### Daily Meditations

**AUGUST 2023**

#### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

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#### PHOTOS

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

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

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

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

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

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

# NOTES

AUGUST 1, 2023

## GETTING CLEAN AND SOBER – DOES IT MATTER TO ANYONE?

Do I matter? Does anyone notice me? Does anyone care? These are the types of questions many of us ask ourselves when we begin to consider sorting out the chaos of our lives and giving our will and life over to the care of God.

In the Bible we read the story of a woman who had been disabled for 18 years. That's a long time. She was bent over and couldn't straighten up. So many things in life were difficult or impossible for her to do. She knew that people noticed her, but for all the wrong reasons. Did anyone care about how she felt or did her condition matter to anyone?

While we don't know all the details of her story we know that this woman must have heard about Jesus and how He cared for people and was doing amazing things among them. She got herself to the place where Jesus was teaching, but in their culture, and at those gatherings, only men could speak so she had to remain silent. Would anyone notice her? Did she matter to God? Did Jesus care?

*When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.* (Luke 13:12-13 NIV)

***God has  
solutions for all  
the problems  
we face  
whether it's  
problems  
brought on by  
our own actions  
or the actions of  
others.***

God sees each of us today just like Jesus saw that woman. God cares and has solutions for all the problems we face, whether it is problems brought on by our own actions, the insensitive actions of others, or just by life in general. God wants us to have fullness of life beyond all we could ask for or even imagine. God sees. God knows. God cares. We matter to God!

***As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*** (Psalm 103:13-14 NLT)

*Prayer: Gracious God, Thank You for caring about me and those things I am experiencing. Help me to seek You with all my heart and to trust You as You restore me to the new life You have promised me and for which I am thankful. Amen*

## UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS LEAD TO DISAPPOINTMENT

Unrealistic expectations will lead us to disappointment and, if we are not careful, may also lead us to relapse. Recovery is a journey not an event. It takes time to sort out what contributed to our problems and sent us down the path of addiction. We need to understand that challenging issues will arise while we are in the process of change.

***I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.*** (Philippians 1:6 NLT)

One of those unrealistic expectations is the speed with which we want our loved ones to rebuild their trust in us. We repeatedly let people down while in addiction. Even though we may be confident about the changes we will make, our loved ones need time to observe how we will handle the future challenges we will face. They need time to build trust and learn how to safely journey with us. As we are trusting God to work in us we can ask God to bless and also work in them.

***It's unrealistic to think we won't feel vulnerable as we seek to maintain our sobriety and repair our relationships.***

***For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.*** (Isaiah 43:19 NLT)

It's unrealistic to think we won't feel vulnerable as we seek to maintain our sobriety and repair our relationships. God is aware of all we face. He wants to care for us and give us peace in our

hearts. As we bring our worries and anxiety to Him in prayer we will settle down and begin to trust God as we see Him do what He says He will do.

***Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*** (Philippians 4:6-7 NLT)

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for my sobriety and the rebuilding that is taking place in many areas of my life. Help me to be patient as You continue Your work to perfect those things which concern me and hopefully, those things which concern my loved ones will disappear. Amen***

## WILLING TO BE CORRECTED

We all know that children need to be disciplined by wise guidance they receive from caring parents. We may assume that when we are grown, that stage of life is finished. However, from a spiritual point of view, there is no time in our life when we don't need correcting because circumstances keep changing and we have limited understanding and often get used to bad habits. There's always more we need to learn about some issues and then be willing to receive correction when we are in error.

***My child, listen when your father corrects you. Don't neglect your mother's instruction. What you learn from them will crown you with grace and be a chain of honor around your neck.*** (Proverbs 1:8-9 NLT)

Something was wrong in our lives when we followed foolish thinking or incorrect advice and got tangled up in addiction and destructive life habits. Life with God in recovery is a season where we need to be humble about receiving correction, so we can move safely forward on a new life path.

***People who accept discipline are on the pathway to life, but those who ignore correction will go astray.*** (Proverbs 10:17 NLT)

Whether we like it or not or whether it is comfortable in the beginning or not, correction is an essential part of growth. Some thoughts and behaviours must be stopped. Others need to be practiced until we are good at them. No one ever wants to admit they have been mistaken but truthfully, we all have been wrong at some point. Now we have a wonderful opportunity to learn how to get things right.

***All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*** (2 Timothy 3:16 NLT)

God has kindly given us a detailed handbook which helps us to know what needs correcting in our attitudes, words, and actions. We can always depend on what we read in the Bible, and if we are wise, when what we are thinking or doing conflicts with Bible principles, we need to make the necessary changes.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to pay attention to Your Words of Life and humbly make any necessary corrections to my attitude and behaviour. Amen***

***To learn, you must love discipline; it is stupid to hate correction.***

***Proverbs 12:1 NLT***

## STORED ANGER – UNWANTED BAGGAGE

Unkind words said about us or unresolved hurtful events cause us to store anger which, if not dealt with, will turn into frustration, anxiety, hatred, despair, rage, and hopelessness. The effect of these feelings carried forward from childhood into adulthood causes us to seek out ways to control each situation we encounter. Often that positions us to hurt others before they hurt us. Alternatively, we may become people pleasers. In our desire to fit in with the crowd we may enter into unhealthy relationships which we believe will help fill the emptiness inside us.

Unfortunately, all the baggage we have not dealt with in life continues to accompany us. Stored anger will erupt and spew over into our current relationships causing frustration and pain to those who are close to us.

***God will reveal to us the underlying root cause of our anger if we ask Him.***

At some point we must admit that we need help to deal with what's going on inside. When we come to know Jesus and accept salvation through His death on the cross, we become new creations. The old goes and the new comes. We are challenged by God to demonstrate this transformation by acting and reacting in new ways.

***"... now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." (Colossians 3:8-10 NIV)***

Anger can be a cover for fear, unmet needs, offenses against us, and an unwillingness to change. If we ask God, He will reveal to us the root cause of our anger and will give us the grace to forgive those who harmed us. God will also forgive us for the harmful influence we have had on others as we lived an angry lifestyle.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to live in Your love today. When I have angry outbursts, help me to discern what is really going on. I want to be free from all that hinders my relationship with You and others. Please help me live in the love, joy and peace that comes from obeying Your principles in everything I say and do. Amen*

## LIVING ONE DAY AT A TIME

The Serenity Prayer is the common name for a prayer authored by the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. The first few lines are the most familiar, as they are regularly spoken at most 12-Step meetings but there are other treasures in how to live well in recovery in the rest of the prayer. After the words *"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 next phrase in this prayer is *"Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time."*

The Bible encourages us to commit everything we do to the Lord. This means, daily surrendering our will and our lives into God's care and, with His help, doing those things we have planned to do. Regularly taking personal inventory helps us maintain our recovery and enjoy each day without the burden of yesterday's issues being carried forward.

***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)***

How many times have we watched athletes and marveled at the ease with which they perform their sport? We know their ability was developed through rigorous training one day at a time, over many months and years. The spiritual discipline of a daily inventory, or even a moment-by-moment one, is required if we are to live well each day and grow strong in our life with God in recovery. We need to let the principles of God's word 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)***

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, As I follow Your principles for healthy living help me to live one day at a time, one moment at a time, in the awareness of Your Presence ever with me, as I choose to do those things that please You. Amen*

***Regularly taking personal inventory helps us maintain our recovery and enjoy each day without the burden of yesterday's issues being carried forward.***

## WISDOM AND PEACE FROM LIVING RIGHT

***People who wink at wrong cause trouble, but a bold reproof promotes peace. Deceit fills hearts that are plotting evil; joy fills hearts that are planning peace! A peaceful heart leads to a healthy body; jealousy is like cancer in the bones. When people's lives please the Lord, even their enemies are at peace with them.*** (Proverbs 10:10, 12:20, 14:30, 16:17 NLT)

It's little wonder that while in addiction our lives were filled with problems and unrest. How many times did we overlook wrong, plot evil, tell lies, and look with jealousy at what others owned or had accomplished? Now in recovery we say we want the benefits this new life with God has to offer, but sometimes we don't trust that good things will come unless we use some of our old ways to get them.

***God's will  
and God's  
ways work  
every time  
and will  
bring us  
peace and  
stability.***

What if we were to tell the truth all day long? In the movie "Liar Liar" Jim Carrey found out how difficult it was to tell the truth all day long. Repeatedly he was confronted with the many ways he was used to lying. Are we willing to expose the habit of lying so we can finally live in peace?

Health professionals around the world confirm the claim of the above Scripture verses, that as we live peaceful lives we experience health in our bodies, and when we live stressful lives, we tend to get ill.

When we live according to God's principles we have this amazing promise from God—that even our enemies will be at peace with us. It doesn't happen overnight, but repeatedly old-timers in recovery claim that, as they walk the walk, the promise of restored relationships becomes real and enemies of old, often become friends. These renewed relationships require us to let go of jealousy and grudges against others and simply work on our own shortcomings. We need to accept others who have flaws, just as God and others have accepted us.

***And this righteousness will bring peace. Yes, it will bring quietness and confidence forever.*** (Isaiah 32:7 NLT)

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, Your will and Your ways are continually proven to work. Thank You for the peace and stability You give me as I turn my will and life over to Your care and choose to follow You in all my affairs. Amen*

## LOVE IS NOT RUDE

Being rude refers to words or actions that are improper, impolite, or crude, and have the intent to offend or put down a person or a group that the offender disagrees with. The Lord Jesus told us to love one another as He has loved us therefore, we should never by our words or actions humiliate others, regardless of their position, their viewpoint, or their religion.

***You must love one another, just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples.*** (John 13:34b-35 NIRV)

Seeing the insanity of our lifestyle in addiction, others may have made rude remarks about how we looked or behaved and our retort right back at them was likely rude with maybe a few swear words thrown in. We were offended and defensive because even in our insane world their words hurt. Words can so easily be weapons that wound.

***I said, I will be careful about how I live. I will not sin by what I say. I will keep my mouth closed when I am near sinful people.*** (Psalm 39:1 NIRV)

Sometimes being rude is an attempt to make ourselves look bigger or better in the eyes of those around us. However, rudeness is not in keeping with the life we are regaining with God and, if we are prone to being rude, we need to ask God to remove this defect of character. Prejudice against others often causes a person to speak crude words or make inappropriate gestures. Gentle words and wise actions will weaken the stronghold of discrimination.

***A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words cause quarrels. May my spoken words and unspoken thoughts be pleasing even to you, O Lord my Rock and my Redeemer.*** (Proverbs 15:1; Psalm 19:14 TLB)

In the past we lived as we wanted but now God has called us to live His principles in all our affairs. That means being kind and compassionate towards one another and living the principle that, "Love is never rude".

*Prayer: Gracious God, Forgive me for times I have spoken rudely to others. Please help me speak with kind words that build others up and never use words that would tear them down. Amen*

***We should  
never by  
our words  
or actions  
humiliate  
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regardless  
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or their  
religion.***



## ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

A recent search for the word "encourage" in the Bible brought 92 direct references. This is obviously a quality of character that matters to God.

***Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, "How can I help?"*** (Romans 15:1-2 MSG)

The dictionary definition of "encourage" includes these ideas: to give support, confidence or hope; help or stimulate to develop; inspire, motivate, nurture, champion, and strengthen.

***So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.***

***(1 Thess. 5:11 NLT)***

When we truly love and care for a person our desire is for life at its best for them. We need to take time to listen to and talk with our loved ones or friends who are struggling and try to understand what is going on in their lives. Sometimes just discussing a problem helps a person find a solution or resolve an issue. Of course, not everything can be resolved that easily. We can show we care about a person by following up with a phone call, a note, another meeting, or whatever it takes to help that person get through the troublesome time they are experiencing.

***May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had.*** (Romans 15:5 NIV)

Demonstrating to others that we care about them is encouragement to them whether the problem is resolved or not. If God had not come alongside us when we were struggling and encouraged us to try again, where would we be today?

Let's look around each day and see the opportunities that God is giving us to encourage others with the same comfort and encouragement we ourselves have received.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to take my eyes off myself and focus on the divine encounters You are giving me to encourage others. Amen***

## GOD'S GUIDANCE BRINGS JOY

Thinking and acting on our own self-centered thoughts often results in confusion and grief. Too often when we choose to follow our familiar selfish ways and ignore the guidance of the Holy Spirit we end up in despair. On the other hand, when we walk surrendered to, and empowered by, the Holy Spirit we experience more and more confidence and hope.

***Our hope comes from God. May He fill you with joy and peace because of your trust in Him. May your hope grow stronger by the power of the Holy Spirit.*** (Romans 15:13 NLV)

What steals our joy in recovery and causes us to stumble? The main root cause is pride. We begin to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. We start to find fault in our recovery program, the people around us, and our leaders and mentors. We blame others and our environment for our discontent. We begin to feel confident in our own ability to manage our own recovery. We begin to believe that we could return to our old lifestyle and handle it more successfully than we did in the past. Our prideful thinking makes us feel we can succeed on our own without the help and guidance of God, and that sadly is a deadly error of judgment.

***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)

God is a God of order; He is not a God of confusion. Surrendering our minds to Him brings peace to our whole being. When our hearts are quiet we begin to notice beauty around us, and in us, and in others, and that results in quiet joy deep within.

***Prayer: Gracious God, Forgive me for the times I think I can take care of myself. Once again, I admit that I am powerless to live life without You. I turn my will and my life over to Your care. Help me to know the peace and joy that comes from wholeheartedly surrendering to You and Your ways. Amen***

***God is a God of order; He is not a God of confusion. Surrendering our minds to Him brings peace to our whole being.***

## ANTIDOTE FOR THE POISON OF ANGER

The only antidote for hurt, frustration, and anger is love and plenty of it. Jesus promises us love that runs deeper than any wound. Will we receive it? Many of us reject Jesus' offer of love. We want love from the people we want love from – whether they are healthy enough to give us love or not. Some of us would rather live in anger and frustration at the lack of another's love for us than open our hearts to the rich and freely given love of God.

**We can dare to forgive others because we know we've been forgiven and accepted by God.**

***And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*** (Ephesians 4:30-32 NLT)

Hanging on to our bitterness and seeking revenge sickens our souls. Outbursts of anger are like poison which, over time, will destroy us and harm our loved ones. Our anger may also cause sickness in our loved ones.

Anger can be dealt with by receiving love and forgiveness from God. Jesus took the anger and violence in our hearts to the cross so that we could receive forgiveness and healing in exchange. When we consider and experience the love that Jesus has for us, we'll want to pass it on to others. It's time to let go of everything that hinders our healing and recovery. We need to accept God's forgiveness for the wrongs we have done, and in turn, forgive those who have wronged us.

***So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*** (2 Corinthians 5:16-17 NLT)

***Prayer: Loving God, I dare to love because You first loved me. Please help me get rid of the resentment and anger that is stored deep in my soul. As You have forgiven me, I choose to forgive those who have harmed me. I am grateful that Your love runs deeper than my wounds. Help me to love and care for others as You love and care for me. Amen***

## ROOTING OUT ENVY

Envy is included on many lists of character defects. Envy is the sense of wanting what others have or feeling that we deserve more. The Bible speaks about this negative character trait in strong terms saying that if we harbour feelings of envy, it pollutes us, and makes us "unfit for God."

***For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts of lust, theft, murder, adultery, wanting what belongs to others, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, pride, and all other folly. All these vile things come from within; they are what pollute you and make you unfit for God.*** (Mark 7:21-23 TLB)

Wanting what others have or feeling we deserve more is opposite to living in contentment with what we do have. God created the earth and humans so that we could be in relationship with Him. God chose not to give humans the knowledge of good and evil. Satan, the deceiver, twisted the thoughts of the first humans by causing them to envy God and be like Him with the knowledge of good and evil. What a mess that created! Jesus, on the other hand, did not hold to being equal with God, but humbled Himself and came to earth to die for our sins. Jesus set aside His majesty in heaven so He could come and liberate us from the sin debt we owed. This was God's way of restoring His relationship with humans and giving them life with Him forever.

***Rest in the Lord; wait patiently for him to act. Don't be envious of evil men who prosper.***

***Psalms 37:7 TLB***

***A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.*** (Proverbs 14:30 NIV)

We are instructed by God to look to Him for all we need and to give thanks for the generous gifts He provides for us each day. God will give us everything we need to live the life He has prepared for us. Being contented in God's care with what He has provided for us will free us from the character defect of envy.

***You want what you don't have, so you kill to get it. You long for what others have, and can't afford it, so you start a fight to take it away from them. And yet the reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it.*** (James 4:2 TLB)

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for taking good care of me. Forgive me for being discontented and for envying what others have. Help me to be like Jesus and live life as You planned it for me, and be ever thankful that You will provide all that I need. Amen***

## VALUING THE ORDINARY

One of the most remarkable aspects of the 12-Step movement founded by Alcoholics Anonymous is the emphasis on ordinary people – even broken and pretty much washed-up folks. These are the ones who can serve others well and be the support strugglers need as they find their way to sobriety and the life they were created to live. Twelve step organizations are not run by professionals. Central offices may employ special workers but the heart and soul of what goes on is done by ordinary people helping ordinary individuals stand up and move forward in their lives.

***The heart and soul of what goes on is done by ordinary people helping ordinary individuals stand up and move forward in their lives.***

***But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere.*** (James 3:17 NLT)

God's way of life for everyone is humility and down-to-earth loving and serving. We are called to follow the example of Jesus who had all the glory of heaven and yet laid it all down to come to earth to live among us. Jesus was born in humble circumstances – a stable. He grew up in a humble town – people asked this of Jesus' hometown, ***"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"*** (John 1:46 NLT) Jesus did not own any property and was homeless. He lived as an ordinary man so He could demonstrate how much God loves us and how powerfully God can use us when we surrender our will and our life into His care.

God wants to give us eyes to see the hidden value in an ordinary life, even a broken one. God wants us to operate with grace as we help others gather up the broken pieces of their lives and offer those seemingly useless bits to Jesus, so He can restore the masterpiece God created. We need to work together with others, acting with humility and gentleness, valuing everyone, because only God knows how to transform us into useful vessels designed for His purpose.

***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)

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to have the same humility that Jesus did and to value ordinary people in ordinary circumstances. Help me to see the beauty of their lives as we serve and support one another in the loving relationship You intended us to have. Amen*

## PATIENT ENDURANCE

We lived for so long doing what was right in our own eyes that we may have doubts about being able to live according to God's principles that we are learning about. God's ways are different from our former ways and from the ways of society in general but, with patient endurance and the Power that is greater than ourselves to help us, we can learn to live in ways that please God.

***The Lord says: "My thoughts and my ways are not like yours. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, my thoughts and my ways are higher than yours.*** (Isaiah 55:8-9 CEV)

A young child needs love and care and time to grow strong. When we are born again to new life we need God's love and care and time with the Holy Spirit to grow strong in our faith in God. We need to get to know God and trust His word. We need to believe that God exists and that He loves and cares for us. God's character is revealed by the love that Jesus showed when He came to earth to die for our sins.

***Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father who created all the lights in the heavens. He is always the same and never makes dark shadows by changing.*** (James 1:17 CEV)

When we are newly introduced to someone we only know what we have been told about them or what we have observed. If we desire to get to know the person better we need to spend time with them. In the same way, this is how we get to know God. Only by patient endurance and seeking God through prayer and meditation in the Scriptures will we get to know and understand God and the wisdom of His ways.

***For as you know him better, he will give you, through his great power, everything you need for living a truly good life: he even shares his own glory and his own goodness with us!*** (2 Peter 1:3 TLB)

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am glad that Your ways lead to a fulfilling life. Please give me the will and desire to be patient with myself, so I can endure the ups and downs of learning to practice Your principles in all my affairs. Amen*

***Do your best to improve your faith. You can do this by adding goodness, understanding, self-control, patience, devotion to God, concern for others, and love***

***2 Peter 1:5-7 CEV***

## HOLDING NOTHING BACK

Step 5 is often a tough step to complete. With great apprehension we have made a fearless moral inventory of ourselves and now we must admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. To expose what has gone on in our lives, even to ourselves, is humbling for we feel awkward and ashamed about some of the things that are on our inventory list.

***Let there be tears for the wrong things you have done. Let there be sorrow and sincere grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. Then when you realize your worthlessness before the Lord, he will lift you up, encourage and help you.*** (James 4:9-10 TLB)

***Allowing ourselves to grieve over the events we have participated in, is part of the healing process.***

Allowing ourselves to grieve over the events we have participated in is part of the healing process. It means we see the error of our ways and have a desire to change. God will encourage and help us heal from the source that set us on the downward spiral to addiction. He will also free us from those things which have been part of our lives but are no longer in keeping with God's will for us. The Power of God working in us will enable us to do those things that please God.

***For the Holy Spirit, God's gift, does not want you to be afraid of people, but to be wise and strong, and to love them and enjoy being with them.*** (2 Timothy 1:7 TLB)

Those who have travelled this path before us say we should hold nothing back because of guilt or shame. The Lord Jesus paid the penalty for our sin and endured the associated shame on the cross so that we might share in His glory. When we consider the price Jesus paid to give us new life, why would we hold on to guilt and shame when we could be gloriously free?

***Jesus led many of God's children to be saved and to share in his glory.*** (Hebrews 2:10b CEV)

***Prayer: Lord Jesus, Thank you for enduring the guilt and shame of my sin on the cross. Help me to humble myself and admit the exact nature of my wrongs so that I can be gloriously free in Your presence for evermore. Amen***

## OVERCOMING SHAME FOR PAST BEHAVIOUR

Life with God in recovery includes recognizing where shame is active in us and inviting God to heal the wounds that have caused us embarrassment and humiliation. We can recognize shame when we constantly feel unworthy, insecure, or inferior. The thought that isolation and aloneness would be easier to deal with than living in community is another telltale sign of shame.

***Instead of shame and dishonor, you will enjoy a double share of honor. You will possess a double portion of prosperity in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.*** (Isaiah 61:7 NLT)

The first step in rooting out shame is to receive God's forgiveness for any ways we have sinned against God and others. When we put our trust in what Jesus did for us on the cross, not only is our guilt removed, but God also promises to cleanse our consciences from the shame. When the evil one says our sins are unforgiveable we must counter this lie with the fact that Jesus is the perfect sacrifice for ALL our sins.

***Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.*** (Hebrews 9:14 NLT)

Memories of past behaviour can easily trigger shame. When we accept forgiveness of our sins from Jesus our past is blotted out and we become beloved sons and daughters of God with new hope and a future. We must focus our thoughts on this truth, intentionally affirming it as often as necessary. We must also behave in accordance with this truth rather than reacting to our feelings. When we resist the evil one's accusations in this way, shame will go and peace and stability will come.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You that Jesus died on the cross for me so I could be forgiven, cleansed, healed and made whole. I acknowledge that only You can restore me to new life and today I choose to put my trust in You to do that. Amen***

***The first step in rooting out shame is to receive God's forgiveness for any ways we have sinned against God and others.***

## WHOM HAVE I INJURED?

An important part of living with God in recovery is coming to an accurate view of what went wrong in our relationships and doing our part to make things right. What prompted us to physically, mentally, or emotionally, hurt another person? Regardless of the excuses we may make for our behaviour, we need to admit that we did cause harm to some family members and friends.

***Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*** (1 Peter 3:9 NIV)

***Whether a breakdown happened an hour ago or a decade ago, God is with us to help us work for reconciliation.***

Perhaps we spoke in anger or we used distance and coldness to wound others. Our lying, cheating, or stealing from others deprived them of peace of mind and emotional security. What we thought were “victimless crimes” always had a victim. Many of us used domineering and controlling tactics so we could manipulate others and ensure we got our own way. We were masters at playing the blame game and were unwilling to talk about our issues or take responsibility for the situations we created around us.

***A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth.*** (2 Timothy 2:24-25 NLT)

God created us to live in loving relationships. Whether a breakdown happened an hour ago or a decade ago, God is with us to help us work for reconciliation. As we seek His wisdom, God will show us how our attitude and behaviour harmed others, either directly or indirectly, and will help us become willing to make amends.

***Prayer: Loving God, Help me to have an accurate view of the underlying root cause of what went wrong in relationships where I know there is struggle or distance on my part. Please give me the humility and grace to confess my wrongs, make amends, and pray for those who have been impacted by my behaviour, so each one of us can be healed. Amen***

## APPROVAL SEEKING

All of us like to be appreciated when we have acted wisely or done a good job. The Bible tells us that after Jesus allowed John the Baptist to baptize Him, God spoke and said that He was well pleased with Jesus. God is an encourager and is pleased with us when we choose to follow His principles in all our affairs.

***And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.*** (Matthew 3:17 NIV)

In the above scenario, Jesus did not seek His Father’s approval, it was freely given. Often when we have received no encouragement or appreciation for a wise decision we have made, or a task we have completed with much effort, we are offended that no one took the time to say, “well done”. Because our efforts were not acknowledged, we felt the good we did was not valued, and rejection and self-pity flooded our thinking.

***Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.*** (Hebrews 10:35-36 ESV)

In the past we served our own selfish desires until our lives became unmanageable. Now we are beginning to make wise decisions and we want others to notice. We should not be discouraged when we feel the need for approval, instead we should look to the One who sees all things and tell Him what is going on within us. God will comfort and strengthen us in our time of need, and we will grow stronger in the knowledge of His ways if we do not give up.

***He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.*** (Psalm 25:9, 5 ESV)

For a time, we acted totally in self-interest, now we are learning God’s ways, and in time, God’s approval will be enough.

***Prayer: Loving God, Help me to appreciate what others do as they minister in Your name, and let my heart be satisfied with Your approval of what I do, knowing that You are pleased with me. Amen***

***Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.***

***Matthew 25:23***

## ACCOUNTABILITY: PRACTICAL TOOL FOR LIVING SOBER

As we continue our life with God in recovery it is wise to establish accountability for our actions, first to God and then to another person. Our accountability before God is to love Him and follow His principles in all our affairs. The other person to whom we are accountable is normally called our sponsor. This is someone who has agreed to see us on a regular basis to check how we are coping with sobriety and life in general. Accountability means we have agreed to certain rules of conduct and are making every effort to live by these rules.

**Accountability means we have agreed to certain rules of conduct and are making every effort to live by these rules.**

***Don't give any part of yourself to serve sin. Don't let any part of yourself be used to do evil. Instead, give yourselves to God. You have been brought from death to life. So give every part of yourself to God to do what is right.*** (Romans 6:13 NIRV)

As we journey, the tempter will certainly seek to invade our thinking by enticing us with thoughts of our old ways which were enjoyable for a time. When this happens, we need to pray and seek God to strengthen us against temptation. Our accountability is being challenged and we need to call our sponsor or pastor and speak with them about the battle that is going on within us. We need to be steadfast in our accountability.

***The weapons I fight with are not the weapons the world uses. In fact, it is just the opposite. My weapons have the power of God to destroy the camps of the enemy.*** (2 Corinthians 10:4 NIRV)

We need to stand firm on the truth that Jesus redeemed us from sin and evil, and that the Power of God to uphold our freedom lives within us. We are accountable to God to stand firm in His Power and obey His Word.

***For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*** (1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV)

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, Please strengthen me by the Power of Your Holy Spirit to remain accountable to You and faithfully practice Your principles in all my affairs. Amen*

## SURRENDERING TO THE TRUTH

Negative feelings are usually attached to a lie. To get beyond negative feelings we must reject the attached lie and choose for the truth while our feelings are still vulnerable. In faith, we choose to believe the truth we have learned and remind ourselves of this truth as often as necessary, while allowing the truth to determine our actions. When we do this, our feelings will follow our actions. As we apply these principles to our daily way of life, we will experience the peace and freedom that truth brings.

***We will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ*** (Ephesians 4:14-15 NLT)

In our society most people act in accordance with their feelings rather than allowing their actions to determine their feelings. Bad attitudes and addictive behaviours offer short term pacifiers and escapes but no real peace and blessing. When we determine to walk in obedience to God's principles we will have a life that is filled with love, joy, and peace.

***Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.*** (1 Corinthians 13:6 NIV)

Following God's path requires conquering our feelings when they don't line up with truth. We lay down our familiar self-centered ways and follow God's life-giving ways. Today we have a choice, to live by our feelings or to live according to God's truth. The former leads to disaster. The latter leads to life.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess I have allowed my feelings to shape my life for a long time and because of this the outcome has been disastrous, over and over again. Help me to live by Your truth and stand strong in Your love so my feelings have an opportunity to come into line with Your truth. Thank You for the peace that results when I follow Your principles for a purposeful life. Amen.*

***Today we have a choice either to live by our feelings or to live according to God's truth.***

## AND THE WINNER IS ...

Wealth is often seen as the source of contentment and happiness. The more money we have, the happier we think it will make us. People spend a fortune buying lottery and scratch tickets hoping to win the jackpot. Why do they spend so much money when the odds of winning are so low? The notion that money will solve problems and supply pleasure lurks somewhere not too far from the surface in most human beings. A person may feel secure if a welfare or pension cheque comes in each month while another person requires thousands of dollars on hand to get the same secure feeling. Most of us are not willing to admit the truth, that money does not bring contentment and peace, so we test this statement by pursuing ways to get more money.

**Wisdom  
pays  
better  
than silver  
does. She  
earns  
more than  
gold does.**

**Proverbs 3:14  
NIRV**

***Blessed is the one who finds wisdom. Blessed is the one who gains understanding. Wisdom pays better than silver does. She earns more than gold does. She is worth more than rubies. Nothing you want can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand. In her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways. All her paths lead to peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her. Those who hold her close will be blessed.*** (Proverbs 3:13-18 NIRV)

To avoid the frustration and pain of trusting in wealth, the Bible repeatedly tells us that happiness, peace, pleasure, and real contentment in life are found not in money, but in getting wisdom and understanding.

***If any of you needs wisdom, you should ask God for it. He will give it to you. God gives freely to everyone and doesn't find fault. Listen to advice and accept correction. In the end you***

***will be counted among those who are wise.*** (James 1:5, Proverbs 19:20 NIRV)

How do we get wisdom and understanding? The first and best way is to simply ask God to help us live by His principles as recorded in the Bible. The next best source that leads to our being blessed and contented is to listen to others' wise advice and accept correction. What advice are we going to seek from God and others so we can remove our erroneous thinking before we cause ourselves more pain?

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to search out the way of wisdom so I may find security and contentment in life rather than simply seeking to have more money. Teach me what I need to learn so I can safely tread the path of love, joy and peace to a meaningful life. Amen***

## MAKING MISTAKES

When we begin our new life with God in recovery we often get discouraged because we feel we are unable to control the urges of our old nature. But, as we choose to believe and act on the precious promises God has made to us, the new nature we have put on will develop and we will experience more control of our thoughts and behaviour. We have a power greater than ourselves working in us to help us avoid making the mistakes our old nature is demanding.

***For as you know him better, he will give you, through his great power, everything you need for living a truly good life: he even shares his own glory and his own goodness with us!*** (2 Peter 1:3 TLB)

We all suffer from making mistakes. We like to please ourselves and unwise decisions come from self-serving. When we turned our will and life over to God, we were made new in the spirit of our minds so, when reckless thoughts cloud our thinking, we need to pray and uphold the promises God has made to us. We have died to self and have been made alive in Jesus to live lives that are pleasing to God.

***He died for all so that all who live — having received eternal life from him — might live no longer for themselves, to please themselves, but to spend their lives pleasing Christ who died and rose again for them.*** (2 Corinthians 5:15 TLB)

The power greater than ourselves who lives within us is the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who renews our mind to make it conform to the will of God. We progress away from pleasing ourselves and making mistakes when we fix our mind on Jesus, the One who is faithful to perfect our faith.

***Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how his ways will really satisfy you.*** (Romans 12:2 TLB)

***Prayer: Lord Jesus, Please renew my mind by the Power of Your Holy Spirit so that Your life-giving words may cause me to obey You in all I do and say. Amen***

***We have a  
Power  
greater than  
ourselves  
working in us  
to help us  
avoid  
making the  
mistakes our  
old nature is  
demanding.***

## SELF SEEKING WILL SLIP AWAY

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous makes this statement: *“Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, and frightened?”* Also, included in the promises of AA is the Eighth Promise which begins with, “Self-seeking will slip away.” What is self-seeking?

We are all aware that selfish behaviour is very much involved in dysfunctional behaviour and an addictive lifestyle. We think about our own needs and don't care much about the needs of others. Self-seeking may cause us to do some things that seem considerate and helpful to others, but underneath the action is a desire to get something out of it for ourselves. It could be as simple as the desire for recognition and praise to build our self-esteem. It could also be more sinister with someone using what seems like good behaviour to manipulate a situation for their own selfish desires and goals.

***They didn't know that God's power makes people right with himself. They tried to get right with God in their own way. They didn't do it in God's way.***

***Romans 10:3 NIRV***

***For those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*** (Romans 2:8 ESV)

God is love and God calls us to live in truth and love. One of the descriptions of what love is NOT is, self-seeking.

***It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.*** (1 Corinthians 13:5 NIV)

It's time to give up the tunnel vision of first looking to our own interests and, only when it is convenient, looking to the interests of others. Most important, it is time to give our energy and attention to God's interests, because we will then experience the blessing of right relationship with Him and with others.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, You call me to live beyond the deceit of self-seeking. You want me to experience great joy and contentment and so from today help me to follow the path of honouring You by considering the needs of others before my own. Amen***

## LIVING SOBER – FACING PEER PRESSURE

At one time or another all of us have surrendered to peer pressure. We may not have wanted to do what our peers were planning to do, but went along with them because we did not want to cause a fuss or be ridiculed. To take a stand on moral grounds, or for the sake of our own well-being, is usually frowned on by peers who want us to join them in doing what they want to do. How do we handle a situation like this when we are trying to stay clean and sober?

***Stay away from the evil things a young person like you typically wants to do. Do your best to live right and to have faith, love, and peace, together with others who trust in the Lord with pure hearts.*** (2 Timothy 2:22 ERV)

When a person wants to become competent or professional in a sport they enjoy, they need to plan how they are going to achieve their goal. Training in the art of the sport and physical fitness together with a strict meal regime, will all be part of their scheduled program. If they allow peer pressure to mess up their training, then the person is giving up their goal to please their peers. Life is all about choices and we all need to plan how we will handle opposition to the principles we have set for our life.

***Dear friend, listen well to my words; tune your ears to my voice. Keep my message in plain view at all times. Concentrate! Learn it by heart! Those who discover these words live, really live; body and soul, they're bursting with health. Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that's where life starts.*** (Proverbs 4:20-23 MSG)

Sometimes peer pressure can be good for us. We have peers who are qualified to coach us in the best path for our life. They will encourage us to do the right thing by sharing their experience, strength, and hope with us. Together, with God's Word as our guide, we cannot fail.

***How can a young person live a clean life? By carefully reading the map of your Word.*** (Psalm 119:9 MSG)

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Please help me to keep the good plans I make for my life and not to be swayed by peer pressure to mess up. Help me to set a good example with my choices and behaviour, even in a moment of pressure, so that others may see a better way forward. Amen***

***Life is all about choices and we all need to plan how we will handle opposition to the principles we have set for our life.***



## THE RICH RETURN FROM BEING GENEROUS

God has made many promises, some of which are conditional on our obedience to do what He says. One of God's promises tells us that, as we bless others, He will give us back abundantly above all that we have given. Some of us are afraid to share or give to others fearing we will not have enough left over for ourselves. In God's Kingdom the opposite is true. He says the more we give, the more we will receive.

*Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 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 9:7-8 NIV)

***The way to having more than enough for all our needs is to trust God's word and act on it.***

When we were living a destructive lifestyle, some of us benefitted from the generosity of others. People helped us through monetary contributions to charities which prepared meals or maintained shelters. Some donated clothing to help keep us warm. God returns excessive interest on what is given to help others so we should all be seeking to give more rather than stockpiling what we have.

*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.* (Luke 6:38 NIV)

Some of us get caught up in putting our trust in gambling rather than God. We hand over our money in the hope of winning an amount that is significantly more than the wager we contribute. Statistics tell us the odds of winning are limited, and most of us lose what we put in. This, however, does not stop people gambling. God's promises on the other hand are trustworthy. The way to having more than enough for all our needs is to trust God's word and act on it.

*Riches and honor come from you alone, and you are the ruler of all mankind.* (1 Chronicles 29:12a TLB)

*Prayer: Loving God, Protect me from a poverty mentality that keeps me from sharing what I have with others. Please give me a generous heart and help me to trust You for the abundant blessings You promise when I do things Your way. Amen*

## WHAT DOES "ENTIRELY READY" LOOK LIKE

In Step-6 we say we are entirely ready to have God remove all the character defects we have listed in our fearless moral inventory. We are willing for God to remove our defective old self, which was controlled by our lustful desires, so we can live as a new person controlled by the Spirit of God and operating in the will of God.

*You were told that your foolish desires will destroy you and that you must give up your old way of life with all its bad habits. Let the Spirit change your way of thinking and make you into a new person. You were created to be like God, and so you must please him and be truly holy.* (Ephesians 4:22-24 CEV)

Being entirely ready to start afresh is the key to Step 6. We are making a complete life change. We have been travelling roads that are familiar to us and now say we are entirely ready to travel roads that are unfamiliar. We do not travel alone for God will always be with us, and the Holy Spirit will guide, direct, and teach us everything we need to be successful in our new life in recovery.

*You said to me, "I will point out the road that you should follow. I will be your teacher and watch over you.* (Psalm 32:8 CEV)

When we say we are entirely ready to have God remove our defects of character we need to be sure that we are not making room for some to stay. Often pride, loitering within us, will tell us that one or more of our characteristics are OK because that is just who we are. We need to be totally honest with ourselves about what is harmful to others and ask God to remove it.

*You are God's people, so don't let it be said that any of you are immoral or indecent or greedy.* (Ephesians 5:3 CEV)

*Prayer: Gracious God, I ask You to show me what I need to let go of and be willing to do so. Also, strengthen me to follow Your principles as I navigate my new life with You in recovery. Amen*

***When we say we are entirely ready to have God remove our defects of character we need to be sure that we are not making room for some to stay.***

## UNDERSTANDING THE CARE OF GOD

As we turn our will and lives over to God's care, we will find the safety and protection we have been looking for all our lives. How does Jesus make us safe and secure? Jesus used the example of a shepherd caring for sheep to explain this to us.

Jesus said: ***The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.*** (John 10:10-11 NLT)

***When we feel anxious, we need to stay close to the Shepherd and let Him gently gather us up in His arms.***

When a shepherd is out on the hillside he goes ahead of the sheep and they follow him to the green pastures and quiet waters that he finds for them. When evening comes he looks for a safe place for the sheep to rest. He will fence an enclosure for the sheep and leave only a small opening to the area where they are. He then will lie across this opening, acting as a door. Nothing can get in or out of this enclosure unless the shepherd gives access. The shepherd protects the sheep from anyone or anything which may seek to harm them.

***He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.*** (Isaiah 40:11 NIV)

Others, who have been responsible for our care may have abandoned us and left us to cope with whatever danger came our way. Jesus will never leave us. He is the Good Shepherd and when His sheep are in trouble He quickly comes alongside them and will protect and deliver them from whatever worries them. Like sheep, we are vulnerable and not equipped to handle many things which come against us. When we feel anxious, we need to stay close to the Shepherd and let Him gently gather us up in His arms.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, You are a Higher Power worth trusting with my life. Protect me from all danger, and comfort me in my difficult times. Help me to stay close to You and let you care for me as You guide me on the pathway to a new life. You truly are a Good Shepherd who tirelessly cares for Your sheep. Amen***

## LOVE IS NOT IRRITABLE

It is so much easier to name ways that others irritate us than to accept there are ways we irritate others. It may even be harder for us to admit that the real source of our irritability comes from deep inside us. God's Word is clear on this, that we cannot live as loving people and remain irritable or easily angered.

***Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.*** (1 Corinthians 13:5 NLT)

Many factors can cause or contribute to irritability, including stress, disappointment, hormonal changes, lack of sleep, and low blood sugar. When things are not going our way and we feel others are blocking us from accomplishing what needs doing, we easily complain and become irritable. Depression may be an off shoot of irritability. When we are feeling a bit low the behaviour or personality of another person may begin to irritate us. The other person may or may not be doing something wrong, but our inner pain is simply working out in us.

God cautions us to deal with whatever the underlying root of our irritation is, so we can avoid creating more painful issues to deal with.

***Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. A patient person is very smart. A quick-tempered person makes stupid mistakes. An angry person stirs up fights. And a person with a bad temper commits many sins.*** (Romans 6:12 NLT, Proverbs 14:29 ERV, Proverbs 29:22 NIRV)

If we ask Him, God will show us the truth about what is going on, give us comfort and healing for the pain we are experiencing, and show us a way forward. He will also provide everything we need to complete the tasks He assigns us. Will we choose to live in the care and guidance of God or remain as irritable people?

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Often I feel irritated and stretched by what is going on around me and inside me. Help me to look to You for help when my short fuse is about to blow and allow Your comfort and peace to work in me, so that the underlying problems related to my irritability may be resolved. Thank You for caring. Amen***

***God cautions us to deal with whatever the underlying root of our irritation is, so we can avoid creating more painful issues to deal with.***

## PATH OF PEACE

We all need time to relax and unwind from the responsibilities of a busy day. Our hearts need a chance to quiet down and be at peace. In recovery meetings we say the Serenity Prayer and invite God to bring peace to our hearts. The good news is that the peace of God is available to people like us – people who have lived in darkness and the shadow of death. God knows we are unable to find the way of peace on our own, so He accompanies us and guides us to it.

***Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.*** (Luke 1:78-79 NLT)

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What we could not do for ourselves, Jesus came to earth to do for us. Through Jesus death on the cross the price of our sin was paid for. God offers us forgiveness and peace of mind and heart. What do we need to do to obtain this gift? Repent and turn away from our dark deeds, turn to God, receive His forgiveness, and give our will and our life over to His care.

***Jesus said: I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.*** (John 14:27, 16:33 NLT)

Seeking to live in the peace that God gives may be challenging when circumstances or people are difficult to deal with. Jesus tells us the truth about these life situations – you **will** have troubles – but He tells us to take heart because we have His power within us to overcome all our troubles and be at peace.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to be conscious of Your tender mercy as You accompany me through difficulties and lead me to the pathway of peace. Help me to make the effort required to build peace into all my relationships. Thank You for caring and giving light to us who once sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. Amen***

## RECOVERING A LIFE OF RELATIONSHIP

God invites us to a relationship with Him, so we can know His principles for living right, and then set healthy boundaries in our relationships with others. God wants us to utilize the gifts and talents He has given us to help others. It's only as we reach out and serve others that we will get to know ourselves and the unique gifts and talents we have been given. This is life – the recovered life.

***What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.*** (1 Corinthians 2:12 NLT)

God never intended us to live in isolation. His plan is for humans to live in relationship with Him and with each other. Isolation may be more familiar to us, but with God's help, we can learn to maintain good relationships with others. God wants to reveal our true self and help us excel in serving others.

***For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.*** (Galatians 5:13 NLT)

We need the continued care and guidance of God to learn how to come alongside people and work co-operatively towards common goals. Trying to figure things out on our own is seldom the most productive way to go. We need to let go of the fear of making mistakes or looking stupid and learn to ask for help. Rather than running away in hurt and anger, God wants us to learn to communicate our feelings, so others can better understand and offer forgiveness where it is needed.

***If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*** (James 1:5 NLT)

***Prayer: Loving God, Help me to move from isolation and hiding behind walls to walking in healthy supportive relationships. Strengthen my resolve to work through any barriers that surface so my relationships with others will grow and mature. Amen***

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## WHO HAS AUTHORITY IN MY LIFE?

God's purpose in creating humans in His likeness was that they would live in loving relationship with Him and with each other. He formed the earth for humans to dwell in and wanted them to live well and have fullness of life in the beautiful environment He created. However, through Satan's lies and scheming, he managed to make the first humans believe that God was withholding something good from them.

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***God created mankind in his own image, in the image of  
God he created them; male and female he created them.***  
(Genesis 1:27 NIV)

Satan, a created angel, was once in a place of great importance before the throne of God but because he became prideful and wanted to elevate himself to having similar authority to that which God has, he was cast out of heaven.

***"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will  
make myself like the Most High."*** (Isaiah 14:14 NIV)

Now Satan roams the earth seeking to deceive and destroy humans who are made in the image of God. When we follow the desires of our own heart, whether in an addictive lifestyle or just ignoring the God who created us, we are allowing Satan to have authority in our lives. We are saying by our actions that we have found a person, a substance, or a thing that is better than what God has generously provided for us.

***Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor.***

***Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as  
better than yourselves.*** (Proverbs 29:23, Philippians 2:3 NLT)

Today, let's reflect on the God who created us and loves and cares for us, and then purposefully decide who we really want to have authority over our lives.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want Your plans and purposes to shape my life and how I live today,  
and every day. Give me understanding of Your Word as recorded in the Bible and reveal to me  
Your plan and purpose for my life so I may follow Your principles in all I do or say. Amen***

## THINKING AND EMOTIONS

The way we think has the most powerful impact on how we face each day. If we think we will have a stressful day then we probably will, because our thoughts feed our feelings and our feelings usually determine how we behave. We are not shaped by our environment as much as we are by our perception of our environment. Beginning our day with God and thinking right thoughts, even amid turmoil, will have a major impact on how the events of our day will go. If we think God will bless our day, then we are on the right track to having a good day. God knows the end of this day from the beginning, so we have nothing to fear if we walk with Him.

***This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be  
glad in it.*** (Psalm 118:24 NLT)

When we choose to handle the pressures of each day on our own, excluding God from the process, then we will have very little control over our feelings. As we face the difficulties the day brings, our emotional stability will come and go like the crashing waves of the sea, removing all peace.

If, however, we begin the day by asking for God's help, He will give us the wisdom to find a reasonable response to any difficulties. In addition, He will stay close to us as we navigate through each challenge we encounter.

***If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give  
it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you  
ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not  
waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as  
a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.***  
(James 1:5-6 NLT)

Thinking right will have a major impact on our emotions and on our general well-being. Life's events don't determine who we are, God our creator, determines who we are, and He will hold us steady with His righteous right hand.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, When challenges come, help me to prayerfully seek Your input. Help  
me to uphold the truth of Your word in every situation I encounter so that my thinking starts on  
the right track. Amen***

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