

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY

Daily Meditations



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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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Visit us at www.partnersinhope.ca or write to us at:

Partners in Hope Recovery Society
1906 – 615 Belmont Street, New Westminster, BC V3M 6A1

Email: pihrecovery@gmail.com
Phone or text: 604-215-0335

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DECEMBER 2018

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Evelyn Leeburn, Elsie Quick

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2018

TAKING TIME FOR WONDER

The hustle and bustle of shopping and Christmas events is in full swing. We hardly have time to stop and think. We are grateful at the end of a busy day that we can sit down, put our feet up, and rest for a while. On the night Jesus was born, shepherds who had been busy caring for their sheep all day finally were sitting down resting. Suddenly, angels appeared in the sky and their ordinary lives were changed forever.

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:8-12 NLT)

The shepherds took the angels at their word and went to find this baby. We don't know everything they communicated with Mary and Joseph, but we know that they took the time to let the amazing truth that God had come to earth in the form of a human baby settle in their hearts.

After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished ... The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them. (Luke 2:17-20 NLT)

This Christmas season, God is ready to break through into our ordinary lives. Just as the shepherds took time to go to Bethlehem to seek the baby Jesus, we need to reflect on, and take time to seek the risen Jesus. When we encounter Him, and spend some time in His presence, we will be filled with joy and peace, and our lives will be wonderfully changed forever.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am so grateful that Jesus came to earth as a baby to be my Saviour and Lord. I pause in this moment to remember the helplessness of the Baby Jesus and reflect on the awesome power of the risen Jesus and let the wonder of it all fill my heart once again. Amen

Just as the shepherds took time to go to Bethlehem to seek the baby Jesus, we need to reflect on, and take time to seek the risen Jesus.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2018

THE JOY OF NEGATIVE MEMORIES TRANSFORMED

As we prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ's birth, some of us may have negative memories and regrets about past Christmases. Dysfunctional families, addiction, poverty, and loneliness may have been part of our story. However, regardless of the many disappointments we may have experienced, God knows and cares about where we are today.

God's invitation to us today is to turn our negative memories and regrets over to Him and let Him heal our hearts and minds.

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born the prophet Isaiah wrote, "*The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.*" (Isaiah 9:2 NLT) We are the people on whom the light is now shining and for whom this great prophesy has been fulfilled.

At certain times in our past life may have been unmanageable and we were powerless to do anything about it. We felt unnoticed by family members and others. We came to believe that no one understood or cared about us. The truth is, God sees, God understands, and God cares about us. Jesus, God's Son, entered our human experience and identified with our pain. Jesus is known as Immanuel, God with us.

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. (John 3:16-18 MSG)

God's invitation to us today is to turn our negative memories and regrets over to Him and let Him heal our hearts and minds. We can give God the pain of our past and receive from Him a purposeful future. What a great exchange! This is the gift that Christmas offers to each person.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for the gift of Jesus. May I ever be mindful that Jesus came into the world that I might have life and have it to the full. Amen

MONDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2018

JUST FOR TODAY – I Will Pray Blessing

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.

We find it easy to bless some people but today we are asked to bless a person with whom we struggle to relate. How do we do that? If we're honest, most of us would like to simply avoid those with whom we struggle to relate. How and where do we find the desire and willingness to bless them?

We always want the other person to acknowledge what they did to us was wrong and to be sorry for what happened. We wait for them to make the first move. To bless someone with whom we struggle to relate might mean reflecting on our part in whatever went wrong and taking responsibility for it. Making amends may also be part of the blessing. Depending on the incident, sometimes the best way to bless someone we're having a problem with is forgive them and let go of whatever the issue was. Life is just too short to hold others accountable for every wrong word or bad attitude we encounter.

The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. (Proverb 11:25, Luke 6:28 NLT)

We don't know what is happening in another person's life. When we are upset with what someone said or did, perhaps we should first seek to bless them with encouraging words. Encouragement is never wasted. Giving thanks and appreciating the work someone has done, even if their efforts fall short of our standard, can build a beautiful bridge. Offering a listening ear or a helping hand might just lessen the weight of pressure another person is under.

Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. (Gal. 6:2 NLT)

Finally, it is important to be generous without keeping score of "who owes who" and "who's turn it is now." If score were kept between how many times God has blessed us and how many times we've blessed God, who would have blessed the most? We need to go and do likewise.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, As You have unconditionally loved and blessed me, help me to be like You and continually bless that person with whom I struggle to relate. Amen

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2018

GOD IS LISTENING

How are we expected to know what is right? How do we know what is wrong? What is helpful? What is harmful? How can we be sure that we are making the right choices? God knew we would need help in these areas and gave us moral laws that instruct us how to live a purposeful and satisfying life. The Bible tells us that God has a plan for each person's life and if we seek Him, He will give us the wisdom we need to make wise choices in each step of our journey.

Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. (Proverbs 3:5-6 MSG)

One of the practices we are encouraged to maintain in recovery is taking daily inventory with God. This practice is intended for us to reflect on the happenings of each day. We inventory what we have done right. We inventory what we have done wrong. We also look at those events which we know have the potential to draw us back into the shame and resentment we have been journeying away from. The purpose of a daily inventory is to expose and if necessary deal with any shortcomings that might cause us or someone else to stumble.

God has a plan for each person's life and, if we seek Him, He will give us the wisdom we need to make wise choices in each step of our journey.

See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Hebrews 12:15 NIV)

As we review the events of our day, let's be conscious that God's presence was with us wherever we went. Let's ask Him to help us accept those things we cannot change, for the courage to change those things we can, and for the wisdom to know the difference.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am thankful that You are with me wherever I go and if I seek Your guidance, You will keep me on track in my recovery. My desire is to bring glory to Your name in all I do and say. Please shelter me and be my guide to the pathway of peace. Amen

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

THE EFFECTS OF OUR CHOICES

The choices we make affect not only our own life but the lives of our loved ones as well. When we do not seek God or acknowledge that He exists, then we are choosing to rebel against Him. 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 Him. This has a negative impact on all our relationships. Unkind actions and the gaps created by our failing to reach out with care and blessing will 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 of doing so. Why? We don't want to give up our sinful pleasures, and we want to maintain control of our circumstances. Getting our own way seems like the most convenient and pleasant path for a time. That's why we choose it. God 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's unfailing love and forgiveness is available to us even though we have made unwise choices. If we repent and turn to Him, God's mighty power will strengthen us to overcome all our weaknesses.

Prayer: Loving God, I ask for forgiveness for my rebellious ways. Strengthen my resolve to obey You in all I do and say. My desire is to love You with all my heart, soul, and mind. I am grateful for Your power that is made perfect in my weakness. Amen

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. This has a negative impact on all our relationships.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2018

CHOOSING WELL EVERY TIME

Many people who choose for life with God in recovery think they can live any way they want to as long as they attend meetings, complete an honest set of steps, pray on occasion, and don't pick up. They believe these activities put them in right standing with God regardless of the fact they consciously choose to live in ways they know are disobeying the word of God.

A person who chooses to live for God will follow God's principles in every area of their life, not just when coping with drinking or drugging or any other destructive habit they are seeking to change.

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 whatever we feel like doing whenever 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 will follow God's principles in every area of their life, not just when coping with drinking or drugging or any other destructive habit they are seeking to change.

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)

When we are truly surrendered to God we will choose to obey Him because we are committed to doing what God says is right, regardless of our feelings. Obeying God will result in the positive change we are seeking. It may not be instant change but as we live one day at a time surrendered to God, our relationship with Him and others will prosper and grow, and life will take on new meaning.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I surrender every area of my life, to You. Help me to know and follow Your principles in every choice I make. Amen

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2018

DEALING WITH STRESS – THIS TOO SHALL PASS

When we are dealing with stress the slogan “this too shall pass” is a helpful principle to remember. God’s unfailing love surrounds and supports us in every situation. His strength is sufficient to meet all our needs. We can get through challenging days, get the rest we need, and face the next day with confidence, because God is always with us. When our hope is in the living God, we cannot fail. Troubling times will come, but good days will return.

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

God will never permit circumstances to break or shatter us. He knows our limits and will not allow us to be stretched beyond what we can bear. God seeks to use our stressful times as opportunities for us to gain His perspective, lean on His strength, and develop perseverance with which we can better run life's course. God may not alter the circumstance that is currently pressing on us. He may not remove the person who is bothering us. He may not heal the condition that daily grates away at our body and soul, but God will dramatically alter our emotions and responses as we improve our conscious contact with Him and seek answers from His word. As we trust in the wisdom of God to resolve our situations, we will gain spiritual maturity and endurance.

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? (Psalm 56:3-4 NIV)

We deal best with stress when we call on God for help, acknowledge that He is on our side, and faithfully do what He says. With God's help, “this too shall pass.”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, When life seems overwhelming and I feel distant from You, help me to remember that You truly are listening when I pray and are working in all situations for my good. I am forever grateful that You love and care for me. Amen

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2018

DEALING WITH STRESS – PLAN AND PRAY

Stress comes with daily living. Problems show up without notice. We need to have a plan in place to handle the unexpected events and stress that life brings.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8 NIV)

God is aware of all our circumstances. There is nothing that is a surprise to Him. When we pray and seek His input, God is available and willing to give us wisdom in each situation we encounter.

God seeks to use our stressful times as opportunities for us to gain His perspective, lean on His strength, and develop perseverance.

We gain strength as we allow God to stabilize our emotions with His peace, infuse our hearts with His joy, and provide us with His wisdom.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV)

We have an enemy of our soul who lurks around seeking someone to destroy. Satan's desire is to drive us to breaking point as he attempts to deceive us into thinking we can or must handle the stress of problems with our own limited capabilities. As we obsess on troubling events and our helplessness to handle them, he brings us into fear which weakens our trust in God. The key to handling stress is to seek God's help at the initial stage of any problem. Knowing and trusting in God's unchanging word is an essential component of a stress reducing plan. We gain strength as we allow God to stabilize our emotions with His peace, infuse our hearts with His joy, and provide us with His wisdom.

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. (Ephesians 6:10-11 NLT)

The Bible is a toolbox containing tools which enable us to handle every stressful situation. Let's not neglect to use them.

Prayer: Loving God, Forgive me for the times I have allowed a stressful situation to devastate me. Help me to remember that You could and would help, if you were sought. Amen

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2018

SUNDAY PSALM – THE UNFAMILIAR

Coming into a recovery group setting is threatening for many of us. The place is unfamiliar to us. We don't know the people, and compared to our former lifestyle, the rules seem restrictive. We are not even acquainted with the God we prayed to when we knew we needed help. We are in unfamiliar territory and unsure if recovery is for us. Thankfully, we can repeatedly cry out to God to help us get through the unfamiliar, and God assures us that He will help.

Ah, God, listen to my prayer, my cry—open your ears. Don't be callous; just look at these tears of mine. I'm a stranger here. I don't know my way—a migrant like my whole family. Give me a break, cut me some slack before it's too late and I'm out of here. (Psalm 39:12-13 MSG)

If we listen attentively, we will hear God's quiet voice encouraging us to be at peace and allow Him to settle our hearts as we make the necessary adjustments. If we choose for God and all His ways, rather than quitting, we will be accompanied by the One who is full of wisdom, compassion, and unfailing love for us.

Show me the right path, O Lord; point out the road for me to follow. Lead me by your truth and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you. (Psalm 25:4-5 NLT)

As we put our trust in God to help us, we will soon relax and become familiar with the routine of the program we have chosen. We will get to know the people around us and allow them to get to know us. If we have surrendered our will and our lives over to the care of God, nothing will be impossible for us to achieve. We will soon be aware that our fear of the unfamiliar has retreated and the power of God is strengthening us to begin our new life with Him in recovery.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You are ever present with me in my time of need. When I am challenged by the unfamiliar, give me the confidence to remain close to You and do the next right thing. Thank You for being my hiding place from the storms of life. Amen

We can repeatedly cry out to God to help us get through the unfamiliar, and God assures us that He will help.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2018

FORGIVENESS RECEIVED

Forgiveness happens when a person willingly forgives the wrongs that have been committed against them by another. When we accept Jesus' death on the cross as payment for our sins, we become children of God and God generously forgives us for the many sins and wrongs we have committed. As God's children, He then asks us to forgive the sins of those who have committed an offence against us.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (Matthew 6:12 NIV)

When we receive God's forgiveness and acceptance as His beloved children, ... forgiving others is something we will do out of gratitude to Jesus.

God is love and all God's actions are filled with love. We are only truly alive when we live in God and God lives in us. Anything we think, or say, or do, or even desire to do, that is not filled with love, is something that grieves the heart of God. God loves those who have harmed us just the same as He loves us. God created us to live in a loving, caring relationship with Him and with others. When we are not interested in God's plan for our lives and refuse to forgive others, the Bible describes our actions as sins against God for which we need forgiveness.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. (Psalm 51:4 NIV)

Are we willing to turn away from holding grudges and unforgiveness towards others who have harmed us? Are we willing to trust God to be the judge of the person who sinned against us?

When we receive God's forgiveness and acceptance as His beloved children, gratitude and joy for freedom from sin will fill our hearts and forgiving others is something we will do out of gratitude to Jesus for bearing the penalty for our sin.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I repent of having an unforgiving heart towards others. Please forgive me and Heal me. I ask You to give me the will and desire to forgive others as You have forgiven me. Amen

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2018

REPENTANCE and FORGIVENESS

One of the greatest obstacles to receiving and living in God's absolute forgiveness is that we haven't truly repented. We have not changed our mind and our heart attitude about God and do not acknowledge that living in sin is wrong.

For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death. (2 Corinthians 7:10 NLT)

When we struggled in the chaos of our addiction we acknowledged that some of our actions were harmful. However, we generally used negative events in our past to justify our selfish behaviour. Other people or circumstances were to blame. We became greedy, self-indulgent and self-centered individuals and decided to shape our lives around what we thought we needed, deserved, or what we deemed needed fixing. The building block for living well with God in recovery is, changing our mind about who is responsible for our brokenness and how we got to where we are.

Our chance of having a real life comes when we accept responsibility for our sinful responses to life events, are sincerely sorry for messing things up by trying to sort things out on our own, and humbly turn our will and life over to God's care.

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. (Acts 3:19 NIV)

When we begin our journey to new life in Christ there will be times when we will fail to live in love. Genuine sadness over our behaviour, and a willingness to change our ways and seek God for cleansing and healing, is true repentance that honours God and restores our relationship with Him.

Prayer: Gracious God, Forgive me for ignoring You and not taking responsibility for my past behaviour. Cleanse and heal my heart and renew a right spirit within me. I desire to honour You in all my ways. I am grateful for Your unfailing love and care for me. Amen

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2018

DEFEATING ACCUSATION AND CONDEMNATION

Our weaknesses are no surprise to God. God strengthens us in areas where we have grown and encourages us in the areas where we still need to grow. God reassures us that His grace is sufficient to meet all our needs and His power will support us when we acknowledge our weakness before Him.

You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry. (Psalm 10:17 NIV)

The building block for living well with God in recovery is, changing our mind about who is responsible for our brokenness and how we got to where we are.

Where the evil one says, "Failure", God says, "You are growing more and more like Jesus." How comforting and reassuring it is to know that God is aware that on our journey we will make mistakes as part of our growing and maturing.

And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness ... we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. (Romans 8:26-28 NLT)

How do we defeat discouragement when others accuse and condemn us? Jesus tells us: "***But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.***" (Luke 6:27-28 NIV)

We need to let go of negative words from others or from our own self-criticism. God speaks the truth to us in love, and He challenges us to do the same when we speak to others, or to ourselves. When we repent and confess our sin and shortcomings to God, God sees us through the blood of Jesus which purifies us from all the wrongs we have done. God's word is trustworthy, and He will never accuse or condemn us for past sins which have been washed in the blood of Jesus.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am glad that my weakness is no surprise to You. As I grow in my new life with You, I am thankful that I am free from all accusation and condemnation. Amen

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2018

LIVING SOBER

We all know that staying sober starts with not picking up a drink or our drug of choice or returning to whatever our destructive habit was. However, maintaining a sober life has more to do with listening to God's directions and bringing our thoughts and behaviour into line with His will. In this way we live beyond our defects of character and learn to grow in positive character qualities which enhance our relationships.

We are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God. (Titus 2:12 NLT)

While our "DOC" whether alcohol or something else, is "cunning, baffling, and powerful," the enemy of our soul is not the one to obsess on. God's word is very clear that there is a battle going on for our lives. The devil wants to destroy us. God wants to advance His amazing plans for our lives. Whose influence will we choose today?

Keep a cool head. Stay alert. The Devil is poised to pounce, and would like nothing better than to catch you napping. Keep your guard up. You're not the only ones plunged into these hard times. It's the same with Christians all over the world. So keep a firm grip on the faith. The suffering won't last forever. It won't be long before this generous God who has great plans for us in Christ — eternal and glorious plans they are!—will have you put together and on your feet for good. He gets the last word; yes, he does. (1 Peter 5:8-11 MSG)

To live a truly sober life is to be both vigilant and relaxed at the same time. How do we do that? We walk carefully – alert and trusting. We watch out for the attacks of the evil one and repeatedly bring ourselves back to the truth that God is working out His amazing plan for our lives. God will never fail to accomplish the good work He has begun in each one of us

Daily circumstances may challenge our emotions and attitudes and even trigger thoughts of picking up. However, suffering will not last forever. To live sober is to always give God the final word in any temptation we may be facing.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to live sober today. Just for today help me keep my guard up and remember that the circumstances I am in will not last forever. I am thankful that You have promised to have the last word on my behalf. Amen

To live sober is to always give God the final word in any temptation we may be facing.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2018

GOSSIP

The practice of gossip is extremely destructive to our growth in living with God in recovery. What is gossip? It is anything we would say behind a person's back that we would not say if they were present in the conversation.

A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends. (Proverbs 16:28 NLT)

Gossip isolates and discourages people who are being talked about. When we gossip about others it hinders us from examining our own life as we should. Instead of taking inventory of our own lives, we tend to focus more on the lives of others. We all say we dislike gossip yet so often when we are offered an opportunity to hear or speak it, many of us find it impossible to resist. From God's perspective, even listening to gossip is as bad as speaking it.

Do not spread slanderous gossip among your people. Do not stand idly by when your neighbor's life is threatened. I am the Lord. Wrongdoers eagerly listen to gossip; liars pay close attention to slander. (Leviticus 19:16, Proverbs 17:4 NLT)

To live well in recovery, it's important to remove our own character defects before we look at or gossip about others. If we don't abide by this rule, our gossiping lifestyle will cause us to shrink away from our own recovery while also discouraging those we gossip with and about.

Do I find myself engaging in gossip? Do I spread rumors or speculate about why someone did something? Am I known as someone who makes statements that injure the well-being or reputation of another? How many of my words could pass the 3-question test for wise speech – Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and 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 4:31-32 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am grateful you don't share the ugly story of my sinful brokenness with others. Help me to honour others as you honour me. Help me to rid myself of the habit of gossiping. Amen

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2018

WHAT DOES GOSSIP SOUND LIKE?

Gossip shows up in our lives in many forms. God hates them all because He knows how harmful destructive words are to our dignity and our relationships. Here are some types of gossip and what God's word says about it. In which of the following categories does the tendency to gossip affect me?

1. Slander spreads rumors or lies about a person in order to damage them. ***Hiding hatred makes you a liar; slandering others makes you a fool.*** (Proverbs 10:18 NLT)

2. Rumors. We hear something and even though it has not been confirmed we pass it along. Gossip spreads and harm is done. ***Careful words make for a careful life; careless talk may ruin everything.*** (Proverbs 13:3 MSG)

3. Speaking with innuendo and planting seeds of doubt which question a person's character or actions is another destructive form of gossip. ***By our speech we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it, smoke right from the pit of hell.*** (James 3:6 MSG)

4. It's easy to complain about things which are not perfect or aren't going our way. This "behind the scenes gossiping" can cause great harm. ***Complain if you must, but don't lash out. Keep your mouth shut, and let your heart do the talking. Build your case before God and wait for his verdict.*** (Psalm 4:4-5 MSG)

5. Bad-mouthing, back-stabbing, back-biting. This is the harmful practice of speaking negative and harmful words about someone who isn't there to defend themselves. The Bible says: ***Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law.*** (Matthew 7:1; James 4:11 NLT)

God hates gossip. God wants us to use kind words in all circumstances so that the practice of gossip will decrease or stop altogether.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You hate gossip because of the harm it does to everyone involved. Give me a discerning heart and help me deal with what I hear in an open, kind and truthful way. Amen

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2018

CHRISTMAS COMFORT AND REDEEMING GRACE

People travel from one end of the country to the other to be with family during the Christmas season. Family celebrations are meant to strengthen the bonds of love and caring as families gather to remember God's unfailing love for them. However, for many of us, memories that trouble our hearts begin to surface as we anticipate Christmas gatherings. Our comfort level goes down as we think about things that happened in the past. God's desire is that we begin to think of Christmas in a different way this year.

GOD made my life complete when I placed all the pieces before him. When I got my act together, he gave me a fresh start. Now I'm alert to GOD's ways; I don't take God for granted. Every day I review the ways he works; I try not to miss a trick. I feel put back together, and I'm watching my step. GOD rewrote the text of my life when I opened the book of my heart to his eyes. (Psalm 18:20-24 MSG)

Jesus came to earth to die in our place so that our sins could be forgiven and our relationship with God restored. When we realize how much we have been forgiven, we will choose not to withhold forgiveness of others. God's grace has been freely poured out on us, so we have an ample supply to generously pass on to others.

The birth of Jesus truly was the dawn of redeeming grace! The famous carol "Silent Night" speaks of this in the lyrics: ***Silent night, Holy night. Son of God, Love's pure light. Radiant beams from Thy holy face. With the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus Lord at thy birth. Jesus Lord at thy birth.***

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all. (2 Thessalonians 3:16 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, As I prepare for Christmas and family gatherings, I ask you to fill my heart with Your love so that, together with others, I can celebrate Christmas well. Amen

MONDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2018

GOD'S WILL REVEALED

Meditating on God's word in the Bible and prayer to our Heavenly Father are positive daily habits that help us rebuild our lives. In our daily devotions, we are not seeking to learn facts about God but rather to come to Him and get to know His character and His ways. As our relationship with God develops, we will discover that we have a loving friend who knew us before we were born, knows all about us, and cares deeply for us.

There are "friends" who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24 NLT)

God created us with a desire for intimate personal sharing for trusting and being trusted. God wants to fulfill this longing in us, first through relationship with Him and then with others. God wants to share heart to heart with us about the things that matter to Him.

The LORD confides in those who fear Him; He makes His covenant known to them. (Psalm 25:14 NIV)

The prayer and meditation to which Step 11 invites us is more than just trying to figure out what God's plans are for us. Reading the Bible reveals to us the nature of God and all the promises He has made to us. Underneath all our "spiritual exercises" is God's desire for us to know the unfailing love He has for each one of us.

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. (Jude 20-21 NIV)

Improving our conscious contact with God will strengthen our faith as we seek His will in all our ways.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your unfailing love for me. I ask for strength to live as a person who honours You in all my ways. Draw me near that I might dwell on those things that are close to Your heart. Amen

Underneath all our "spiritual exercises" is God's desire for us to know the unfailing love He has for each one of us.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2018

HOSPITALITY AT CHRISTMAS

The Christmas story reminds us that we don't have to clean up our lives before we make room for Jesus to enter our hearts.

Jesus existed with God before the beginning of time. For love of us, Jesus was willing to leave the glory of heaven to come to earth to live in human form. Jesus entered a world unfit for his royal presence. He was born in an animal shelter and His cradle was their feeding trough. The animal shelter was likely poorly lit and would have smelled strongly of the animals and their food.

The true purpose of Christmas is God's plan to give us eternal life through Jesus. He awaits our invitation to come into our lives and make His home with us.

Because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea ... He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was now obviously pregnant. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them. (Luke 2:4-7 NLT)

God comes to us in the muck and mire of our daily existence and says, "***Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest***". (Matthew 11:28 NIV)

God's plan of redemption, through Jesus, began on that first Christmas. Jesus came to pay the penalty for forgiveness of our sin and to restore us to eternal life. No matter how unworthy we believe ourselves to be, the truth is, God desires to make His home with us. He awaits our invitation.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6 NIV)

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, Let Your light shine in my heart. Forgive me for my sins and let me inherit eternal life. Come into my heart and make me new. Fill me to overflowing with your love and goodness so I can share the good news of Your salvation with others. Amen

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2018

FAVOR WITH GOD

What does it mean to have favour with God? Favor with God is a special blessing from God to us. It releases His kindness to us in a way that we are drawn to cooperate in those things God has prepared for us to do. God loves us and wants us to be successful in the plans He has for us. His favor will help us complete those plans, with the benefit of help from others.

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. (Luke 1:30-32, 2:52 NIV)

Someone has said, "Favor is like being dipped in honey so that the blessings of God stick to us." As we listen to God, observe His goodness in our lives, trust His ability to lead, protect, and provide for us, we will find ourselves moving from ideas about God's goodness into an experience of God's goodness for ourselves. This is living in the environment of God's favor.

Why would God be intent on blessing us today or any day? It's just His way. It's the core of His nature. It's how He operates. It is God's desire that we live as people who influence the environment around us so that persons who live in the same area also experience God's favor. As we follow His directions, God will pour out His blessings on us until we overflow with His goodness. This goodness will flow from us to others, so that together we will desire to live in God's pleasing plan for our lives. This is God's heart for the world – one blessed person telling another of God's favor so that each person may open their heart and receive all that God has for them.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, As Mary and Joseph lived in obedience to Your will and experienced Your favor in their lives, so I choose to follow Your plan for my life and live in the stream of Your goodness and mercy each day. Help me to be an influence for good in the lives of those around me. Amen

This is God's heart for the world – one blessed person telling another of God's favour so that each person may open their heart and receive all that God has for them.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2018

CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness. (Isaiah 35:10 NLT)

Christmas and music – they just go together don't they? 'Mary's Boy Child', a modern Christmas carol is a favorite of many people. It was written by Jester Hairston, the grandson of American slaves. Jester knew that despite the injustice and pain suffered by his ancestors, God's love will overcome all things.

"Hark, now hear the angels sing, a King was born today, And man will live forevermore, because of Christmas Day Now Joseph and his wife, Mary, came to Bethlehem that night, They found no place to bear her child, not a single room was in sight. By and by they found a little nook in a stable all forlorn, And in a manger cold and dark, Mary's little boy was born."

There is still hatred and violence in our world today. However, God's unfailing love will overcome and bring salvation and eternal life for all who believe in the finished work of Jesus who came into this world as a baby, the same way we all did. Whether it's individuals struggling with addiction, homeless people living on the streets, refugees fleeing violence and terror attacks, or people caught up in the insecurity of finances needed for day to day living, God comes to let us know He is with us. God has a life planned for us that will last forever. Jesus was triumphant over all injustice. Because Jesus lives forevermore, we also will live forevermore. That's truly worth singing about, isn't it?

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. (1 Timothy 1:15 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for sending Jesus to earth to save us. He was not born into luxury but was born in a cold dark stable. You chose Jesus' birth place and we believe it was to give us hope that whatever our circumstances, You have a plan for each one of us, for You are Immanuel, God with us. Amen

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2018

WALKING WARILY OR TAKING STEPS TENDERLY

Christmas lights brighten the dark evenings of December and are a reminder to us that no matter how dark this season may be, the coming of Jesus into the world brought light and hope and joy. Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is the reason for the season.

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." (John 8:12 NLT)

If we call on Him, God will be our shelter in times of trouble. Where there is darkness, God will bring light. When we walk with Him, He will lead us on a pathway of peace. In the past we walked alone in our sorrow. Now that God is with us, we need never face our problems alone. God may not be physically visible, but we have His Word that He watches over us and will keep us from harm.

I am GOD, your God, who teaches you how to live right and well. I show you what to do, where to go. If you had listened all along to what I told you, your life would have flowed full like a river, blessings rolling in like waves from the sea. (Isaiah 48:17-18 MSG)

When we welcome the light of Christ to shine on our circumstances, His truth shines brightly and overcomes the darkness of our soul. As Christmas lights need to be plugged in and turned on for their beauty to be seen, so we need to be connected to God through faith in Jesus Christ, to be filled up with light. As we obey God's principles and are plugged into the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will shine brightly through any darkness we may encounter.

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)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Light of the World, Guide me out of darkness and lead me into God's glorious light and peace. Amen

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2018

MISSING THE MEANING

Christmas decorations have been up for weeks. Many malls have prepared a winter wonderland, a special "North Pole" room for Santa to greet his friends. In some places a nativity scene with figures of Mary and Joseph, some shepherds, and the baby Jesus may also be seen. It's good that some merchants still recognize the true reason for the season.

The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

(John 1:9-12 NLT)

***As we obey
God's
principles,
and are
plugged into
the power
and
guidance of
the Holy
Spirit, we
will shine
brightly
through any
darkness we
may
encounter***

***Let's fill this
season with
direction
and
meaning as
we include
Jesus in our
thoughts
and
activities
today, and
every day.***

So many people, and perhaps even we ourselves, are so pre-occupied with preparations surrounding Christmas that we ignore Jesus. Shoppers are busy deciding whether to buy gifts in the mall or online. Some are exhausted by the demands of the season and others struggle with loneliness. Some of us may be preoccupied with shame and guilt about being in a position in life where we are distant from our family, or perhaps financially unable to provide for our kids.

Today is a wonderful opportunity to intentionally leave behind the busyness of the season and spend time with God. Jesus is the reason for the season. Let's invite His presence into our lives. Let's simplify the things that need doing. Let's shift from exhausting activity to the joy of being receivers of God's generous love. Let's fill this season with direction and meaning as we include Jesus in our thoughts and activities today, and every day.

In those days and at that time I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. (Jeremiah 33:15 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for the gift of Jesus to the world. Help me to stop fretting about things and truly celebrate that You gave us Jesus, for He is Immanuel, God with us. Amen

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2018

ORDINARY LIVES – THE CHRISTMAS STORY

The coming of Jesus to our world to reconcile us to our Heavenly Father is a powerful witness to the truth that our seemingly ordinary lives matter to God.

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory. What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? (Romans 8:29-31 NLT)

At Christmastime, we celebrate the event of Jesus being born into this world. God chose simple people like Mary and Joseph to care for His beloved infant son. Mary and Joseph did not know the full plan of redemption that God had in mind, but they were willing to do what God asked of them. God shared the message of Jesus' birth with shepherds, ordinary people who were just doing their job on a hillside in Bethlehem.

We too are ordinary people and yet God has done great things for us. We are loved by God. We are rescued from the loneliness, darkness, and hopelessness of addiction by faith in Jesus Christ. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses with our words and our lives of this message of hope and healing through Jesus.

You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. (Psalm 139:16 NLT)

The story of the transformation of our ordinary lives through God's love and grace can be an extraordinary gift to our family and friends this Christmas season.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You knit me together in my mother's womb. I may not fully understand what You have planned for an ordinary person like me but I know your plans are for good and not for disaster, plans for hope and a future with You. Amen

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2018

THE GIFTED LIFE

Statistics tell us that 7 out of 10 shoppers on Christmas Eve will be men doing panic shopping for those they love. Thankfully, God is not a last-minute planner. From before the creation of the world God planned, through Jesus' death and resurrection, the amazing gift of forgiveness and eternal life for each of us. God's gift is perfect and complete and just right for you and for me.

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT)

Christmas is a time to give thanks for the birth of Jesus. This Christmas we can bless others, not so much by spending lots of money on gifts, but by sharing ourselves with them. The extravagant love of Jesus flowing through us will help us love and serve our family and friends. Just being with family and friends will bring more joy into our lives than anything we could ever purchase in a store or online.

Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession. (James 1:16-18 NLT)

What gifts of thankfulness and worship will we offer to Jesus this Christmas season? What have we received from God that we can share? What ability do we have to help others? Just spending time with someone can make a difference in their lives. Listening to what is troubling another and perhaps offering help in the situation may be significant. In what small or large ways can we offer something to another person that says I care about you.

I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. (John 15:11-12 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for the gift of forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus. Help me to give the gift of love and caring to others as together we celebrate Christmas. Amen

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2018

CHRISTMAS – NOT JUST A HOLIDAY

Why do we celebrate Christmas? Why not just settle for a winter holiday of Santa and snow and parties and gifts? Those of us who believe in Jesus celebrate Christmas because we know He came to earth as a helpless human baby so that He might deliver us from the penalty of our sin. Jesus willingly set aside all His rights in heaven, came to earth and took on human flesh, and lived an obedient life in the service of the Living God. He fulfilled God's plan of salvation for sinful, suffering, and broken human beings like us.

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. (Philippians 2:6-8 NLT)

When we turn from stubborn self-will and trust in Jesus to set us free from our sin, God embraces us as His children. The gift Jesus came to give us is life with God, now and forever. God will guide and direct us in our new life with Him and will give us the power to do what is right.

GOD made my life complete when I placed all the pieces before him. When I got my act together, he gave me a fresh start. Now I'm alert to GOD's ways; I don't take God for granted. Every day I review the ways he works; I try not to miss a trick. I feel put back together, and I'm watching my step. GOD rewrote the text of my life when I opened the book of my heart to his eyes. (Psalm 18:20-24 MSG)

We don't leave gifts under the Christmas tree unopened. We open them and enjoy them now. Life with Jesus is a gift to be opened today and enjoyed now and for eternity.

Prayer: Gracious God, Thank You for Jesus who was born into this world to be my Saviour and to give me a new life filled with peace. Today, I choose to accept this gift. Amen

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2018

THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Christmas is a family holiday. People make a special effort to return home and be with family at Christmastime. For those of us who are unable to gather with family at Christmas, is it still possible to celebrate a full and rich Christmas without being fake? Joseph and Mary teach us that it is possible.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. (Luke 2:1, 3-7 NIV)

We need to look at our hearts before we look at our circumstances and see the amazing guest who shares this season with us.

Joseph and Mary were displaced at a crucial time in their lives. In a stable – a rough cave in the side of a hill where animals were sheltered for the night -- they made ready and welcomed Jesus into the world. Other guests came, shepherds, who were directed by a Heavenly Host of Angels to where they were. Mary and Joseph might not have been where they wanted to be but, together with the shepherds, the animal shelter was turned into a wondrous place of worship.

At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus who chose displacement from heaven to come to earth to redeem us from the power of sin and give us life with God forever in heaven. This Christmas we need to look at our hearts before we look at our circumstances and see the amazing guest who shares this season with us. Life may not be as perfect as we would like it to be and we may struggle to cope, but, Jesus is with us! Wherever we are, let's ask Jesus to accompany us as we celebrate His birth this Christmas season.

Prayer: Blessed Lord Jesus, Thank You for coming to be with me in my imperfect world. I want to make room for you in my heart and share this day and this Christmas season together with You. Amen

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2018

SHARING THE MESSAGE

Within each personal story of the journey from bondage to freedom is the power of the Gospel to save those who are lost. We are simply sinners saved by grace and kept clean and sober daily by God's mercy. When we tell our story, our lives give witness to God's grace and mercy and we are fulfilling the great commission of spreading the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others. We are pointing them to the pathway of their own healing journey with Jesus who said:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are oppressed;" (Luke 4:18 NKJV)

The Bible tells us that if someone struggles we should be gentle and humble as we help them get back on the right path. It's important to remember how we were when we were slaves to our addiction, just as they are now. We need to support the desire in a person's spirit to carry out their new life choices, even while their flesh is weak. We also need to respectfully warn others for whom we perceive ongoing danger.

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)

We are not the Saviour, but we can love others as God loves us. Love goes beyond mere words. Sometimes it is demonstrated in silence or in an understanding touch as we come alongside someone who has strayed from the path of recovery. Love doesn't accuse but encourages the person to get back on the path to healing and continue the journey.

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, May my life reflect the joy of living life to the full so that others may believe in the power of the Gospel to save and transform lives. Amen

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2018

GOING FORWARD

As we consider our future, we need to take time to reflect on where we have been and where we want to go from here. Like any journey we plan to take, we need to know our starting place, our destination, and the way to get there.

When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (John 16:13 NKJV)

Within each personal story of the journey from bondage to freedom is the power of the Gospel to save those who are lost.

As we consider our future, we need to take time to reflect on where we have been and where we want to go from here

In view of our forgetfulness, now may be a good time to give thanks for our recovery program and invite God to accompany us as we journey forward.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Thank You for giving me life. Help me to remember where I came from, where I am now, and where You are leading me. Give me the will and desire to stay the course with You. Amen

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2018

WAITING FOR THE NEW YEAR

How long are we prepared to do the daily ordinary things we need to do while we wait for God to bring about the plans He has prepared in advance for us to do?

Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple ... She was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36-38 NLT)

What must it have been like for Anna, who for 60+ years waited to see the fulfillment of God's plan regarding the Messiah? Anna was likely in her teens when she married. She was widowed after only 7 years of marriage and then she entered the Temple, probably in her early twenties. From then until she was 84 she had faithfully worshipped God, fasted and prayed, and served at the Temple. Before seeing the child Jesus, Anna had waited expectantly each day for 60+ years doing ordinary daily tasks. She truly was a patient committed believer in the plans of God.

We don't know how long you or I need to wait for the fulfillment of God's promises in our lives. What we do know is that God is in control. God's plans are good, and God's timing is perfect. God has a purpose in each event of our lives.

"He is the God who made the world. He also made everything in it. From one man he made all the people of the world. Now they live all over the earth. He decided exactly when they should live. And he decided exactly where they should live. God did this so that people would seek him. (Acts 17:24a, 26-27a NIRV)

Prayer: Loving God, As I come to the end of this year and move into the next, I set myself wholeheartedly to do those tasks You have given me to do and trust You to fulfil Your plan for me in Your perfect timing. Amen

**What we do know is that
God is in control.
God's plans are good,
and God's timing is perfect.**

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2018

CERTAINTY IN AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Many of us face a new year wondering about the unknown. If we're honest, there's a bit of uncertainty and tension that lies beneath the excitement and anticipation that the New Year brings. What difference does relationship with God bring to our confidence in the events of the year ahead?

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. (John 1:1-5, NLT)

The same power that created the universe is available to help us deal with the events of the year ahead.

The same power that created the universe is available to help us deal with the events of the year ahead. Jesus is the light of the world. He will expose and bring light wherever darkness tries to manipulate and control our lives. He will bring light into our unknown future. Through His death and resurrection Jesus' power has already overcome the powers of death and darkness and we have nothing to fear. When we stand firm on the finished work of Jesus, we can accomplish what God has planned for us. God is faithful in His love and care for us. What better way is there to enter the New Year than in the strength of our awesome God?

He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:10-12 NLT)

God's power and wisdom are infinite. We are not asked to produce our own solutions for living life to the full in the coming year. The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is the guiding light to show us the way.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I welcome and acknowledge Jesus, the Light of the World in my life. I have nothing to fear in the year that lies ahead because You hold me by Your righteous right hand. Keep me mindful of your unfailing love for me and lead me in the way I should go for I entrust my life to You. Amen

THE LOVE THAT HOLDS OUR YEAR TOGETHER

As we come to the end of this year, a year filled with both accomplishments and failures, it may be a time to reflect on events that brought both joy and growth in our journey with God in recovery. Perhaps, as we reflect, we may also have an overwhelming sense of the challenges and struggles that still surround us. However, if we continue to turn our will and our life over to the care of God, we can be confident that He, who began this great work in us, promises to finish it.

And 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)

At the end of each year we are reminded that the God of time and eternity has for centuries looked on human struggle and growth, both accomplishments and failures. He has heard people make promises to Him that they did not keep. He also watched them make choices that He knew would lead them to pain and heartbreak, but they wouldn't obey His word or seek His wisdom.

God has planted eternity in each of our hearts. He is ready and willing to supply what we need to have a meaningful and purposeful life in the coming year. We can have hope this New Year's Eve because God purchased eternal life for us through the death and resurrection of Jesus. God promises to pour His love into our hearts as we put our trust in Him and turn our will and our life over to His care.

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:5-8 NKJV)

Prayer: Loving God, With confidence I put my hand into Yours and enter this New Year with the full assurance that You will faithfully lead me in the way I should go. Help me to listen for Your guidance and follow Your principles in all my affairs. Amen

NOTES

God has planted eternity in each of our hearts. He is ready and willing to supply what we need to have a meaningful and purposeful life in the coming year.

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.

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.