

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY

Daily Meditations



DECEMBER 2022



These meditations are available online
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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.*

For your personal print copy send your request to:

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

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.



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

PRAYER FOR HEALING AND RESTORATION

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

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CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
 Evelyn Leeburn, Elsie Quick

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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.

LOVE IS ALWAYS HOPEFUL

God longs for us to experience love and blessing in relationship with others. Sometimes, for various reasons, there are complications in our relationships, and we are unsure how to sort things out. God wants to help us know how to live well, how to interact with one another, and when to let go and let God.

It's hard to watch a loved one suffer. It's a challenge to stick with a relationship when someone is acting out of their pain in a way that negatively impacts us. We find it difficult to know how to handle things on a good day let alone deal with these frustrations on a bad day. Hope dwindles. We get discouraged and tempted to give up. As God never gave up on us when we were wandering around trying to find our way, so God encourages us to not give up on others.

Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. (1 Corinthians 13:7 NLT)

We need to pray for wisdom and establish healthy boundaries in all our relationships. Setting boundaries can be a part of walking in love with a person who is struggling. We need to pray for this person, trusting that as we pray, God will work on their hearts. We also need to keep praying for ourselves for understanding and strength so we can handle the situation, as when those we have a relationship with struggle, we may easily get hurt.

Stay with God! Take heart. Don't quit. I'll say it again: Stay with God. There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears. (Psalm 27:14; Philippians 1:6 MSG)

***Love
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always
hopeful.***

***1 Corinthians
13:7a NLT***

God is good. God is with us. We put our hope in God alone, for He will make a way where there seems to be no way. Our part is to hang on to hope.

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13 NLT)

Prayer: Gracious God, Help me to look to You for guidance in all my relationships and also have the wisdom to turn over to You those things that are beyond my capability to sort out. Thank You that in all things You work together for the good of those who love You. Amen

COMMITTED TO LIFE AND GROWTH

The story is told of a pig and a chicken having a conversation about a meal they want to provide for their friends. The chicken suggests bacon and eggs for the menu. The pig responds "Not on your life! For you that's just a contribution. For me, it is total commitment."

To grow and mature in any area of life requires commitment. Professional athletes consistently practice for long hours at inconvenient times to develop their skills. Medical professionals spend huge amounts of money and time to acquire the necessary skills needed to correctly care for sick or injured patients.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. (2 Timothy 2:15, Romans 12:1 NIV)

To grow and mature in any area of life requires commitment.

Maintaining our new life with God in recovery will take time and effort on our part. The disciplines we begin to practice when we first get sober need to be our life choices if we are to sustain our sobriety. Maintaining our conscious contact with God by praying and meditating on His Word each day is a must if we are to carry out His will in all our affairs. We must commit to these principles whether it is convenient or not.

Turning our focus away from God's plan for our life and dwelling on "me and my needs or problems" is a continual challenge for those in recovery and for those who are just living life. Deciding for our own way rather than God's way or acting against the advice of trusted friends is a temptation we will face repeatedly. We need to ask ourselves, "Have we committed to God's plan for our life or are we just acting out a role in recovery?" Turning our will and our life over to the care of God is not just a one-time pledge, it is an everyday commitment.

Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you. (Psalm 37:5 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Once again I turn my will and my life and all my plans and ideas over to Your care. Show me Your will for my life and help me to steadfastly walk in it. Amen

THE END AND THE BEGINNING

In just a few hours the new calendar year will be upon us. After such a challenging year, on what basis do we hope that next year will be a better year? We often feel overwhelmed at the start of a new year because we have so much stuff to deal with, so many unanswered questions in our minds, and so many painful things in our hearts. If we have come and gone from recovery in the past year we might be concerned about our future ability to maintain the peace and joy of sobriety for any length of time.

God's answer is very positive, very simple and very direct. It comes in the form of an invitation: ***Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed and get a new heart and a new spirit.*** (Ezekiel 18:30b-31 NIV)

As we wait for the countdown to this coming year, it's good to take heart in the fact that God promises us a new heart and a new spirit when we turn our will and our life over to His care. We will come into this new year as a new person if we choose to do so.

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion (2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT, Philippians 1:6b NIV)

The year ahead is a fresh opportunity to improve our conscious contact with our powerful God who can restore and maintain our sanity. We can't fix ourselves, but God can help us to do the next right thing. We may not trust our own ability to carry anything through to completion but God "could and would if He were sought." This is our New Year's hope.

Prayer: Loving God, As I enter this new year, I choose to commit myself to You. I lay down my fears and resentments. I receive Your comfort, Your forgiveness, and Your healing. I have hope and confidence in Your assurance that You will complete the good work you have begun in me. Amen

This coming year is a fresh opportunity to go deeper in our experience of coming to believe that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.

THE LONG WAIT

How long would we be willing to wait for God to show us the fulfillment of His plans? God made a promise that he would send someone to free both Anna and her people. For more than 60 years Anna waited for the fulfillment of the promise. While she waited, she trusted God and served him. She didn't get angry and complain and give up on God in frustration. She just did the simple things she knew to do, one day at a time, and waited.

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36-38 ESV)

What we need to understand is that God's plans are perfect, and God's timing is right.

Personally, we may not know how long we will wait to know the fulfillment of God's plan for our lives. It probably won't be sixty years. What we do know is that God's plans are perfect, and God's timing is right. God wants us to walk with Him and do the ordinary things He has instructed us to do, even in the middle of difficult circumstances. As we honour God and practice His principles in all our affairs, we will experience the best life possible. Then we will want to share with others this hope for the future that we are experiencing with God.

The Lord is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him. So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord. (Lamentations 3:25-26 NLT)

As this year comes to an end and we move into the next, let's focus on today and trust God's plan and God's timing for our future.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I find it hard to wait. Please help me to trust that You will fulfill Your promises for my future and today, help me to simply do the next right thing. Amen

STEP NINE – FACING THE STORM AS WE MAKE AMENDS

Seeking out those to whom we need to make amends can be intimidating. We know what we have done but often do not know where the other person may be at, or what the impact of hearing from us might have on them. However, Jesus said if someone has something against us, we are to go and be reconciled with that person.

.....no weapon will be able to hurt you; you will have an answer for all who accuse you. I will defend my servants and give them victory. The Lord has spoken. (Isaiah 54:17 GNT)

After feeding 5000 people in a remote place Jesus insisted that his disciples get into a boat and cross to the other side of the Lake while He dismissed the crowd. The disciples obeyed Jesus. As they were crossing the lake and remaining on the course Jesus had told them to take, strong winds arose and they had to fight heavy waves to stay afloat. We often experience similar storms in our hearts when we come to make amends. We may feel unsettled and wonder what will happen when we try to approach a person to whom we are seeking to make amends.

In view of all this, what can we say? If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31 GNT)

When the boat was a considerable distance from the land, Jesus came to the disciples walking on the water. When Peter knew it was Jesus, he asked to come to Him on the water and Jesus agreed. Peter got out of the boat, took a few steps, looked at the wind and the waves, was terrified, and he began to sink. Some of us are like Peter. We have taken some steps and have made a list but when we look at the list, we are terrified and start to doubt. As we work through our list of needed amends, we should remember that we need not be troubled or allow doubts to sink us. Jesus is always with us, ready to reach out and help us.

Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?" (Matthew 14:31 NLT)

Prayer: Dear Jesus, The list of people I have harmed is intimidating but I choose to make the effort to be reconciled with each person. Please help me! Amen

We need not be troubled or allow doubts to sink us. Jesus is always with us, ready to reach out and help us.

ATTACHING OUR HEARTS TO THE GOD WHO CARES

Substance abuse is often self-medication to compensate for lack of love and safety in a relationship. From the time we are born, all of us require a safe emotional connection with a parent or caregiver. We need to know there is someone we can turn to when we are in need of love and safety. Scientists who study human development say bonding with a caring parent or caregiver nurtures every area of our development.

When we are ignored or abused by a parent or caregiver and feel empty inside, we tend to withdraw and find other ways to self-soothe. Addictions to substances and other unhealthy behaviours are often efforts made by a vulnerable person who is dealing with the trauma of feeling invisible and unloved.

**Give all
your
worries
and cares
to God, for
he cares
about you.**

1 Peter 5:7 NLT

So do not be afraid. I am with you. Do not be terrified. I am your God. I will make you strong and help you. I will hold you safe in my hands. I always do what is right. (Isaiah 41:10 NIRV)

Whatever our background, God wants us to know Him and live in His care each day. It's why Step 3 is such a powerful statement, because if we don't know that God cares, how can we turn our will and our life over to Him?

I am poor and needy, but, Lord God, you care about me, and you come to my rescue. Please hurry and help. (Psalm 40:17 CEV)

In recovery we can bring ourselves to the God who knows us and is filled with compassion for us. We can be assured that He will respond to our cry for help. At first it may be a tough journey but, if we will take it one step at a time, God will continually prove Himself to be a loving and caring Father. Recovery is a journey of making choices and looking to God for love and support when times are tough. The more we experience God's care, the deeper our trust and attachment to Him will be. Our whole personality will change as we intentionally live in God's love and care.

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

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Please fill me with Your comfort and peace in those places where I've experienced detachment because of events in my past. Heal me and set me free from the abuse and neglect that contributed to my being on a wrong course. Renew my mind so I can trust You and believe that You are for me, You are with me, and that You will never leave or forsake me. Amen

REMAIN STEADY IN UNUSUAL TIMES

How are we to approach this new year with peace and hope? As we watch the review of the past year on television, we realize how recorded events went far beyond anything we could have imagined. It is also fair to assume that there will be more unusual days ahead.

This is a time to remember that God is in control and will fulfill His purposes regardless of the ups and downs of life or other unknown threats that might arise. There is much more going on in the world than what we see and hear in the daily news. When we call on God in our personal challenges and crises, we are assured that He will help us and bring about those things He has promised. Even when people think they have failed to live up to the potential God has for them, God is unwavering in working out His purposes for those who commit their will and life into His care.

For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. (Psalm 33:9-11 NIV)

For us to find peace in this fragile and sometimes frightening world, we must continue to have faith in God's ultimate control and His ability to bring about His purposes. The invitation to us in this week between Christmas and the New Year is to reaffirm our trust in God's power to work for good in any unusual circumstances we may encounter. When God says that we will not be overwhelmed, He means it. When God says He will make a way where there seems to be no way, He is able to do just that. Our part is to trust Him.

When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever. (Proverbs 10:25 NIV)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You truly are the Prince of Peace. During this "in between time," come and live in me and strengthen me as I follow You in all my ways. Amen

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EQUIPPED FOR GROWTH

To enjoy a healthy and satisfying life in recovery we need to recognize our need for growth in areas of our character which have been compromised. God has provided tools and instructions to equip us for effective growth. Are we willing to pick up these tools and follow His instructions?

Troubles will come and the evil one will certainly tempt us to return to our former ways. If we look to God who has ultimate power, He will deliver us from any trouble the enemy may seek to bring our way. Growth comes when we choose to trust God regardless of the circumstances we encounter.

God has provided tools and instructions to equip us for effective growth. Are we willing to pick up these tools?

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

What can we do that will support growth? We can wholeheartedly put off the old self and our former way of life. We can get to know our Heavenly Father's ways so that we may grow in trusting Him. By a conscious choice of our will, we can abandon and receive healing for those things that have kept us in bondage to fear and addiction. We can give up any co-dependent relationships. We can surrender our will to God and seek His help as we daily put on our new self. We can choose to walk in God's ways, doing those things which help us grow in righteousness and holiness.

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

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am thankful that life and growth come from You. Help me to build my life on Your principles and promises as recorded in the Bible. Help me to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Your beloved son Jesus. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit who will provide the tools I need to fulfill Your plan for my life. Amen

STUBBORN PRIDE

Pride is a very destructive character defect. It is evident in our lives when we think negative, angry, and/or, victimized thoughts. When we have been harmed or offended by someone, pride tells us that we know best how to deal with it. We decide to use our own ideas, which are fatally flawed, and the result is that instead of solving problems, we become slaves to destructive life practices which fill our lives with increased suffering.

Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice. A fool's mouth lashes out with pride, but the lips of the wise protect them. Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Pride brings a person low, but the lowly in spirit gain honor. (Proverbs 13:10; 14:3; 16:18; 29:23 NIV)

Pride is destructive because it removes God's presence and God's principals from any thoughts about how to deal with a situation. Pride says "I will do it MY way" regardless of the consequences.

Though the Lord is great, he cares for the humble, but he keeps his distance from the proud. Though I am surrounded by troubles, you will protect me from the anger of my enemies. You reach out your hand, and the power of your right hand saves me. The Lord will work out his plans for my life—for your faithful love, O Lord, endures forever. (Psalm 138:6-8a NLT)

Humility, on the other hand, enables us to stand with God, face hurt and injustice, and invite Him to show us a secure way forward. God promises to work out His good plan for our lives in a way that demonstrates His faithful love for us.

If we truly want to build a secure life it is necessary to come to God with a humble heart and willingly follow the directions given in His Word.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I repent of my pride and arrogance which led me to faulty solutions. Forgive me for the times I have thought that Your principles for living in recovery did not work because I wanted to continue doing things my way. Help me to trust Your proven ways and lean not on my own understanding, for Your Word is my source of hope. Amen

Pride is destructive because it removes God's presence and God's principals from any thoughts about how to deal with a situation.

SEEKING PLEASURE

God designed humans with a natural desire to pursue pleasure. Pleasure was to come from our intimate relationship with God and then overflow into our human relationships and experiences.

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. (Psalm 16:11 NIV)

The problem is, we get consumed with desire for things that only bring temporary satisfaction. Seeking pleasure above all else has been described down through the ages as the focus of fools rather than that of the wise. Whether it is avoiding work, failing to listen to the wisdom of another, or planning and scheming to get ahead, these are described as things that bring temporary pleasure and, in the end, also bring trouble. Our addiction, and the chaos of life it brings us, certainly fits into this category.

A fool finds pleasure in wicked schemes, but a person of understanding delights in wisdom. Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions. Whoever loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and olive oil will never be rich. (Proverbs 10:23, 18:2, 21:17 NIV)

We often experience pleasure by giving it to others. God gets great pleasure in adopting us into His family and who among us doesn't find joy in knowing that we are loved and belong?

God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. (Ephesians 1:5 NLT)

Whether it's tasting that first cup of coffee in the morning or laying our head on the pillow at night, let's be mindful of God's goodness and all the simple pleasures that fill our day.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to listen to and act on Your guidance, so I may live on the path that leads to joy and satisfaction every day. I desire to live in Your presence and experience pleasure that is much more fulfilling than anything addiction has to offer me. Amen

ORDINARY LIVES NO MORE

After all the preparation and hype of Christmas, we are now getting back to our regular daily schedule. We have our ordinary everyday lives to assess, work on, and then make available to God for His good purposes. The shepherds were back on the hillsides looking after their sheep and yet they would never be the same because of what they witnessed that night in the stable when they looked on Jesus, the newborn baby the angels had told them about. Mary and Joseph wore the same clothes, had the same hair styles, and were just as poor the days after Jesus was born as the days before and yet they too were dramatically changed forever by the birth of baby Jesus.

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. (Romans 8:29-30 NLT)

We are ordinary people who have encountered God and have been dramatically changed forever. The guilt and shame of our past sin is removed, and we have right standing before God because of the finished work of Jesus. Because of God's love and mercy, we are whole new persons who desire to walk in the paths of righteousness with God.

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)

While we don't yet know the whole story of our lives, no more than the shepherds or Mary and Joseph did, but God knows what's coming and He's preparing us, working deep within our souls to give us everything we need, so our ordinary lives shine brightly in a way that attracts others to this same wonderful new relationship with God through Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You know every day of my life. As ordinary as it may seem to me or others, help me to trust that You are working in me to do something that is wonderful and will have lasting impact for good. Amen

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 GOD OF CHRISTMAS IS WITH US

With Christmas Eve and Christmas Day behind us, it's a good time to review our daily life and our relationship with God and others, and to reflect on our hopes and dreams for the coming year.

God is righteous, and His wisdom is infinite. There's nothing harsh or unkind in God's nature. We were created in the likeness of God but sin spoiled God's perfect creation. As some of us gathered in family groups or with friends to celebrate Christmas, we may have witnessed sinful ways at work. Often a gathering may be ruined by existing bitterness related to a past event or by addictive behaviour that is ongoing. We are called to love each other and yet we still say and do things that disappoint and anger one another.

The joy of the Christmas season is that we celebrate Jesus who came to earth to demonstrate God's love for us and to provide a way for us to be free from sin and brokenness.

We truly are sinful broken people living in a sinful broken world. The joy of the Christmas season is that we celebrate Jesus who came to earth to demonstrate God's love for us and to provide a way for us to be free from sin and brokenness.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. (Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8 NLT)

Many new devices and gadgets received as gifts will need to be powered up or have batteries installed. The new life God is offering us requires that we invite Jesus into our lives and connect to His power through the Holy Spirit. Each day, as we meditate on His word in the Bible, God will teach us how our lives are meant to be lived and will support and direct us as we seek Him in all our affairs.

The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. (Psalm 32:8 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for the gift of new life that You are offering me. I am willing to enter into this new life and allow You to guide and direct me in all my ways. Amen

DEALING WITH ANXIETY

Every one of us deals with anxiety at some point in our lives. Numerous circumstances cause us to feel anxious such as: a deadline to find housing when nothing affordable is on the horizon; bills are overdue for payment and there is no money in the bank; caught in a traffic jam and the time for an important appointment is creeping ever closer, etc. etc. When the mind and body come under stress, adrenaline is released into the bloodstream. We feel jumpy. Our hearts beat faster. Our breathing becomes irregular. We feel nervous. Often, our sleep is affected. While it's normal to feel anxiety in certain situations, for some people this becomes a condition they experience often, or perhaps all the time.

The Bible tells us: ***Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*** (Philippians 4:6 NIV)

How can we hope to achieve such a condition where we are not anxious about anything? Isn't that an unrealistic expectation? Aren't we just setting ourselves up for failure? God says the way to deal with anxiety is to deal with its root cause. If it's anxiety over past mistakes, then God invites us to confess them and receive forgiveness. If we're worried about a current condition or circumstance and we don't know what to do about it, God's solution is to bring it before Him in prayer, obey whatever He tells us to do, and trust Him with whatever consequences arise.

I confess my sins; they fill me with anxiety. I am filled with trouble and anxiety, but your commandments bring me joy. (Psalm 38:18, 119:143 GNT)

If we are anxious and nervous and not sure of the reason why, we can ask God to help us sort out what's going on inside us. He'll not only show us what's going on, but will comfort us in the middle of our troubled thinking, and calm our anxious thoughts.

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Whenever I am anxious and worried, you comfort me and make me glad. (Psalm 139:23-24 NIV, Psalm 94:19 GNT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Your desire is that I live in peace and feel secure in Your care. Help me to understand my heart and bring all my anxious thoughts to You for You are my refuge and my deliverer. You will guide me in the way I should go. Amen

God says the way to deal with anxiety is to deal with its root cause.

STEP TEN – MY LIFE IS IN YOUR HANDS

Step-10 encourages us to regularly take personal inventory and when we are wrong about anything to promptly admit it. We have just made direct amends to those we have harmed and are aware that, with God's help, we need to change how we behave in the future. We previously acted out of our self-centeredness and now we need to act out of our new self which is being renewed in the likeness of our Creator. Jesus gives great teaching on how we ought to treat others and we need to find out what He says, so we can grow in our understanding of the ways of God.

**God:
I've put
my life in
your
hands.
You won't
drop me,
you'll
never let
me down.**

*Psalm 31:3-5
MSG*

So, my dear Christian friends, companions in following this call to the heights, take a good hard look at Jesus. He's the centerpiece of everything we believe, faithful in everything God gave him to do. (Hebrews 3:6 MSG)

As we journey forward it is wise to take daily inventory and review the things that happen in each day. Some things will please us, while others will cause us concern. Those things that we are doubtful about we should consider talking over with a pastor, friend, or sponsor to ensure we are on the right track. God gave us the Scriptures to be our handbook. If we obey what it says in the handbook, we will avoid the traps of the enemy.

You're my cave to hide in, my cliff to climb. Be my safe leader, be my true mountain guide. Free me from hidden traps; I want to hide in you. I've put my life in your hands. You won't drop me, you'll never let me down. (Psalm 31:3-5 MSG)

We should also seek out and listen to the wisdom of those who have been walking in the ways of God for a time and are familiar with the drawbacks in the recovery process. The experience, strength, and hope of their journey may help and encourage us in some of the difficulties we may encounter.

He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. (2 Corinthians 1:4 NLT)

Prayer: Gracious God, Please help me to stand firm on Your Word and in times of trial to seek Your counsel and the counsel of others who have journeyed on this path before me. Amen

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Christmas – it really happened! God came to our planet. We may never be able to fully comprehend how or even why He chose to do this but, the fact remains He came by way of a Bethlehem manger. We matter to God, the God who created the heavens and the earth.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? (Psalm 8:3-4 NIV)

Jesus was born exactly as the angel and the prophets foretold. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. Jesus came at the appointed time and place that God had planned. Jesus' birth was foretold so that people would recognize Him. Some did and some didn't. The fact is, at just the right time, God sent Jesus into the world.

All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us'). (Isaiah 7:14 NLT)

We are significant to God because of our connection to Jesus Christ. Throughout His life Jesus clearly said and demonstrated that He came from God. He taught the people the ways of God and healed the sick among them. Jesus was patient and kind to the crowds who gathered around Him for He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. Jesus invites us to come close to Him on this Christmas day.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36 NLT)

The coming of Jesus to our world, and to us, is a powerful witness to the truth that our ordinary and simple lives matter to the God who created us. When we repent of our sin and accept Jesus as our Saviour, we are assured of God's love and acceptance. Jesus' birth changed everything and has helped make things better for each of us because we know God will never leave or forsake us. Merry Christmas!

Prayer: Gracious God, Thank You for Jesus who was born into this world to be my Saviour, and to show me that my life has meaning and purpose. Thank you for the gifts of love and acceptance I have received from You because I choose to believe in Jesus who was sent into the world to save me from the power of sin. Amen

***The fact
is, at
just the
right
time,
God
sent
Jesus
into the
world.***

THE GIFTED LIFE

Statistics tell us that many Christmas Eve shoppers are men doing panic buying for those they love. Thankfully, God is not a last-minute planner. From before the creation of the world God planned, through Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection, to give us the awesome gifts of forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

From before the creation of the world God planned, through Jesus' death and resurrection, to give to each of us the awesome gift of forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

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 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 or friends will bring more joy to our lives than anything we could purchase at 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 1:17-18 NLT)

During this Christmas season, will we offer the gifts of thankfulness and worship to Jesus for all He has done for us? What other gifts have we received from God that we can share? Are we able to help others? Just spending time with someone can make a huge difference in their life. Listening attentively to another when they are struggling to cope and perhaps offering help may be significant to that person. In what small or large ways can we offer something to someone 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 gifts of love and caring to others as together we celebrate Christmas. Amen

A GOOD REPUTATION

Just seeing the words "good reputation" brings a wry smile to those of us who have lived with something quite different in various periods of our life. A life in addiction gives us a reputation, for sure, but it's generally not a good one.

A good reputation is better than expensive pleasures. Choose a good reputation over great riches; being held in high esteem is better than silver or gold. (Ecclesiastes 7:1 ERV; Proverbs 22:1 NLT)

Life with God in recovery brings the amazing opportunity of walking with our head held high and living in such a way that others are blessed by our presence in their lives. They share stories that include reports of our example and support for them. Others hear their stories and form a favorable impression of us, and we become persons who have a good reputation in our community.

What does it take to be a person with a good reputation? We need to be people of our word. When we make a promise, we need to keep it, even when it is inconvenient. When we say we'll be somewhere, we need to get there. When we say we'll do it, we need to follow through.

Lord, who can live in your sacred tent? Who can stay on your holy mountain? Anyone who lives without blame and does what is right. They speak the truth from their heart. They keep their promises even when it hurts. They do not change their mind. (Psalm 15:1-2, 4b NIRV)

Too often in the past we were willing to change our direction and do whatever we thought it took to be accepted and admired. Now we choose to live as a person who follows God's standards and do what is right, regardless of popular opinion. When people know the principles we live by, and that we consistently hold to them, we become safe and steady people to be around. We are respected and trusted – people with a good reputation.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You that I can leave my past reputation behind and, one day at a time, build a new life of integrity and faithfulness. Help me to speak and make promises carefully, and to be a person of my word. Help me to be more like Jesus in all my ways. Amen

To be a person of good reputation we follow God's standards and do what is right regardless of popular opinion.

DECEMBER 10, 2022

KNOWING WHAT GOD'S WILL IS NOT

I don't always know what God's will is for me, but I always know what it's not.

Getting to know God's will is the journey of a lifetime. For many people the difficulty of living in sobriety is not so much “quitting” an addictive habit as it is of maintaining a new way of life – living in God’s will instead of self-will.

It is God’s will that we get to know Him and develop a meaningful relationship with Him. Everything else comes after that. We know that acting in ways that nurture our addiction will take us away from God rather than towards Him, so we know that this is not God’s will.

It's God's will that we get to know Him and develop a meaningful relationship with Him. Everything else comes after that.

For Christ died for sins once and for all, a good man on behalf of sinners, in order to lead you to God. He was put to death physically but made alive spiritually. But God has shown us how much he loves us—it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us! (1 Peter 3:18, Romans 5:8 GNT)

In the Bible we are continually reminded that God loves us with unfailing love and is ready to receive us, forgive us, and give us a new start when we turn to Him, open our hearts and live in His ways. So, endlessly living in shame and guilt is clearly not the will of this loving God.

Whenever I am anxious and worried, you comfort me and make me glad. (Psalm 94:19 GNT)

Relationship with anyone is developed by spending time with them, being our authentic selves, listening, asking questions, telling stories, working together, and so on.

Living in relationship with God is about all these things too. Neglecting to make time for conversation with God each day is clearly not God’s will for us.

We may not know what God’s will is for our long-term career or the ultimate working out of problems we created in addiction, but we know that God’s will for us today is to live well and to trust Him with all of the unknowns.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to know Your will for my life and put that into practice. Help me to stay away from those things I clearly know are not Your will for me and resolutely leave future unknowns with You. Help me to get to know You more. Amen

DECEMBER 23, 2022

MISSING THE MEANING

During the Christmas season we celebrate Jesus coming into the world as a baby who was born from His mother Mary. In our celebration of Jesus earthly birth, how many of us have taken time to understand and give thanks that this same Jesus already existed with God prior to being sent into the world to save it? Jesus, the only begotten Son of God set aside His divine nature and came willingly to earth to take on human nature so that He could offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sin of the world. Jesus, the creator of all things, came into the world and there was not even room for him at the Inn.

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)

Many people, and perhaps even we ourselves, are so pre-occupied with Christmas activities that we ignore the real purpose for the celebration. Some may be exhausted by the extra demands of the season and others may struggle with loneliness because they are unable to join family gatherings. There are various reasons why families are unable to get together or provide the gifts they would like to give, so Christmas can be a really difficult time.

Today, let’s take the opportunity to intentionally leave behind any troubling thoughts of the season and spend time with God. Let’s invite Jesus, the Prince of Peace, into our lives. Let's simplify our exhausting activities and dwell on the joy of being receivers of God's lavish love. Let’s fill this season with direction and meaning as we include Jesus in our thoughts and activities today, and in the days ahead.

For the Father himself loves you dearly because you love me and believe that I came from God. Yes, I came from the Father into the world, and now I will leave the world and return to the Father. (John 16:27-28 NLT)

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

Let's fill this season with direction and meaning as we include Jesus in our thoughts and activities today, and in the days ahead.

THE REASON FOR OUR BIRTH AND OUR RECOVERY

Do we ever wonder what people said about us on the day that we were born. With few exceptions, there is great joy and wonder at the appearance of a new baby full of life with 5 tiny fingers and 5 tiny toes and all the little wrinkles and miniature markings. Some parents have names picked out in advance for their baby and others wait, knowing that the personality of that little one will somehow point to the right name. Parents have hopes and dreams for this new little life.

Regardless of the twists and turns and the ups and the downs of our life since the day of our birth, God's design for us has remained constant. God has a perfect plan for each person and is ready to put into effect whether we come into recovery at the age of 18 or 81.

We grow in our life with God in recovery as we share the message of how God changed our lives.

John the Baptist was a person used by God to get people ready for the coming of Jesus to earth. John's message was one of repentance and preparation for the way of the Lord. As we share our story of sobriety, we are encouraged to look to the reason God gave us life in the beginning and is giving us recovery today. Perhaps our role is like John's in telling others how to find recovery through the forgiveness of sin and the reforming of our ways.

And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins. 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 1:76-79 NLT)

This Christmas season and in the coming year, as encouraged by the founders of A.A., we will grow in our life with God in recovery as we share the experience of how God changed our lives. We have found forgiveness, have been touched by God's compassion, seen the light of truth, and been guided into the path of peace. As we continue our journey, we can share our story of God's transforming power, and by doing so, help others to open their hearts to God's redeeming grace.

Prayer: Loving God. Thank You for awakening me to the Word of Truth. Today, I give You permission to fulfill Your purpose for my life. Live in me that I may have life through You. Help me to share the message of Your forgiveness and healing with those I meet on my journey. Amen

WHEN WE SURRENDER TO OUR HIGHER POWER, THE JOURNEY BEGINS.

Turning our will and life over to the care of God as we understand Him is just the beginning of our new life with God in recovery. We all have much to learn about this gracious God and His ways. As we truly seek to know Him and His ways, God will give us the discernment we need to practice His principles in all our affairs.

Yes, if you cry out for discernment and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. (Proverbs 2:3-5 NKJV)

When we give our will and life over to the care of God and repent of our sins, nothing should be held back. Surrendering to our Higher Power means we are willing to get off the fence and take one step forward with God, journeying as He directs. As we move ahead, we need both feet on the path of righteous living in the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the Power greater than ourselves. If we knowingly hold anything back, we are not supporting our decision and are leaving ourselves open to relapse.

Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do. (James 1:7-8 NLT)

God supports a pure heart even when our decision might be a timid one. As we truly desire to follow Him, God encourages us and works on our behalf to bring restoration and healing in those places that have been broken. It is not in our own power to amend who we are. That is only done by the Power greater than ourselves. He's the one who journeys with us through each day and will restore us to a good, pleasing, and perfect life.

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. (2 Corinthians 13:11 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I give my will and life fully into Your care. I am willing to journey with You as You renew me in every part of my being until I am perfected in You. Amen

When we give our will and life over to the care of God and repent of our sins nothing should be held back.

CONTINUING TO HOLD A GRUDGE

Unresolved grudges related to childhood offences against us usually show up in adulthood as deeply rooted bitterness. Some of us have carried the grief of these offenses for decades and have tried to relieve the pain and hopelessness we feel with addictive substances or co-dependent relationships. We have added to our pain over the years by not dealing with these grudges.

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

Forgiveness is the only way to stop the ongoing pain from buried grudges.

Forgiveness is the only way to stop the ongoing pain of buried grudges. For some of us who have been victimized, forgiveness is unthinkable. The pain of the offence remains and forgiveness rips at our sense of justice. We want the offender to suffer for what they inflicted on us. However, until we forgive the offender, the offence he or she committed against us will continue to harm us. The occurrence will fester with resentment in our souls, and the connection between the perpetrator, whom we despise, and ourselves will remain.

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. (Colossians 3:12-13 NLT)

We can't change other people, but we can ask God for the courage to change ourselves. Hanging on to a bitter grudge and seeking revenge only sickens our soul and often results in damage to those we are close to.

Jesus died for every wrong done to us or by us. Why not choose to forgive others their sins as God has forgiven ours? Why not take the lingering resentment and pain of these offences to the cross where they have been atoned for? Why not be guided in all our ways by the love of God? He is the righteous judge.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Please help me forgive others as You have forgiven me. I bring all grudges and bitterness that I hold against others to You and ask You to free me from the bondage I have put myself in. Please heal and restore those damaged places within me and help me to walk in the light and peace of Your presence ever with me. Amen

LONGING FOR LIGHT

For those of us who live in the northern hemisphere this is the shortest day and the longest night of the year. Most of us long for less darkness and longer lasting light. It will surely come, but not for a while.

In recovery circles we often hear stories of how each of us "hit rock-bottom" and how depressing an experience it was for us. However, it became a time of hope. In desperation, when we were at rock-bottom, we somehow heard God whisper to our heart and shine a light into the deep darkness of our soul, which resulted in us seeking help.

Look, the Lord's power is enough to save you. He can hear you when you ask him for help. (Isaiah 59:1 ERV)

God continued to call out to us in our dark and lonely place until we chose to pay attention and respond to his offer of help and healing. That is the kind of God we have come to know and put our trust in – the God who never gave up on us despite knowing every sordid detail of our destructive lifestyle.

But our Lord gave me a full measure of his grace. And with that grace came the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a true statement that should be accepted without question: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and I am the worst of them. (1 Timothy 1:14-15 ERV)

The message of Christmas and of our recovery is that we are powerless over sin and our lives are unmanageable. We needed someone to deliver us from the power of sin and give us a new set of principles to live by. God generously sent Jesus into the world to be our rescuer. This Christmas, the best gift we can receive is Jesus. When invited, Jesus will come to live in our hearts, will guide us and will give us wisdom in all our ways. He will introduce us to our Heavenly Father who will be the parent we have always longed for and the one who gives us peace.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, come into my heart and take control of my life. I cannot manage my life on my own. I am powerless to do so. I welcome You to be my Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Amen

In desperation, when we were at rock-bottom, we somehow heard God whisper to our heart and shine a light into the deep darkness of our soul, which resulted in us seeking help.

CHRISTMAS COMFORT AND PEACE

The annual festivities for the Christmas celebration are well underway and many people will soon be travelling by various means of transportation to gather with family and loved ones on Christmas Day. Communities have decorated homes and businesses with lights which brighten the dark December days. People give gifts to one another. This reminds us of God's gift to us. God sent Jesus into the world as a light to those living in darkness and under the power of sin. God sent

Jesus not to judge the world but to save the world through Him.

***My spirit
delights in
God my
Savior. He
has taken
note of me
even though
I am not
considered
important.***

Luke 1:47-48 NIRV

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. For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:2, 6 NLT)

The first Christmas brought many challenges for Mary and Joseph. Mary was in the late stage of pregnancy with Jesus and she and Joseph had to leave their home to travel to Bethlehem because a Roman ruler decided to take a census which required people to return to their place of birth to be counted. There were no buses or comfy cars in those days so walking or riding on a donkey was the method by which they travelled. In spite of the inconvenience, this couple knew that God had a plan for their lives and for the life of the baby Mary was carrying.

Mary said, My soul gives glory to the Lord. My spirit delights in God my Savior. He has taken note of me even though I am not considered important. (Luke 1:46-48a NIRV)

Perhaps this Christmas holds challenges for some of us. For various reasons we may be separated from family and friends and not looking forward to Christmas. Will we believe that God is aware of the less than perfect situation we are in? Will we trust that God has a good plan for us and that all things will work together for our good?

Prayer: Gracious God, Forgive me when I feel sad about my circumstances. Help me to trust You and know that You have a plan and purpose for me that is being worked out. Amen.

STEP ELEVEN – GETTING TO KNOW GOD INTIMATELY

In Step 11 we are seeking through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out. We have come to understand some things about God, but now desire to have an intimate relationship with Him, so we can discover the plans He has prepared in advance for us to do.

This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. (Isaiah 48:17 NIV)

Many of us have acquaintances that we know some things about but the only way we can really get to know another person intimately is by spending time with them and allowing them to reveal themselves to us. God knows all about us, but until we meditate on His word as recorded in the Bible, we will be unaware of how much He loves and delights in those who desire to know Him and follow His principles in all their affairs.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand. (Psalm 37:23-24 NKJV)

Spending time with God each day and living in His presence will delight God's heart and bring peace to our own. This is not to say we will never have any problems. Jesus said in this world we would have troubles but not to fear, for through God who loves us, we will be given the strength to persevere to victory. As we grow in our relationship with God our faith will mature, and we will wholeheartedly choose to follow Him in all our ways.

We show our love for God by obeying his commandments, and they are not hard to follow. Every child of God can defeat the world, and our faith is what gives us this victory. (1 John 5:3-4 CEV)

Prayer: Loving God, I want to draw near to You for You are the fountain of life, and in relationship with You, my life is perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Amen

***The only
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ENDURING LOVE

In many writings in the Bible we read that God's love endures forever. We can assume from this truth that when we give our will and life over to God's care His extravagant love for us will endure throughout the ups and downs of life in recovery. The very heart of God is love and nothing will ever change that. We are encouraged in our relationship with God, and with others, to have faith, hope, and love, and are told the greatest of these qualities is love.

The three most important things to have are faith, hope and love. But the greatest of them is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13 NIRV)

The very heart of God is love and nothing will ever change that.

Why is love so important? Love is the thing that strengthens us to endure through every circumstance of life. We may have faith in Jesus' redeeming work and know we have been cleansed from all our sin, but we must also accept His love for us and allow Him to heal and restore us from the hurts we have sustained in the past. To move forward in our life in recovery, we need to be strong and embrace God's love as He supports us in the many trials that will come our way. When we see how God works in our lives, we will love Him for all that He has done and continues to do for us.

Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God's Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we've embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God. (1 John 4:15-16 MSG)

When we see the work of God in our lives it inspires us with hope. The perfect love of God casts out all fear of the future for we know that, despite any failings we may have, His love is strong enough to carry us through because it endures forever. Even when we are unfaithful, God remains faithful. When we confess our sin, He cleanses us from all that would hinder our relationship with Him.

There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love. (1 John 4:18 MSG)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am so thankful that Your love endures forever. Please help me to leave fear behind and to be fully transformed by Your love so that my hope of endurance will remain, regardless of what may come my way in the future. Amen

TRUSTING GOD

Trust in God is foundational for trust in our relationship with others. Even when a relationship is challenged, we can do our part to be trustworthy if we choose to live with integrity and keep God at the center of it all.

In the Christmas story, Mary and Joseph are examples of those who trusted what God said even in challenging times. Months before their planned wedding, Mary became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph knew he had not been sexually active with Mary he assumed that she had been unfaithful to him, even though that was untrue. Joseph was troubled by Mary's pregnancy and could have harmed her, but he graciously decided to break off the engagement as quietly and mercifully as he could.

God sent an angel to explain to Joseph what had taken place in Mary. Joseph believed God and was willing to change the plans he had made. He put his own reputation on the line in order to follow God's will and continued his relationship with Mary.

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18-20 NIV)

Are we behaving as trustworthy people of integrity in our relationships? Are we asking God for His guidance in the decisions we are making and seeking His direction in how we relate to the other person in our relationship? Are we willing to offer forgiveness and live at peace with the other person as God walks each of us through any challenges that may arise?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to trust Your input as I seek to build a relationship with others. Give me eyes to see and ears to hear as I follow wise counsel from Your word and from others who faithfully follow You. Amen

Trust can always be maintained if we choose to live with integrity and keep God at the center of it all.

STEP TWELVE – SHARING THE MESSAGE

Within each personal story of the journey from bondage to freedom is the knowledge of 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 healing journey with Jesus who said:

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

“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. 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 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 NIV)

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

THE WISDOM OF MY WORDS

One of the books in the Bible is called Proverbs. It is also known by many as the book of wisdom. The wisdom contained in this book is described in the words of a person speaking. Jesus taught that what we say is directly linked to what is in our heart. As we move forward in recovery, all of us would do well to look at our lives through the lens of what our lips are saying.

My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse. To the discerning all of them are right; they are upright to those who have found knowledge. Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her. (Proverbs 8:7-11 NIV)

If we are familiar with God's principles as recorded in the Bible and put them into practice, people will hear what we have to say and will discover that what we are saying is not only true, but is also right and fair-minded. Others will learn how to do life better because we are sharing our experience, strength, and hope with them. What we have to say will be relevant to others because God's wisdom coming out of our mouths is precious and there is nothing better to base our lives on.

It takes time to submit to God's way of thinking, valuing, and speaking, but the upgrade to our quality of life when we do so is worth the effort.

Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it. Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. (Proverbs 8:32-34 NIV)

God is pleased when what we speak is in accordance with His ways. None of us are perfect, but as we begin to understand what God says and give it top priority in our thinking and behaving, we will be truly blessed.

Prayer: Loving God, What You teach me is more precious than anything in this world. I desire that all that I am, and all that I say, will give honour to You. I pray that Your words that I speak and also put into effect in my life will draw others to You, so that they too may gain more understanding of Your wisdom and truth. Amen

For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Luke 6:45b NIV

HOPE IN GOD

Some of us say we have hope in God, but what does that mean? Many of us make a list of what we would like for Christmas and then hope that someone will get us what we want. Is this how we approach God, with a list of what we want, just hoping we will get something? When we repent of our sins and give our will and life over to the care of God, we become His adopted children. Through our belief in the finished work of Jesus, God has promised us rich and glorious blessings.

I pray that God will open your minds to see his truth. Then you will know the hope that he has chosen us to have. You will know that the blessings God has promised his holy people are rich and glorious. And you will know that God's power is very great for us who believe. (Ephesians 1:18-19a ERV)

I pray that the God who gives hope will fill you with much joy and peace as you trust in him.

Romans 15:13a ERV

Through Jesus we have a new life free from the sins of the past. Our old life is left behind. Going under the water in baptism symbolizes this death of our old self. As we come up out of the water, we demonstrate that we are born again to a new life. The Holy Spirit comes to live in us. He is the power greater than ourselves who will lead and guide us into the knowledge of all truth. Now we truly have hope for the future!

So when we were baptized, we were buried with Christ and took part in his death. And just as Christ was raised from death by the wonderful power of the Father, so we can now live a new life. (Romans 6:4 ERV)

God is both the object of our hope and the author of it. The Scriptures, as written in the Bible, are the foundation on which our hope is built. There really is no evidence of hope for a person who thinks they can live life by their own wisdom. As we trust in God and obey Him in all our ways, our hope in God will grow and joy and peace will fill our soul.

I pray that the God who gives hope will fill you with much joy and peace as you trust in him. Then you will have more and more hope, and it will flow out of you by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13 ERV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your unending faithfulness to me. May my hope be strengthened as I seek Your wisdom and follow Your principles in all my ways. Amen

LET US BE THANKFUL AND WORSHIP GOD

Christmas – a time for giving and receiving gifts. Life is a gift. Recovery is a gift. Today is God's gift to each of us and what a wonderful opportunity this gift brings. Are we receiving these gifts God has given us with thankfulness?

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:28-29 NIV)

When God comes to live in us, He fills us with His Holy Spirit who strengthens us and keeps us secure as we walk forward in life and recovery. How amazing to realize what God is doing in us is life giving and cannot be shaken.

Of course we need to be conscious of where we are easily tempted and what triggers make us vulnerable to picking up again. We need to form healthy supportive relationships with others who will stand with us when we feel weak. But, most important for our stable recovery is being mindful that, it is God who is willing and able to remove everything from us that has the potential to harm or damage us. God is a consuming fire.

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (Colossians 4:2 NIV)

So, as we consider all we have to be grateful for today, let us start with the foundation of our gratitude – the life we have through Jesus. It is His gift of forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life that has brought us to this day. Let us continually offer to God our gratitude for Jesus.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (Hebrews 13:15-16)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, We are grateful that what You are doing in us today is stable and cannot be shaken. Help us to live in grateful trust that You are a consuming fire in our lives. Thank You for burning up everything that would seek to harm us. Thank You for keeping us safe and strong. Amen

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Psalms 106:1 NIV