

**LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY**

# **Daily Meditations**



**JANUARY 2022**

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

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### **JUST FOR TODAY**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## SOME AREAS OF ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCY

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

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

## PRAYER FOR HEALING AND RESTORATION

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

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**JANUARY 2022**

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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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.*

## HAPPY NEW YEAR

Happy New Year! There is a line in a Christian music song which says, God has "opened up my future, closed my past." This New Year's Day may generate that desire within us – a longing for a new beginning.

One of the ways people seek to make the New Year better than the old one, is to make New Year's resolutions – commitments to personal goals, projects, or the reforming of a habit. The only problem with looking to self-determined New Year's resolutions is that statistics tell us that after 9 days there is a 75% failure rate in keeping the resolutions.

If we think that's bad news, what do we do with the statistic that tells us that 100% of people fail to live according to God's righteous laws? The result of that failure isn't just a few more pounds in weight on our bodies or a little more debt – it means death and eternal separation from God.

It's no wonder we love to celebrate Christmas -- the birth of Jesus Christ. It is such a wonderful event because the Bible tells us: ***But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.*** (Galatians 4:4-5 NLT)

Before the beginning of time, God planned for each of us to live in a productive, loving, creative connectedness to Him. He planned for us to have the opportunity to daily walk and talk with Him. His desire was for us to know the peace and blessing that would flow from our relationship with Him. However, humans rejected the ways of God and chose for their own ways.

Today is a good day to seek restoration with the God who created us, who alone can "open up our future and close our past." If we accept Jesus' death on the cross as payment for our sins, we are assured of God's forgiveness and life forever with Him. May this New Year's Day 2022 be the beginning of a truly "Happy New Year" for each one of us.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for giving Your beloved son Jesus to be a sacrifice for my sin. I choose to surrender my will and life into Your care and trust that as I faithfully follow You, Your plans for my future will open up and this will be my best year yet. Amen*

***Today is a good day to seek restoration with the God who created us, who alone can, "open up our future and close our past."***

## BEING GRACIOUS TO ALL

God created us in love and desires that we love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind, and that we love our neighbour as ourselves. A man who was a religious scholar in the Jewish faith asked Jesus to define who was his neighbour while believing that only a fellow Israelite was truly his neighbour. Jesus, however, gave a different interpretation of who our neighbour is.

***You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies. Pray for those who treat you badly.*** (Matthew 5:43-44 ERV)

***How do we treat others?  
Are we gracious to our neighbours?***

To illustrate who His neighbour was Jesus told a story about a man who was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. He was beaten up by a gang of robbers who left him half dead. Two people saw the man lying on the side of the road and did not stop to help him. The third person who came along was a Samaritan. The Jews despised the Samaritans. However, the Samaritan stopped and helped the injured man. He cleansed the man's wounds with oil and wine and bound them up, set the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn. He paid the inn keeper to take care of him until his return and was willing to pay any extra costs incurred. When Jesus asked the religious scholar which one was a neighbour to the man, he replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

***"What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?" "The one who treated him kindly," the religion scholar responded. Jesus said, "Go and do the same."*** (Luke 10:36-37 MSG)

How do we treat others? Are we gracious to our neighbours? Do we take the time to listen or help someone who is in need or are we just too busy to help? What about those who haven't treated us well? From the overflow of God's generosity to us, are we willing to help others – even our enemies?

***Do to others as you would like them to do to you.*** (Luke 6:31 NLT)

***Prayer: Loving God, In Your amazing love and grace You have brought me to new life in You. Help me to be alert to my neighbour's needs and to take the time to stop and listen and help when I can. Help me to be more like Jesus. Amen***

## PLANNING AHEAD

Planning gives us peace in our hearts knowing that we have reviewed the specifics of how to get to where we are going and what we need to do to get there. For instance, when we plan a hike, we decide the place we want to visit and determine whether the terrain is suitable to our physical fitness. We want to ensure we are wearing the right footwear and clothes for the journey and have informed someone where we are going. It is also wise when we are travelling to a place for the first time to consult with a person that has been that way before and has some knowledge of what lies ahead.

***Plans fail without good advice. But they succeed when there are many advisers.*** (Proverbs 15:22 NIRV)

When we are travelling the road to recovery, we also need to make plans for those things that might obstruct us from getting to our destination. We need to work hard to be spiritually fit so we can navigate the road ahead. We need to seek advice on how to avoid the pitfalls of temptation. It is helpful to have a sponsor who knows the road ahead and can advise us on what is likely to happen.

***Let us act as we should, like people living in the daytime. Have nothing to do with wild parties, and don't get drunk. Don't take part in sexual sins or evil conduct. Don't fight with each other or be jealous of anyone. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ as if he were your clothing. Don't think about how to satisfy sinful desires.*** (Romans 13:13-14 NIRV)

It is wise to plan ahead and determine what we will do should unexpected events challenge us. Sinful desires and overwhelming obsessions may war against our mind and our body, but if we call upon Jesus, He will act on our behalf for He ever lives to intercede for us.

***But because Jesus lives forever, his priesthood lasts forever. Therefore, he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.*** (Hebrews 7:24-25 NLT)

***Prayer: Lord Jesus, I know my flesh is weak therefore, I ask You to help me with plans to persevere through to victory whenever temptation comes to trouble my soul. Amen***

***Planning gives us peace in our hearts knowing that we have reviewed the specifics of how to get to where we are going, and what we need to get there.***

HOW FAR IS THE EAST FROM THE WEST?

How far is the east from the west? It is a distance we can never travel and a destination we can never reach. Based on our acceptance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has removed our sins from us and sent them to that place we can never reach. We can leave the disgrace and damage of our destructive lives at the cross of Jesus and receive a completely new life from Him in exchange.

*The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.* (Psalm 103:8-12 NIV)

**God has removed our sins from us and sent them to a place we can never reach.**

When God separates us from our sins, we are washed clean from them, and they are removed to a place that is as far as the east is from the west. What then is going on within us when we continue to remember the guilt and shame, or the pain and condemnation? The simple answer is that the enemy of our soul is sitting on our shoulder telling us lies. The one who seeks to destroy us is deceiving us into thinking those dark things are still sitting some place in our soul. He's lying because our sins are gone. God says He remembers them no more, so why should we?

What are we to do when we experience this kind of condemnation? We are to hold onto the truth that Jesus paid our sin debt on the cross and, because of that, God has forgiven us. We are to tell our thoughts and emotions to remember that our debt for sin has been "paid in full" by Jesus. We then tell the enemy to take his lies and leave because Jesus has set us free. We experience the satisfaction of Jesus' freeing work in us when we simply stand on the truth of what He has done.

Jesus said, **"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."** (John 8:31-32 NIV)

*Prayer: Dear Jesus, Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins and removing them from me as far as the east is from the west. Help me to reject all shame and condemnation and live in the joy and freedom of complete forgiveness. Amen*

STEP ONE - FINDING HOPE IN A DARK PLACE

Recovery begins when we come to our senses and affirm that we are powerless over alcohol or some other substance or habit and that our lives have become unmanageable. It is a profound moment, not of hopelessness, but of letting go and turning our focus to discovering new solutions for our life's problems.

***Foolish people say in their hearts, "There is no God." They do all kinds of horrible and evil things. No one does anything good. The Lord looks down from heaven on all people. He wants to see if there are any who understand. He wants to see if there are any who trust in God. All of them have turned away. They have all become evil. No one does anything good, no one at all.*** (Psalm 14:1-3 NIRV)

We did horrible things to ourselves and others as we sank further and further into the pit of our destructive lifestyle. We lost sight of a way to change ourselves and lost contact with our emotions, until we didn't even care. We often think that our powerlessness and the unmanageability of our lives is the dark and disconnected place we arrived at through our addiction. Actually, it is not. That is a result not a cause. The real root cause is the fact that we either didn't know or didn't dare to reach out and trust that there was a God who made us, who loves us, and who is longing to care for us in a way that makes life possible and meaningful. We thought and lived as if there was no God. We now have lots of proof that it truly is the foolish people who say in their hearts "There is no God."

**God could and would if He were sought.**

Thank God that even though we gave up on Him, He didn't give up on us but kept on calling out to us and inviting us to a life that was always meant to be – a life dependent on His goodness and love supporting us to do the good things He has prepared for us to do. May we seek God's help today. As we are so often reminded, **"God could and would if He were sought."**

**(Big Book - How It Works)**

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, Forgive me for the chaos and suffering I've caused by living as though You did not exist. Today I affirm that You are God. You created me in love, and You will show me the way to live well. I'm not sure how it will work, but the wreck of my life, and the witness of others who say that You made a difference in their lives, and the truth of Your words which I read in the Bible have convinced me that I really do need to follow Your principles in all my affairs. Help me to know You more. Today, I turn my will and my life over to Your care. Amen*

PUTTING ON THE ARMOUR GOD PROVIDES

While writing to a group of Christians the apostle Paul told them to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. How were they to do this? He told them to put on the whole armor of God so they would be able to stand against the strategies of the devil. When we are being tempted to return to our old ways or are being complacent about following the ways of the Lord, we need to be aware that we are giving the enemy ground where he can attack us and entice us back to our old ways.

**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.** (Ephesians 6:10-11 NASB)

**Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.**

*(Ephesians 6:10-11 NASB)*

King David was a man after God's own heart and the devil was out to get him. At a time when his country was at war David decided to take off his armour and rest. At this time, when his guard was down, the devil saw an opportunity to attack David and cause him much grief. (Read: 2 Samuel 11) The devil is an opportunist, and he prowls around looking for someone to destroy.

**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)

Victory over the devil begins by having knowledge of his ways through meditation on the Scriptures. Jesus told us plainly that the devil comes to steal, kill, and destroy those who are made in the image of God. We can be certain that what the devil tempts us with will bring pleasure for a moment, but heartache for a lifetime.

**He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.** (John 8:44b NASB)

When confronted with the devil's temptations, the Lord Jesus stood firm and quoted the Scriptures. We also can defeat the devil's enticements by using the same method that Jesus did.

*Prayer: Gracious God, When the devil comes around seeking to tempt me, strengthen me to uphold Your Word and stand firm in obedience to what You say. Amen*

A NEW WAY OF LIFE

While He was on earth, Jesus taught many things and made many statements about the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus said He came to earth to fulfill the law and the prophets. The law was given by God and the prophets foretold many things about the life of Jesus. Jesus came to save the world because humans failed to do what was pleasing to God. Fortunately, God did not abandon us to our rebellious ways but continued to love us and, through Jesus, made a way for us to be restored to life with Him.

**God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through him.** (John 3:16-17 NIRV)

The law of our country sets penalties for whatever law is violated and we are sentenced according to the punishment laid out. God set death as the penalty for violation of His laws to ensure that sin would never enter the paradise of God. Jesus came into the world in human flesh and lived a life that never violated the laws of God. On the cross, Jesus paid the debt for all human sin so that those who believe in Him could be free from the penalty of eternal death.

**Christ didn't have any sin. But God made him become sin for us. So we can be made right with God because of what Christ has done for us.** (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIRV)

God was well pleased with Jesus' righteous living and accepted His death as a substitute for our death. This exchange is guaranteed for those who believe on the finished work of Jesus, repent of wrongdoing, turn away from sin, and follow the ways of Christ. When we give our will and life over to the care of God, we become His precious children and have an inheritance forever in the Kingdom of God.

**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.** (Ephesians 5:8-10 NIV)

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, Thank You for all You have done for me. I repent of my rebellious ways and desire to live my life according to God's laws. Please help me! Amen*

**Jesus paid the debt for all human sin so that those who believe in Him could be free from the penalty of eternal death.**

## ISOLATION VERSUS RELATIONSHIP

In our addiction, long periods of isolation became a way of life for us. While people were around us when we were using, there was little or no emotional connection with them. We didn't trust them, and we certainly didn't feel cared for or understood by them. An important part of leaving behind a life in addiction is coming out of isolation and entering into healthy relationships. It might be as simple as attending a meeting and saying "hello" to another person. It certainly means taking time to get to know others and allowing relationships at various levels to bring joy and richness to our daily life. We also take a significant step out of isolation when we sincerely pray the Serenity Prayer and progressively come to know this amazing God, who can restore us to sanity.

Jesus said: ***"I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.*** (John 15:5 NLT)

***Let us consider how we can stir up one another to love***

We need to form a relationship with our Heavenly Father and learn how to receive and respond to His love. God's love is unfailing. As we open our hearts to His kindness, we begin to relax and are able to take a risk to share ourselves with others and offer friendship. Sometimes it is through the gentle spirit of another human being that we see God's love and come to believe that God really cares for us.

Hebrews 10:24

***Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.*** (Philippians 2:4, Galatians 6:2 NLT)

To demonstrate the power of relationship over isolation the Bible uses the picture of a body where each part works together and supports the other parts. Where one part is weak, the other offers strength. As we live with and help each other, we are strengthened and encouraged by all that we can accomplish together.

***Let us consider how we can stir up one another to love. Let us help one another to do good works. And let us not give up meeting together. Some are in the habit of doing this. Instead, let us encourage one another with words of hope.*** (Hebrews 10:24-25 NIRV)

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Give me the courage to reach out and be a friend. As You love and encourage me, help me to reach out to others with love and encouragement. Amen***

## DEALING WITH PRESSURE

Who of us hasn't felt pressured recently – maybe even today? There are so many demands on our time and attention, so many uncertainties in our world, and so much we don't know about to make us safe and successful. Sometimes the pressure comes from having all kinds of opportunities and feeling overwhelmed by the decisions we need to make. We want what is best. We want what will work. While it's important to not passively let life just happen, it's also important to find a secure place each day where we can deal with whatever we need to face today and then wisely let the rest go.

***Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.*** (James 1:2-4 MSG)

God has a good plan for us and is willing to help us find and work at it successfully. God knows there will be pressures to face every day, but He promises that He will be with us and that the lessons we learn, even in times of challenge and pressure, will help us develop confidence and faith in God's goodness and His consistent support in all we do.

***Happy are those who remain faithful under trials, because when they succeed in passing such a test, they will receive as their reward the life which God has promised to those who love him.*** (James 1:12 GNT)

One of the greatest pressures we put on ourselves is the fear of making a mistake when part of the learning process is doing exactly that. No one is perfect. Everyone is learning. Those who learn best are those who are willing to stay focused on what they can do today; who build one step at a time; who celebrate progress; who look for good in each situation they encounter.

Feeling pressure is a signal to remind us to talk to God about what's going on and to remember that God will never leave us to face anything alone.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, when I feel pressured and overwhelmed, help me to remember that You are with me, You will show me a way forward, and You will supply everything I need to do what I need to do. Help me to trust You with all my heart and let go of stress. Amen***

***In my distress I prayed to the Lord, and the Lord answered me and set me free.***

Psalm 118:5 NLT

**GOD PROVIDES ALL I NEED**

When we give our will and life over to the care of God, we are demonstrating our trust in God to provide for our needs. We may have many needs and find it challenging to believe that God will supply what we require. The fact is, God is aware of what is lacking in our lives and if we choose to trust Him, we will find that He will provide everything that affects life and godliness.

*That's why I urge you to pray for absolutely everything, ranging from small to large. Include everything as you embrace this God-life, and you'll get God's everything.* (Mark 11:24 MSG)

***We too will be blessed by knowing God's character and His ability to provide what is needed in every circumstance***

One account in the Bible shows how God tested Abraham's faith and it reminds us that God wants us to believe the Scriptures and act on what He says. God told Abraham to sacrifice his dear son Isaac whom He loved, and Abraham prepared to do so. God commended Abraham for obeying His direction and when the sacrifice was needed, God provided a sheep. Isaac was spared and because of Abraham's obedience God's blessings impacted him and generations to come. Abraham believed that God would provide what was needed, and He did. (Genesis 22)

*Abraham said, "Son, God will see to it that there's a sheep for the burnt offering." And they kept on walking together. Abraham named that place God-Yireh (God-Sees-to-It). That's where we get the saying, "On the*

*mountain of God, he sees to it."* (Genesis 22:8, 14 MSG)

We too will be blessed by knowing God's character and His ability to provide what is needed in every circumstance. We are tempted to believe we ought to provide for ourselves in whatever way we can – good or not. However, if we pray and believe that God knows our needs, we will often be surprised at how He provides for us.

*The full meaning of "believe" in the Scripture sentence, "Abraham believed God and was set right with God," includes his action. It's that mesh of believing and acting that got Abraham named "God's friend."* (James 2:23 MSG)

*Prayer: Gracious God, When I am overwhelmed by the magnitude of my needs, help me to have faith that You are my friend and my provider and believe that You will act on my behalf. Amen*

**WHERE IS MY FOCUS**

How many of us who have given our will and our life over to the care of God have taken time to acknowledge all that we received by making that decision? At times we may focus more on what we let go of rather than on what we have received.

*There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever.* (2 Corinthians 4:18 MSG)

When driving a car, if our eyes focus on something other than the road ahead, the car will turn in the direction of our focus. The same is true when our focus is on our former way of life. If we allow self-pity it will cloud our thinking. If we guard shameful secrets instead of bringing them to God and allowing a safe person to help us through the trauma we will struggle. When we obsess on former events, we often end up stumbling back into what we just left. We need to change our thought patterns and focus on those things which build us up and encourage us to move forward with God.

*This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance.* (Romans 8:15-17a MSG)

We experience pain when we have a physical injury, but the pain lessens as we go through the healing process. The same is true of emotional injuries. As we invite God to be with us, we are assured of His tender love and care for us. Medical evidence assures us that we heal more quickly when our focus is on getting well.

Now is the perfect time to focus on the good things God has done and continues to do, rather than on those things that can drag us into the pit again.

*Prayer: Gracious God, Forgive me for not seeing the good things I received when I turned my will and life over to Your care. As I submit to Your ways, help me to focus on the purposeful life I have with You and be thankful that You love and care for me. Amen*

***We need to change our thought patterns and focus on those things which build us up and encourage us to move forward with God.***

## UNITY

After living so long in the self-centered world of addiction, it's not easy to come into recovery and build relationships with other human beings, particularly those who have lived in self-centered ways just like us. Relapse is much more often the result of stress in relationships than it is giving in to the obsession to use.

***Put up with one another. Forgive one another if you are holding something against someone. Forgive, just as the Lord forgave you. And over all these good things put on love. Love holds them all together perfectly as if they were one.***  
(Colossians 3:13-14 NIRV)

***Relapse is much more often the result of stress in relationships than it is the obsession to use.***

We need help to live in unity with others. It's why the founders of AA made this principle in the Twelve Traditions the very first one, *"Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity."* This principle echoes what God has been teaching humans since the beginning of time. We need to live well with each other in order to live well individually.

***There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body. It is the same with Christ. So let us do all we can to live in peace. And let us work hard to build up one another.*** (I Corinthians 12:12, Romans 14:19b NIRV)

No one said it would be easy. The Bible verse above tells us we are going to need to work hard. We need endurance and encouragement from God if we are going to be able to put up with one another and socialize in a way that helps us live well together.

***May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*** (Romans 15:5-7 NIV)

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, It is so hard to be with others when we all have character defects. Please give me the grace to accept others as I pray You will give them the grace to accept me. Help us to walk in unity with each other and do it one step at a time, one day at a time. Amen*

## HOW WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE

We got to where we are today by our own irrational thinking and flawed solutions. When we allow God's truth to motivate our thinking and daily living, we can have a full life beyond all we could ask for.

***It's true that moral guidance and counsel need to be given, but the way you say it and to whom you say it are as important as what you say. It's obvious, isn't it, that the law code isn't primarily for people who live responsibly, but for the irresponsible, who defy all authority, riding roughshod over God, life, sex, truth, whatever! They are contemptuous of this great Message I've been put in charge of by this great God.*** (1 Timothy 1:8-11 MSG)

Who do the tapes playing in my head say I am? Who does God say I am? What are my felt needs right now? Does God promise to meet those needs? Where do I think my life is headed? What does God say about His plans for me? On which of the answers to these questions will I base my beliefs and actions today?

***Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*** (Romans 12:2 NIV)

God offers us a new way of life. It requires that we surrender to the truth. It requires conquering our feelings when they don't line up with the truth. It requires that we lay down our familiar self-centered ways and follow God's life-giving ways. Today we have a choice either to live by our unreliable feelings or live according to God's truth. The former leads to disaster. The latter leads to life.

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

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess that my irrational thoughts and flawed thinking have brought me to where I am today. My self-centered actions are primarily caused by my defective belief system about who You are and who You say I am. Today I choose to walk in the truth of who You are and who You say I am. Give me a discerning heart to know the plans You have for me. I am forever grateful that You love and care for me. Amen*

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

I CAN'T. GOD CAN. I THINK I'LL LET HIM

First and last words - these are words that are said on special occasions and are deemed important to the situation at hand. It therefore seems worth noting some of the first words Jesus spoke when He began His ministry.

*Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"* (Mark 1:14b-15 NLT)

God always keeps His promises and we do not. God has always been there for us, even when we wandered in the darkness of our destructive and addictive lifestyle. Thankfully, there were moments of clarity when we realized that there was more to life than the current suffering in which we were existing. But just to realize that fact is not enough. There's a response required of us if things are going to change.

***The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!***

(Mark 1:15 NLT)

It hinges on the meaning of that word, "repent" which has been amplified below to show us it's full meaning:

*... repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret past sins, live your life in a way that proves repentance; seek God's purpose for your life] and believe [with a deep, abiding trust] in the good news [regarding salvation]."* (Mark 1:15b AMP)

The components of the turn-around listed here include, change your old way of thinking; regret past sins; live your life in a way that proves it; seek God's purpose for your life; deeply believe the good news of salvation. The simplified version of the first three steps of Alcoholics Anonymous will help us when we admit: "I can't. God can. I think I'll let Him."

God is near to us and ready to work an amazing transformation in our lives if we repent, turn from living life on our own terms, believe God's good news of forgiveness and life through Jesus Christ, and surrender to His will and His ways.

*Prayer: Loving God, help me to hear and respond to the words of Jesus today to "Repent and believe." My life is unmanageable without You. Fill me with Your power as I turn away from my rebellious ways and turn to You, putting all my faith and trust in Your goodness and Your power to change my life. Amen*

THANKS GOD, FOR MY LIFE AND MY RECOVERY

Each day in recovery is another opportunity to learn and grow. We all know that to stand strong in recovery we need God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, but we also need to do for ourselves what we can. Today we are invited to remember, celebrate, and give thanks for what God has done for us that we could never have done for ourselves.

*Let me tell you what God did for me. I called out to him with my mouth, my tongue shaped the sounds of music. If I had been cozy with evil, the Lord would never have listened. But he most surely did listen, he came on the double when he heard my prayer. Blessed be God: he didn't turn a deaf ear, he stayed with me, loyal in his love.* (Psalm 66:16b-20 MSG)

Sometimes winter months seem long and gloomy and there are also moments in recovery when we feel like the journey has been long and hard. At times like these, it is good to pause and reflect on how different things are now compared to when we were struggling in our brokenness. Today, let's take time to hit the "pause button", look around us, and see those things we are grateful for.

At the core of our recovery is the God who was there for us when we recognized our powerlessness and admitted that our life was unmanageable. He listened to us and, as the Bible quote above says, "*came on the double when he heard my prayer.*" God didn't just come quickly and help us take that first step, but He has stayed with us and tenderly expressed His love for us during days in recovery when it was hard for us to hang on and keep going.

*Bless our God, O peoples! Give him a thunderous welcome! Didn't he set us on the road to life? Didn't he keep us out of the ditch?* (Psalm 66:8-9 MSG)

Wherever we share today – on our phone, in a conversation, or at a meeting – let's share with gratitude about our gracious God who set us on the road to life.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for being there for me when I couldn't even be there for myself. Thank You for making a way for me to receive forgiveness and healing and life before I even asked You for it. Today, I reaffirm my trust in Jesus, who did for me on the cross what I could never do for myself. Today I thank You for my life. Amen*

***Today, I reaffirm my trust in Jesus, who did for me on the cross what I could never do for myself.***

STEP FOUR - SEARCHING FOR GOD'S PLAN

Human beings are wonderfully complex creations of God. We have a body, a soul, and a spirit. God planned for us to live in harmony with Him and with everything else in creation. God made us in His image so we could live in relationship with Him. Only in this relationship with God can we know the security and stability needed to properly enjoy all the other desires and passions we experience as human beings.

***He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*** (Micah 6:8 NASB)

Without relationship with God our foundation for living in a healthy human relationship does not exist. We fear pain, crave pleasure, and desire power. Our participation in actions that are destructive and addictive result from not knowing how else to cope.

***We were created to live in harmony with God and with everything else in creation.***

Making a searching and fearless moral inventory is a wonderful way to start at the beginning and see how everything is meant to fit together. We have natural appetites and passions for sexual fulfillment, emotional and financial security, and a place of respect and usefulness in society. These are God-given qualities. God is ready and willing to show us how these strong desires may be met in a wonderful way.

***This is all there is in the world: wanting to please our sinful selves, wanting the sinful things we see, and being too proud of what we have. But none of these comes from the Father. They come from the world. The world is passing away, and all the things that people want in the world are passing away. But whoever does what God wants will live forever.*** (1 John 2:16-17 ERV)

We get into trouble when we focus on a particular desire and go after its fulfillment rather than seeking to know and love God and asking Him to show us the right path to satisfy our deepest needs. God didn't give us instincts and passions in order to make us suffer. God wants us to enjoy full and satisfying relationships. However, in order to know how to live, seeking God must come first, then everything else will fit together in harmony.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, Too often I've done things backwards. I've looked to meet my needs before asking You which is the best way forward for me. Help me to seek and learn from You today so I can have the satisfying life You created me to live. Amen*

PRACTICE BEING CHEERFUL

Scientific evidence suggests that being cheerful seems to have positive benefits on our over-all health. There are studies that suggest being cheerful and optimistic limits stress, reduces pain, supports our immune system, and even helps to protect our heart. Is it any wonder that long before there were tests to prove it, the Bible already had this important information available?

***A cheerful heart makes you healthy. But a broken spirit dries you up. Worry weighs us down; a cheerful word picks us up.*** (Proverbs 17:22 NIRV, Proverbs 12:25 MSG)

Studies have shown that those who live in peace and cheerfulness better fight off seasonal bugs like cold and flu. Older people who reported feeling happy lived longer than those who were least happy. This is pretty good motivation to be thankful for who we are and to be cheerful today.

***A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit. All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast.*** (Proverbs 15:13, 15 NIV)

We tend to be creative and solve problems more quickly when we are happy and optimistic rather than when we are living in fear and worry, supposing the problems before us to be bigger than God's ability to make a way through for us. God does not want us to pretend that problems don't exist. Denial didn't fix our problems with addiction, and it won't solve the challenges we face in recovery. Our part is to pray often, work hard, and trust God in all circumstances. When we do, God's promise is that He will surely be with us.

***Be cheerful. Keep things in good repair. Keep your spirits up. Think in harmony. Be agreeable. Do all that, and the God of love and peace will be with you for sure.*** (2 Corinthians 13:11 MSG)

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to live with joy in my heart and be cheerful no matter what challenges I face. I receive Your comfort and encouragement as I face problems head-on rather than avoiding or denying them. I trust You are with me and will make a way forward for me as You've done so many times in the past. Thank you for caring for me. Amen*

***Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder***

*Romans 12:11-12 MSG*

STEP TWO - CAME TO BELIEVE

At some point in our lives we became aware that we were powerless over our dependencies and that our lives had become unmanageable. By some miracle we found ourselves in rooms where we were told the next step to a healthy life was, “Coming to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” The challenge then is, how do we come to believe? How long does it take and what is involved in the healing and restoration process?

God is with us each step of our journey and assures us of His love, His care, and all the help that we need.

***We have come to know that a good and caring God is present with us offering personal and practical help and support.***

***When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*** (Romans 5:6-8 NLT)

It is God’s desire to restore us to a life giving and satisfying relationship with Him. As we seek God, we can ask Him for His direction and help for the journey of coming to believe He exists and will always be there for us in our times of trouble.

***Without faith it is impossible to please God. Those who come to God must believe that he exists. And they must believe that he rewards those who look to him.*** (Hebrews 11:6 NIRV)

One step at a time God will show us a new life-giving way to walk out of hatred and victimization. Daily reading the Bible is foundational to our progress because it teaches us how merciful and kind God is to those who reach out to Him and begin to walk in the path He directs. As our thoughts and

actions follow God’s principles, we will notice peace and security filling our hearts. We have come to know that a good and caring God is present with us offering personal and practical help and support. When we come to know God’s character, we become willing to turn our will and our life over to His care

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, Forgive me for living so long in the misery of my own making. I have come to believe that You care for me and that You have the power to do what needs doing to restore me to sanity. Help me to trust in Your unfailing love for me and in the truth that only in You will I find the peace and security that I am seeking. Amen*

GROW A WISE HEART

How many of us got into trouble because of our lack of wisdom and understanding of where life would lead us as we pursued a rebellious course? We may have been hurting from unmet needs or events that happened in our past and instead of seeking help and healing we chose a defiant path of doing what was right in our own eyes. In recovery we are now attempting to turn our lives around from the chaos that resulted from such choices.

***Grow a wise heart—you’ll do yourself a favor; keep a clear head—you’ll find a good life.*** (Proverbs 19:8 MSG)

We started on a new path when we decided to give our lives over to the care of God. Our stubborn hard heart was removed, and we were given a soft tender heart of flesh. The Holy Spirit was given to us to guide us in the way of truth and to help us make wise choices through understanding the consequences of our words and actions. Giving thought to our actions and being obedient to God’s commands is a new way of behaving for us, but we are assured it will bring encouraging results.

***I’ll give you a new heart. I’ll put a new spirit in you. I’ll cut out your stone heart and replace it with a red-blooded, firm-muscled heart. Then you’ll obey my statutes and be careful to obey my commands. You’ll be my people! I’ll be your God! Keep the rules and keep your life; careless living kills.*** (Ezekiel 11:19-20; Proverbs 19:16 MSG)

Learning to listen attentively to others who are willing to share their experience, strength, and hope with us is another way to get wisdom. If we have sought to improve our conscious contact with God, we will be able to make wise decisions about what we see and hear and will be better equipped to put God’s plan for our lives into action. Accepting guidance from God and those around us will surely lead us to a purposeful life.

***Take good counsel and accept correction—that’s the way to live wisely and well. We humans keep brainstorming options and plans, but God’s purpose prevails.*** (Proverbs 19:20-21 MSG)

*Prayer: Gracious God, I want the clean heart and new spirit within that You promise. Teach me Your Word so that I may obey Your commands and allow Your purposes to prevail. Amen*

***Grow a wise heart—you’ll do yourself a favor; keep a clear head—you’ll find a good life.***

Proverbs 19:8 MSG

A GOOD REASON TO WAKE UP TO THIS DAY

Why do we get up in the morning? What's the point of me being part of this day? These are questions that people ask when they are feeling the burdens of life, but they are genuine questions to ask God each day. God is sure to have an answer for us today that will encourage us and bring joy to our hearts.

**Jesus said: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free. (Luke 4:18 NLT)**

**God created each of us for a purpose, and each day we make ourselves available to Him, God will do amazing things through us.**

We are not just wandering through each day hoping to stay sober and put in another day. God created each of us for a purpose, and each day we make ourselves available to Him, God will do amazing things through us. He will use us to bring good news to others. God will give us activities to do and words to say that will help others reach out to Him for healing and release from their addictions and problematic issues.

How does God do that? He fills us with His Holy Spirit who guides and empowers us to do what God knows will bless both us and others.

**But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing. (John 14:26, 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NLT)**

Sharing our experience, strength, and hope of what God has done for us is a wonderful way to help others know and find freedom.

*Prayer: Loving God, Today I am honoured to be a person who desires to be useful for good purposes. Help me to let go of self-centered pursuits that don't satisfy and sincerely give myself to You and the plans You have for me this day. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and work in me so I recognize the opportunities You are putting before me. My desire is to encourage and strengthen someone who, like me, needs the power to change their ways. Amen*

SAFE GATES AND SOLID FOUNDATIONS

Gates serve several purposes. One purpose is to keep those inside safe and another is to keep out those who seek to harm. Gates may be controlled so that only those who have special permission can enter. When we turn our will and our life over to the care of God, we receive forgiveness for all our sin and are made pure and righteous before God. Our relationship with God is restored and the gates of heaven are opened wide for us to enter in and receive all that God has promised us.

**Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter. I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad. (Psalm 118:19-24 NIV)**

Builders know that the foundation for a building must be on rock otherwise the elements of nature will eventually cause it to topple. We've already learned that trying to build our lives solely on pleasure doesn't work. It led us into addiction and ruin. Attempting to build a lasting recovery without the cornerstone of faith in God, who sent His son into the world to reconcile us to Himself, will truly have a disastrous end.

Thankfully, when we build our lives on the solid foundation of God's word we do not have to worry about disastrous failure. The storms and earthquakes of life may come and go but we will remain safe, because we are living in the kingdom of God that can never be shaken.

**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)**

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, You are the cornerstone of life eternal. Help me to grow in faith and stand firm in the knowledge of Your word as I apply its truth to every situation. Amen*

**Attempting to build a lasting recovery without the cornerstone of faith in God, who sent His son into the world to reconcile us to Himself, will truly have a disastrous end.**

PEOPLE, PLACES, THINGS

What do “people, places, and things” have to do with living well with God in recovery today? Our minds remember and tend to associate our negative emotions with people, places, and things. These powerful emotions can trigger our obsession to use. It’s not always drug paraphernalia, a drinking buddy, or passing by a familiar bar that triggers our fixation on our former dependency. While it’s important to do what is in our power to limit triggers, it’s even more important to acknowledge our powerlessness over events that have strongly impacted our lives.

*The world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father but*

*are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.* (1 John 2:16-17 NLT)

***This world  
is fading  
away,  
along with  
everything  
that  
people  
crave.***

***1 John 2:17 NLT***

Each day, it’s important to remind ourselves that God is in control. He has a wonderful day planned for us that is more fulfilling than the temporary enjoyable feelings we experienced when we were drinking and using.

*You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.* (Psalm 16:11 NLT)

Whether it’s anxiety, fear, or stress that is triggering our thoughts of using, we need to bring it all to God and trust God to provide a solution and to support us in our journey. We are powerless over people, places, and things but we are not alone anymore. God is with us. God is for us. God will make a way where there seems to be no way.

*I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears. When doubts filled my mind, your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me.* (Psalm 34:4; 94:19; 23:4; NLT)

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to live in the conscious awareness of Your compassionate presence with me in every situation. Help me to hear Your voice when people, places, or things trigger me in negative ways. I ask You to tightly hold my hand as You assure me that “this too shall pass.” Amen*

RATIONALIZING

We are experts at rationalizing – attempting to excuse, minimize, or justify our bad behaviour. We rationalize because we don’t want the inconvenience or embarrassment that the truth might bring. We rationalize when we are still angry with someone and want to justify our resentment. God’s word paints a very clear picture about this poisonous mixture of truth and lies.

***If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar. His word is not in us. Suppose someone claims to love God but hates a brother or sister. Then they are a liar. They don’t love their brother or sister, whom they have seen. So they can’t love God, whom they haven’t seen.*** (1 John 1:10, 4:20 NIRV)

We need to ask God to awaken us to the harmful choices we are making. He knows the poison stored in the roots of our destructive actions and reactions. He knows and understands the actual impact of all the events that make up our lives – good and bad. There may be traumatic events in our past to which we still have emotional links, and the resulting fear translates into our rationalization. God wants to heal our wounds and set us free from the false belief the evil one attached to those memories. Are we willing to be healed?

God’s love goes deeper than any painful, shameful action in our past. For all the sin that resulted from rationalizing our behaviour, there is instant, total, and completely undeserved forgiveness. God’s truth begins to come alive in us when we speak truth to our hearts and minds and consistently choose for truth over rationalization. When we surrender our imperfect understanding of ourselves and our past behaviour to God and ask for help, He will reveal the root cause of our confused conduct and show us the best way forward.

***...Don’t let anyone lead you astray. The person who does what is right is holy, just as Christ is holy. The person who does what is sinful belongs to the devil.*** (1 John 3:7-8a NIRV)

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, Forgive me for the times I have rationalized my thoughts in order to excuse my unwillingness to do the right thing. I ask You to give me wisdom and the courage to examine my thoughts and actions in accordance with Your word. Help me to get rid of the roots of bitterness and fear which support my rebellion. Help me to walk in truth in the light of Your presence. Amen*

***God’s love  
goes  
deeper  
than any  
painful,  
shameful  
action in  
our past.***

AND THE WINNER IS ...

GROWING IN MATURITY

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

For most of us who have come from an unmanageable lifestyle and have chosen a recovery program with community gatherings, the change in our environment is most intimidating. We are unfamiliar with meeting procedures and some of the words we hear seem like they are from a foreign language. Everything around us is different from what we are used to, and we feel immature and imperfect alongside these people who want to help us. What are we to do?

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

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

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

***Have two goals: wisdom—that is, knowing and doing right—and common sense. Don't let them slip away, for they fill you with living energy and bring you honor and respect.*** (Proverbs 3:21-22 TLB)

All of us had to begin at this point and grow through this phase of learning because the ways of God and the Scriptures were so unknown to us. We soon learnt that we could grow faster if we would humble ourselves and simply ask questions of those around us. A flower grows from a planted seed when it is watered and fed. We grow mature in the ways of God and recovery practices as we are watered and fed from the Scriptures and by those around us who are willing to share their experience, strength, and hope with us.

***Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.***

***Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.*** (Hebrews 5:14 NLT)

As we grow in our recovery and become knowledgeable of what is morally excellent and what is evil, we may be shocked to learn that the ways of our culture are quite different from the ways of God. Having had a spiritual awakening, we have come to know that God's ways are higher than our ways and will lead us along a good path to a life that is good, pleasing, and perfect.

*Hebrews 5:14 NLT*

***Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions; I will put them into practice with all my heart.*** (Psalm 119:34 NLT)

*Proverbs 3:14  
NIRV*

***If any of you needs wisdom, you should ask God for it. He will give it to you. God gives freely to everyone and doesn't find fault. Listen to advice and accept correction. In the end you will be counted among those who are wise.*** (James 1:5, Proverbs 19:20 NIRV)

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

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

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, When I feel overwhelmed by the newness of recovery, help me be willing to learn and to stay the course. Give me the will and desire to mature in my understanding of the Scriptures and the power and wisdom to do what You say. Amen*

LOVE IS PATIENT

The Bible tells us that love is patient. How many of us would profess to be patient? Do we listen attentively to what another is saying? Do we give up on a program or a project because it requires too much time or is not going as we anticipated? When things do not go our way, are we willing to pause and seek God on how we should proceed? Many of us are aware of the numerous times we have made life altering blunders because of our impatience.

***It's smart to be patient, but it's stupid to lose your temper. Always be humble and gentle. Patiently put up with each other and love each other.*** (Proverbs 14:29; Ephesians 4:2 CEV)

***The Bible tells us that love is patient. How many of us would profess to be patient?***

What causes us to be impatient and lose our temper? Perhaps it stems from a general disrespect of people. Perhaps we have been conditioned by the environment we grew up in and never learned to wait for things. Perhaps our disappointment with events we expected to happen but never did, affected our trust in others and gave us a sarcastic attitude. How do all these things impact our recovery? Do we stay the way we are, or do we seek God to teach us how to love others and how to be patient with them?

***I am the Lord God. I am merciful and very patient with my people. I show great love, and I can be trusted.*** (Exodus 34 6b CEV)

When we became God's children through accepting Jesus as our Saviour, we were born again into a family household that is quite different from any other household. Our Heavenly Father's love for us surpasses that of any earthly parent. God loves us with unflinching love and is faithful to do what He says. Whatever we are lacking, He is ready to supply. If we need to be filled with His love in order to be patient, He will supply that need.

***My friends, we beg you to warn anyone who isn't living right. Encourage anyone who feels left out, help all who are weak, and be patient with everyone.*** (1 Thessalonians 5:14 CEV)

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Please fill me with Your love and compassion so that I can love and be patient with others just as You have been with me. Amen***

SPONSORS: HAVE ONE, USE ONE, BE ONE

When we enter a recovery program, we are strongly encouraged to quickly find a sponsor and listen to advice from people who have been in the program for a while. It's not a new concept introduced by Alcoholics Anonymous. For thousands of years the wisdom of God, as recorded in the Bible, has been reminding us that we need wise counsel if we are to succeed in recovery, and in living life to the full.

***Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down the other can help him up. But if someone is alone ... there is no one to help him ... Two men can resist an attack that would defeat one man alone.*** (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 GNT)

We live in difficult days. Jesus knows what we need. His prayer for us today is that we would seek and find wise counsel to help us on our journey to life and peace. Jesus is always present with us in the person of the Holy Spirit, and He is the wisest counselor that anyone could have.

God will also bring us together with human counselors and trustworthy people who are walking with Him. Through sharing their stories, these people will inspire us to receive healing for past traumas that hinder our recovery. They will also have worthwhile suggestions on how to cope with the changes we need to make. When we surround ourselves with wise, dependable counselors, we are building a solid foundation for recovery.

***As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*** (Proverbs 27:17 NIV)

We too can humbly share our experience, strength, and hope in support of another person seeking a new life. Every moment of sobriety we have in the care of God teaches us lessons that might be of use to someone else. Part of recovering a life of balance and fulfillment is both giving and receiving. Who needs our support and counsel? Who needs a listening ear, an encouraging word, a supportive prayer? There's great wisdom in what the founders suggest when they say, "Sponsors: Have one, use one, be one."

***Prayer: Lord Jesus, Give me ears to hear what You say. I lay down my pride and commit to seeking help from You and from wise counsellors. Help me walk in the light of Your presence and follow the path of recovery to new life in You. I am forever grateful that you care. Amen***

***Where there is no counsel, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.***

***(Proverbs 11:14 NKJV)***

CONFRONTED BY HOPE

When we first come into a recovery meeting and someone is asked to share their experience, strength, and hope with the group, we are often skeptical in our thoughts about what the person is saying. We are just at the beginning of recovery and not even sure we can abstain from our dependency for one day never mind living the experience of sobriety and looking forward with hope to the future.

***Trapped and helpless, I struggled against the ropes that drew me on to death. In my distress I screamed to the Lord for his help. And he heard me from heaven; my cry reached his ears.*** (Psalm 18:5-6 TLB)

***The Lord alone is our radiant hope and we trust in him with all our hearts. His wrap-around presence will strengthen us.***

*Psalm 33:20*

Hope grows in us when we are willing to listen and assess what another person has found to be reality in their lives. The same holds for our hearing the good news about new life with God and then starting by hoping against hope that God could actually enable us to change and be the person we long to be. If we have earnestly prayed for deliverance from our unmanageable lifestyle, we can be assured that God has heard and, through Jesus, has already answered our prayer. The hope we have lies in God's faithfulness to His word.

***God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?*** (Numbers 23:19 NIV)

Each day God will strengthen us to do what He is calling us to do. Our part is to learn what the Scriptures say and then conform our ways to God's ways. We will triumph over our doubts and fears, and hope will grow in us, when we faithfully follow the way God directs our path. Any stumbling block will be removed as we seek God and pray

for the knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.

***But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*** (1 Peter 3:15 NIV)

*Prayer: Gracious God, I ask You to be my rock, and my fortress, my strength, and my deliverer. I need Your help every hour to strengthen my belief that a Power greater than myself will restore me to sanity. Amen*

YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

SALT – we use it every day. Lots of cities and counties are already sprinkling salt or pouring those little streams of briny solution on roads to keep driving as safe as possible in the snowy season.

Salt enhances the flavour of the foods we eat. When something is just “missing” from what we are tasting, often a pinch of salt will make all the difference. It's not the flavour of salt that we want but the enhancing of the taste of the thing we are eating which improves when we apply salt to it.

Salt was used a lot during the time Jesus walked on the earth and that made it a useful subject for an object lesson about an important teaching Jesus wanted us to be aware of.

***Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.*** (Matthew 5:13 MSG)

God's desire for His people is that our lives and our character reflect His goodness. As we interact with God and reflect His qualities to those in the community where we live, the area will be seasoned with love and kindness. It's not about us being noticed or our reputation being built up. It's about living to bless others whose lives are enriched with the blessing, simply because we've been part of their life today.

The challenge to this way of living is that it often comes from our victory over difficult circumstances that we have had to rise above and therefore our attitude towards others has been made more compassionate. Let's learn from St. Francis of Assisi, who wrote the following prayer, as he sought to put this principle of Jesus into action in his life.

*Prayer: Lord make Me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light. Where there is sadness joy. O Divine master grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; To be understood, as to understand; To be loved, as to love. For it's in giving that we receive, and it's in pardoning that we are pardoned and it's in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen*

***You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth.***

*Matthew 5:13  
MSG*

JESUS TEACHES US HOW TO PRAY

When Jesus was here on earth, He often went off on His own to pray. Jesus knew the value of seeking His Father’s direction for the daily events in His earthly life. With His divinity set aside, Jesus was truly a son of man operating in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray and He gave them a prayer that is 65 words long and yet offers wisdom and insight into the most important issues of life.

***I am praying to you because I know you will answer, O God. Bend down and listen as I pray.***

***Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.*** (Matthew 6:9b-13 NKJV)

When we pray, have we considered who God is and the issues we are bringing before Him? Are we inviting His will, not ours, to be done here on earth? Do we believe as we ask Him, that He will truly meet our needs? Are we willing to forgive those who have wronged us, as He has forgiven our wrongs? Do we sincerely desire to overcome temptation and be delivered from the evil one? Do we identify as children of God and recognize that we have been transferred into the Kingdom of His dear son Jesus in whom all power and glory exist forever?

***Psalm 17:6 NLT***

***For he has rescued us out of the darkness and gloom of Satan’s kingdom and brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who bought our freedom with his blood and forgave us all our sins.*** (Colossians 1:13-14 TLB)

When we give our will and life over to the care of God, we move out of Satan’s kingdom and enter the Kingdom of God. We must stand firmly on this truth. Through prayer and meditation on God’s word we will increase our conscious contact with God and experience His help in every area of our life.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to stand firm on the truth of Your word and to pray continually for Your guidance in all my affairs. May my words and actions reflect Your Kingdom here on earth. Amen***

STEP THREE - WILLING TO ACCEPT GOD AS HE IS

Since God has always loved us and consistently called us to Himself, it makes sense that in recovery, we can expect God’s grace and love to take us forward. Why then do we find it difficult to follow His will and put our lives into His care?

***Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. For God has said, “I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.”*** (1 Peter 5:7, Hebrews 13:5b NLT)

Turning our will over to the care of God involves becoming willing to accept God as He is, rather than insisting on creating Him in our image, based on our own foolish ideas. We will never experience real satisfaction until we shape our lives by what is real. Only God knows what that looks like for each of us. The God who created us draws us into what He alone knows is good for us and He warns us away from those things that would be harmful. God’s thinking is not twisted by wounds and resentments and shame and fear. His perspective is solely that of love and blessing. His desire is for us to know Him and the satisfying way of life He provides.

***We will never experience real satisfaction until we shape our lives by what is real.***

***So we can say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?”*** (Hebrews 13:6 NLT)

Who is this God to whom we should surrender our will and our lives? We may not fully know Him or how good He is, but if we choose to begin our journey with the little understanding we have, we will discover that His promises are trustworthy, and He is even better than we could hope for or imagine.

***Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.*** (Psalm 23:6 NLT)

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, I repent and turn away from my sin and ask You for a clean heart and the gift of Your Holy Spirit as You have promised. I trust you to do in me even more than I could ask for or imagine. I pray Your will, not mine, be done. Please help me to practice Your principles in all my affairs. Amen***