

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY

Daily Meditations



September 2021

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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

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SEPTEMBER 2021

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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 style="text-align: center;">SUBSTANCE ADDICTIONS:</p> <p>Alcohol Caffeine Injected or smoked substances such as: Crack, Crystal Meth, Heroin Marijuana Prescription Medications Sugar Tobacco</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">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 style="text-align: center;">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 style="text-align: center;">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.

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.

REMEMBERING WHAT FILLS ME WITH HOPE

As we seek through prayer and meditation to get to know God better through the scriptures, we frequently find that we also get to know ourselves better. We often discover the decisions we made which took us down the slippery path into addiction were based on bitterness over past issues and pride of self. We were hurt by someone and resolved not to be subjected to trauma by anyone ever again. We hardened our hearts against people and rebelled against God. We became self-focused on making our own way in life and doing whatever brought us pleasure, but the pleasure we sought but did not last.

Just thinking of my troubles and my lonely wandering makes me miserable. That's all I ever think about, and I am depressed. Then I remember something that fills me with hope. The Lord's kindness never fails! If he had not been merciful, we would have been destroyed. The Lord can always be trusted to show mercy each morning.
(Lamentations 3:19-22 CEV)

Being unwilling to forgive the hurt that traumatized us in the past has the impact of preserving it. Would we keep touching a hot iron knowing we will be scarred by it for life? Of course not! Why then are we reluctant to let go of something that is so damaging to us and our recovery? God will take away those shortcomings we bring to Him, but whatever we refuse to expose and forgive will diminish our hope of full restoration.

The Lord is good to those who put their hope in him. He is good to those who look to him. Everything written in the past was written to teach us. The Scriptures give us strength to go on. They encourage us and give us hope.
(Lamentations 3:25; Romans 15:4 NIRV)

God desires that we know His will for us and have the Power to carry it out. We hinder the work of God when we pray, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us," and then refuse to forgive. Let's choose to forgive those who have harmed us and have the blessed assurance that God has forgiven us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I do not want to hinder Your work of restoration in me. Please give me the will and desire to forgive those who have harmed me so that Your will may be done in my life. I desire to be perfect and complete in You, lacking nothing. Amen

***I
remember
something
that fills
me with
hope. The
Lord's
kindness
never
fails!***

***Lamentations
3:20***

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2021

NOTES

TAKE NOTE AND BEHAVE ACCORDINGLY

Just for today I will take note of one helpful thing God is saying to me and seek to behave accordingly.

What is God saying to me and how can I know it is God speaking? God speaks to us through the Scriptures. Before we begin to read the Bible we should pray that God will help us hear what He wants to share with us. We can expect a phrase or sentence in what we are reading to encourage or challenge us. This is God's way of bringing to our attention something He wants to teach us.

As long as our heart is open and we are willing to take note, God is willing to speak to us.

God has breathed life into all Scripture. It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right. (2 Timothy 3:16 NIRV)

God reveals Himself to us through Jesus, so it's important to regularly look at what Jesus said and did.

In the past, God spoke to our people through the prophets. He spoke at many times. He spoke in different ways. But in these last days, he has spoken to us through his Son. (Hebrews 1:1-2 NIRV)

Our natural environment is full of ways that God speaks to us. While out walking, it doesn't take long before our hearts are drawn to something greater than ourselves as we observe life in our surroundings of land, sea, and sky. We can simply ask God, "What are You teaching me by what I am observing right now?"

God's eternal power and character cannot be seen. But from the beginning of creation, God has shown what these are like by all he has made. (Romans 1:20 CEV)

God speaks to us through others, through music we hear or sing, and through circumstances as they unfold. If our hearts are open and we are willing to take note, God is willing to teach us more about Himself and about His creation.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Open my eyes and ears and heart to recognize when You are speaking to me. Help me learn what truth is and what is useful for correcting my errors. Amen

THE BEAUTY OF A QUIET AND GENTLE SPIRIT

SEEING OUR TRUE VALUE

God invites us to a life of gentleness where we honour truth, respect the dignity of everyone – including ourselves, and delight in the joy and wonder of each new day.

Self-worth is the value we see in ourselves and our role in life. Some of us overrate ourselves and some of us undervalue ourselves according to our position in life. What is the right approach to assessing our self-worth? When selling a house, the asking price is not the true value of that house. Its value is the price the buyer is willing to pay for it. God was willing to pay a high price to buy us back from the broken, isolated condition we found ourselves in because of our sin and rebellion against Him.

Surround me with your tender mercies so I may live, for your instructions are my delight. (Psalm 119:77 NLT)

When people sin, they earn what sin pays—death. But God gives his people a free gift—eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 ERV)

God invites us to a life of gentleness where we honour truth, respect the dignity of everyone – including ourselves, and delight in the joy and wonder of each new day.

To be gentle with others and ourselves doesn't mean that we look for "easy ways" to avoid dealing with issues, while allowing ourselves to continue in whatever is familiar but harmful. Gentleness means we approach life with quiet honesty, admitting the truth when we are struggling to cope and need help.

We are of great value to God because Jesus came into the world to pay the price for our sin so we could be free from its penalty. How do we value what Jesus has done for us? If we refuse to accept what Jesus has done for us, then we are assessing no worth to the plan of God for our deliverance from the penalty of sin. Our self-worth is then determined by ourselves or by the value others place on us.

Our worth to God is more than we could ever imagine.

We make space for gentleness in our lives by setting safe boundaries in relationships. We experience gentleness of spirit when we take the time to slow down and notice the good things around us – a baby in a stroller; the aroma of food; the beautiful colours in the sky as the sun goes down.

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)

Lord, don't hold back your tender mercies from me. Let your unfailing love and faithfulness always protect me. (Psalm 40:11 NLT)

Gentleness will grow in us and and flow out from us as we sit quietly and have a conversation with God. Just reading the Bible often brings peace and gentleness to our soul. When we speak to God in response to what He is teaching us, a gentle spirit seems to wrap itself around our hearts and our souls feel comforted.

Jesus came into the world not to judge the world but to save it. Unwillingness to receive this precious gift of new life through Jesus is what will judge us in the last day. Our true value is already settled by who we become when we accept the finished work of Jesus on our behalf. Through Jesus we become children of our Heavenly Father. Our worth to God is more than we could ever imagine. We are God's masterpieces created in Christ Jesus to do good works.

Let my teaching fall on you like rain; let my speech settle like dew. Let my words fall like rain on tender grass, like gentle showers on young plants. (Deuteronomy 32:2 NLT)

God rescued us from dead-end alleys and dark dungeons. He's set us up in the kingdom of the Son he loves so much, the Son who got us out of the pit we were in, got rid of the sins we were doomed to keep repeating. (Colossians 1:13-14 MSG)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to live in the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in Your sight. Amen

Prayer: Gracious God, Help me to base my self-worth on the truth of who You are, and who I am through accepting the sacrifice of Jesus as the payment for my sin. I am grateful that You have become my Heavenly Father and that I am Your precious child. Amen

FORGIVENESS

Forgiving others is something we must take very seriously if we want to protect our sobriety. We can never make up for the wrongs we have done, but we can let others know how much we regret having caused them harm. Through the finished work of Jesus, God forgives us and no longer counts our wrongdoing against us. Operating out of this secure foundation of forgiveness, we have the grace and strength we need to support our efforts in seeking reconciliation with others.

Forgiving others is something we must take very seriously if we want to protect our sobriety.

It would be impossible for us to risk taking the first steps in forgiving someone who has harmed us if God had not demonstrated the way. We failed to keep God's commandments and yet He was willing to sacrifice His Son in payment for our sin. If we admit that we have done wrong and repent and turn away from it and trust Jesus' sacrifice for our sin, God will give us new life.

In Christ, God did not hold people guilty for their sins. And he gave us this message of peace to tell people. (2 Corinthians 5:19 ERV)

God did not wait for us to come to Him. He prepared in advance to liberate us from our wrongdoing. God reached out to us with His wonderful gift when we didn't dare approach Him. We can reflect on God's way of reconciliation as we begin the work of restoring our own troubled relationships.

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. (Colossians 3:13 NLT)

Hanging on to a bitter grudge and seeking revenge only sickens our soul and damages those who are close to us. Bitterness is like a cancer that feeds on our insides and shows itself in outbursts of irritability, anger, and resentment. Who do I still need to forgive? Am I ready to invite God into the pain and the injustice and ask Him to show me a way to peace through forgiveness?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have forgiven me for the many wrongs I have done and even though it is difficult, I will chose to forgive those who have harmed me. Please heal me and give me the strength and courage to move forward into a life of peace with others. Amen

RELYING ON GOD'S PROMISES

To succeed in living well in recovery with God, we need to rely on His promises. His comforting words will help us persevere through the trials and the pain that we experience. Some of us thought that when we gave our will and life over to the care of God, we would automatically be exempt from the troubles of this world. Jesus did not tell us that, and He is the one who should know.

I have told you these things, so that you can have peace because of me. In this world you will have trouble. But be encouraged! I have won the battle over the world. (John 16:33 NIRV)

The promise Jesus made was that we could have peace because of Him. How can we experience that peace when sin and sickness and death are all around us? Jesus has already won the battle over all those things. Jesus is always with us. This should encourage us because no matter what happens we never have to face life's circumstances alone. If God is our helper in times of trouble, why should we fear anything that might come our way?

For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5b-6 NKJV)

God promises to strengthen those whose hearts are turned towards Him. When we are in trouble, is God the first person we turn to? Do we truly believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him? God has made numerous promises to us, but faith to believe that He exists is required to activate His promises. If we truly believe God is our higher power, let's confidently stand on His promises today.

God looks down from heaven to see if there is anyone who is wise, anyone who looks to him for help. (Psalm 53:2 ERV)

Prayer: Almighty God, To You all hearts are open, and all desires known. Cleanse my heart of everything that would doubt Your word and help me to stand firm on Your promises. Amen

Then they cried out to the Lord because of their problems and he saved them from their troubles. He brought them out of the deepest darkness. He broke their chains off.

*Psalm 107:13-14
NIRV*

WISDOM FOR OUR RECOVERY – WHAT GOD HATES and WHAT GOD LOVES

When we pray for God's will for us and the power to carry it out, God just doesn't point to something unfocused in the distance. God brings truth up front and close and tells us in simple ways what we need to know and act on. In the book of Proverbs in the Bible, there is much wisdom in the many clear and simple sayings that are truths we can put into practice while we are learning about our life in recovery. Today we find a list of practices that are clearly NOT God's will. The more we avoid these things and do what God says the more we will grow and find continued success in this new life we have been given.

God calls us to be those who love and lift others up, and with all that we are to encourage them.

There are six things the Lord hates. In fact, he hates seven things. The Lord hates proud eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that kill those who aren't guilty. He also hates hearts that make evil plans and feet that are quick to do evil. He hates any witness who pours out lies and anyone who stirs up conflict in the community. (Proverbs 6:16-19 NIRV)

We have all sorts of excuses for lying and for angrily confronting or accusing someone of their wrongdoing. It is easy for us to be a bit shifty and underhanded in how we approach a person in authority or someone from whom we want some favour. Instead of acting in these ways, God calls us to be those who love and lift others up, and with all that we are, to encourage them. God is love and He tells us to love one another, promising us that love will never fail.

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NIRV)

Prayer: Loving God, Thank You for rescuing me from sin and darkness. I admit that I have done things that Your Word says You hate. Forgive me and wash me clean. Help me to move away from being sneaky and negative and always blaming others. Help me to be humble, truthful, quick to do what is right and to make peace rather than say things that stir up anger and conflict. Help me to establish new patterns of thinking and behaving regardless of what others may think. Help me to endure through every circumstance. Your love is unfailing, and You have been my friend who sticks close to me. My desire is to please You with my life. Amen

SUNDAY PSALM – HOW WELL DO WE HEAR

Have you ever been for a hearing test? The tester gives instructions to the person being tested and then puts that person with earphones on into a cubicle. The tester closely watches the person being tested. One of the tests requires the person to raise their hand or press a button each time they hear a sound. The tester will also speak some words and ask the person to repeat what they have heard. To correctly assess how well a person can hear, the person being tested must obey the instructions of the person responsible for giving the test.

How well do we hear when God speaks to us? Do we always obey what He says? Are we taking time throughout the day to just listen to how God is instructing us?

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you. I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning. Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins. (Psalm 130:1-8 NIV)

Like the hearing tester watches the person in the cubicle, God is always watching us to see if we follow His instructions. Let's remind ourselves that God has redeemed us from all our sins, filled us with His unfailing love, and given us hope. Let's demonstrate we have heard what the Lord said today by praying some of His words from the above Psalm back to Him. In place of the name "Israel" let's put our given name as shown below.

"I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. (our given name) put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem (our given name) from all (his or her) sins." (Psalm 130:5, 7)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to listen to You and put your words into action – not just talk the talk, but walk the walk. Help me to follow Your instructions in all my ways. Amen

I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants.
Psalm 85:8 NLT

LEARNING HOW TO GIVE UP HARD LABOUR

Today is Labour Day and tomorrow many students, and some of us, return to places of education for a new season of learning and maturing. Coming out of addiction is like coming out of hard labour in the school of "hard knocks." Trouble found us, and then we added to it by our own doings.

Thank God for these new days of work and learning that can be challenging, but do not need to be overwhelming. Jesus used a farming picture to help people understand what this means.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30 NIV)

Thank God for these new days of work and learning that can be challenging, but do not need to be overwhelming.

In the same way that an ox just doesn't graze in the fields, we do not enter recovery to do nothing. Oxen have many tasks to perform: plowing, hauling, tramping seed to thresh it, turning a wheel to grind grain or send water along irrigation lines. The food supply of many relies upon the good work of oxen.

God created us for good works and He knew that just like the oxen we need to learn about various things we are not familiar with. When plowing, two oxen are fitted with a heavy wooden yoke on their necks and then a plough is attached to the yoke. A mature ox, familiar with the job, is paired with an immature one so together they pull a heavy load. The mature ox does most of the pulling while keeping the immature ox in line. In this way the job gets done efficiently with the immature ox learning from the mature one.

Jesus takes the heavy burden of sin from us and guides us into a wonderful life of purpose and meaning. We need to be united with Jesus so that when He moves, we move. When He stops, we stop. Jesus promises that if we stay close to Him, we will know a gentle and humble way that, even though it's work, it will be restful rather than overwhelming. This is life as God intended.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Forgive me for the times I have made life more difficult by trying to do things my way. Thank You for this new season of learning and work, Help me to move at Your pace and follow Your directions in every task I undertake to do. Amen

COMING BACK

In the Bible Jesus told a story about a father and two sons. (Luke 15:11-31) The younger of the two boys became dissatisfied with life in his father's household and believed life away from home was more desirable. He asked for his inheritance before it was due to him, and then went out and squandered all he had on wild living. While he had money, he had friends, but his money soon ran out and he found himself alone.

Often when we come into recovery, we find ourselves where the prodigal son was, alone and worn out by sin, with a life that is unmanageable.

God offers us a purposeful life, but we want our own way and think that God's way is restrictive rather than protective. We want to have fun without considering the consequences of the choices we make. The sad truth is, we end up broken and needy by following self-will rather than God's will.

Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live. (Isaiah 55:2-3 NKJV)

The father of this boy was always waiting for the return of his son and when he saw him coming back, he ran to meet him. God is always pursuing us with His love, and when we turn to Him, He welcomes us with open arms and gives us the privilege of being called His precious child.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Forgive me for the times I have rejected You in favour of my own self-centeredness. I ask for Your forgiveness. Thank You for adopting me as Your precious child. Help me to follow Your ways in all my affairs. Amen

Often when we come into recovery, we find ourselves where the prodigal son was, alone and worn out by sin, with a life that is unmanageable.

CALLING OUT FROM FAR AWAY

No matter how far away God seems, we can call out to Him and He will always respond.

Please listen, God, and answer my prayer! I feel hopeless, and I cry out to you from a faraway land. Lead me to the mighty rock high above me. You are a strong tower, where I am safe from my enemies. Let me live with you forever and find protection under your wings, my God. You heard my promises, and you have blessed me, just as you bless everyone who worships you. (Psalm 61:1-5 CEV)

No matter how far away God seems, we can call out to Him and He will always respond.

We know that many times we take back our self-will and wander away from the path God has prepared for us. We stop doing certain things that help us stay strong. We drift into unhealthy places and begin hanging around with people who, together with us, are ready to slide back down the slippery slope into the pit. Before we know it, life is once again unmanageable, and we are powerless to save ourselves. It might not be that we've picked up again. There is also a miserable place we can get to when we are running in self-will that makes a mess of our relationships and steals our peace of mind and heart.

Sometimes we may feel far away from God. We may have been doing all the right things but tiredness, grief, challenges, pain, and so many other things can dull our conscious awareness of God's presence. God promises to respond when we call to Him even from the depressing place we have drifted to. He will lead us to a safe harbour. He will provide protection and support for us just like a mother bird covers her little ones with her wings. Today's verses of

scripture can be a loving reminder that in those dark moments God is as close as a call. God never leaves us and never forsakes us. We are not alone.

Then call on me when you are in trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory. (Psalm 50:15 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for lifting me out of the slimy pit and setting my feet on a rock, giving me a firm place to stand. Thank You that I am secure in You regardless of my circumstances. I'm calling out to You today, asking for Your guidance and support so that I may follow You in all my ways. Thank You for never leaving me nor forsaking me. Amen

CO-DEPENDENCY

Co-dependency is a relationship addiction. People who are co-dependent often form relationships that are one-sided, emotionally destructive, and often abusive. A co-dependent person bases their identity and personal value on who they perceive themselves to be within the relationship. They often interact with the other person in a way that is harmful to their own well-being.

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)

Contentment in life does not come from controlling or trying to please someone else, or from hoping they will meet our needs so that we can feel secure. Another person cannot love us enough or touch us deeply enough to satisfy the longing in our hearts. Only God can truly satisfy those longings. In a relationship one person has only limited responsibility for the other's happiness. We have our own desires and dreams and we need to let others have theirs. We make our own mistakes and others make theirs. We need to forgive ourselves and others for the past mistakes we have made and determine to learn from them.

Fullness of life and real freedom from co-dependency can only be found when we are first rooted in a relationship with our Heavenly Father. God made us in His image, and we have great value in His sight. When we base our worth and identity around this truth, rather than on the opinions of others, we begin to experience peace, freedom, and security.

Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 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 1:4-5 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I ask You to show me how to live in a way that honours You and honours others. Help me to love You with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and to love others as myself. Fill me with Your love and give me wisdom to follow You in all my ways. Amen

Fullness of life and real freedom from co-dependency can only be found when we are first rooted in a relationship with our Heavenly Father.

THE WAY TO BECOME MATURE

The way to become mature in our recovery and in life in general is through prayer and meditation on the Bible. We need to daily seek conscious contact with God, praying for knowledge of His will for our lives and the power to carry it out. As we read the Scriptures, we become knowledgeable of God's character and, by obeying His principles, we learn how to live life to the full. Being able to quote the Scriptures is good, but it does not bring maturity. Maturity comes from obeying what the Scriptures say.

As we follow the ways of God and faithfully obey His principles, we will become the mature person that God created us to be.

I have written to you who are God's children because you know the Father. I have written to you who are mature in the faith because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning. I have written to you who are young in the faith because you are strong. God's word lives in your hearts, and you have won your battle with the evil one. (1 John 2:14 NLT)

The philosophy and mentality of this world is vastly different from what God says in His Word. We know the trouble and heartache our chaotic lifestyle brought us, but now we are learning a more excellent way. We were once foolish, disobedient, hateful towards others, and sought pleasure in whatever our immoral minds desired. We were like immature children seeking every candy in the store. Now our life is being impacted by the love of God for us and we are learning to love others as ourselves.

Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the Lord. Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts. They do not compromise with evil, and they walk only in his paths. (Psalm 119:1-3 NLT)

As we follow the ways of God and faithfully obey His principles, we will become the mature person that God created us to be. We know that God has a plan for us that will prosper us and give us hope and a future, and we know that if we seek Him in all our ways, His plan will succeed.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to be mature in my faith in You and in my knowledge of Your ways. Help me to be victorious in my battle with the evil one. Amen

IMMORAL THINKING

Many people who come into recovery seeking victory over drugs and alcohol often find themselves relapsing when they refuse to obey God's teaching on sexual purity. When it comes to murder, everyone recognizes that it is wrong and something to be avoided and punished. Jesus puts sexual sin in the same category as murder. Jesus speaks about sexual purity in a way that includes not just our actions but also our thoughts and feelings.

For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander. These are what defile you. (Matthew 15:19-20, NLT)

We are challenged to inventory the way we talk, the way we think, the jokes we tell, the offhanded comments we make. These fit in the category of impurity of mind and God clearly warns us against such activity. Looking at pornographic images on the television, in movies, on the internet and in magazines is activity outside of God's plan for us. It leads us to immoral thinking and lustful desires.

Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. (Ephesians 5:3-4 NLT)

God wants us to be whole and filled with peace and this only comes when we are following His ways in every area of life. Impossible standards? On our own, YES! But God is faithful to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have called me to be holy because You are holy. Give me the strength to live in sexual purity so that I may honour You with my body. Help me keep my eyes from viewing anything that would raise lustful passion within me. I surrender my immoral thoughts to You for cleansing and ask for Your help to remain pure in thought. Amen

Jesus speaks about sexual purity in a way that includes not just our actions but also our thoughts and feelings.

ANGER

Anger in our society is rampant. Most of us have a hard time dealing with anger. Some of us may have a history of rage. Others of us learned early in life to smother our feelings to help control anger. Anger will harm our relationships whether we explode or clam up, hold a grudge, or simply let bitterness take root in us and fill us with self-pity.

The Bible has much to say about an out-of-control angry person. Not much of it is good.

What's the real root of my anger? Do I want to get rid of anger? What am I willing to do to be free from destructive anger?

Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools. If you stay calm, you are wise, but if you have a hot temper, you only show how stupid you are. (Ecclesiastes 7:9, NIV, Proverbs 14:29 GNB)

For most of us the question is not "Do I get angry?" We know we do. Some questions we need to ask ourselves about anger include: "What's the real root of my anger?" "Do I want to get rid of anger?" "What am I willing to do to be free from destructive anger?"

Anger can only be dealt with by receiving love and forgiveness from God and in turn choosing to love and forgive others. The foundation for anger management is having an active loving relationship with God and choosing to surrender all our interactions to His wisdom and guidance. Anything less will result in fear or frustration and we will find ourselves back in the anger cycle.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31-32 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me identify and deal with the root of my anger. You know the situations in my life where I have felt helpless and just stuffed all that I was feeling. Help me to grieve, in a healthy way, all the events that contributed to my dysfunctional way of thinking and behaving. Help me to forgive and grace others in the same way You have forgiven and graced me. I choose to let go of my old way of handling troublesome events. With Your help, I choose to live with self-control in the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen

STAYING SOBER – FACING TRAUMA

We are exposed to traumatic events around the world by the 24-hour news cycle on television and on our digital devices. Whether it is the devastation of an event in a community or something inflicted on one person by another, we feel traumatized by the knowledge of these horrible events. News reports may also trigger memories in our own hearts of happenings that we suffered in the past. How do we get relief from the experience of this deep grief and pain?

What has been done cannot be undone. However, God can help us navigate through today by giving us peace and healing in our souls and in our bodies. Our first act must be to turn our hearts and thoughts towards God and allow Him to love and encourage us as we listen to what He has to say through the Scriptures as recorded in the Bible.

Whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm. 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. (Proverbs 1:33 NIV, Isaiah 41:10 NIRV)

While healing of the mind and soul is a process that takes time, we don't need to hide from the past by pushing painful memories into the deep dark places in our soul. In God's presence, and often with the assistance of safe helpers, we can find ways to live well today. We can be set free from the traumas of our past. Jesus died on the cross for all sin and was resurrected from the dead proving the power of God over all evil – and that includes the evil traumas inflicted on us. Today is a new opportunity to reach out to this amazing God who promises to provide healing from our suffering.

The Spirit of the God who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you. So the God who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your bodies. He will do this because of his Spirit who lives in you. God saves suffering people while they suffer. He speaks to them while they are hurting. (Romans 8:11, Job 36:15 NIRV)

Prayer: Loving God, it is difficult to face the pain buried deep in my soul. Help me to believe that You are the Power greater than myself who can heal and restore me from the trauma I have experienced. Come and be with me in those dark and fearful memories and help me hear Your voice speaking peace to those places where I hurt. Thank you for caring for me. Amen

God saves suffering people while they suffer. He speaks to them while they are hurting.

Job 36:15 NIRV

WISDOM TO KNOW

To live with wisdom in recovery requires humility. We need to acknowledge, “I don’t really know what is best for me but I’m willing to try new ways and learn from the experience of others.” God is the source of all wisdom and His principles for life can be found in the Bible. People who have walked this path before us may also have helpful experience they can share. The wisdom we retain and act on will be determined by our choice of following the instructions in God’s Word and the advice of a mentor or friend, or by choosing to operate on our own self-will and knowledge.

The Lord is the source of wisdom; knowledge and understanding come from his mouth. If you listen to him, you will understand what is just and fair and how to do what is right. You will gain wisdom, and knowledge will bring you joy. (Proverbs 2:6, 9 ERV)

A solid life in recovery requires that we learn to be wise in how we think and act.

We are wise people when we desire to put God’s principles into effect in every aspect of their daily life and follow the advice of those who walk with God. We do not need advice from people who act like us and speak things we want to hear. We need to listen to people who are not afraid to contradict our dysfunctional thinking and tell us the truth, even though it may be difficult for us to hear.

Become wise by walking with the wise; hang out with fools and watch your life fall to pieces. (Proverbs 13:20 ERV)

Familiar thoughts often roll around in our heads challenging the truth of what we are being taught. If we dwell on old thought patterns, we will soon find ourselves feeling discontented. A solid life in recovery requires that we learn to be wise in how we think and act and develop a willing heart to learn new ways.

Dear friend, take my advice; it will add years to your life. I’m writing out clear directions to Wisdom Way, I’m drawing a map to Righteous Road. I don’t want you ending up in blind alleys, or wasting time making wrong turns. Hold tight to good advice; don’t relax your grip. Guard it well—your life is at stake! (Proverbs 4:10-13 MSG)

Prayer: Loving God, I ask You to help me make wise choices on the right way forward. Give me the wisdom to stay close to You and trust Your guidance in all my affairs. Amen

HUNGRY ANGRY LONELY TIRED

Across recovery circles we’ve been exposed to the word “HALT” (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired) and its significance in our recovery. The need to take care of these powerful feelings will lessen our vulnerability to relapse.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake. (Psalm 23:1-3 NIV)

Being hungry can express itself in many ways. Besides being hungry for food we can be hungry for companionship or for simple recognition of our personhood. We can be hungry for affirmation that the efforts we made were worth something, even if the result we wanted is not possible at this time.

We cannot expect to go through life without feeling angry. Unfair and unjust things take place in life. God’s way of helping us approach bursts of anger is to offer us healing for our hurts and forgiveness for the destructive forces of resentment and bitterness. As we seek repentance for destructive anger, God will bring peace to our souls and in the future may use what has gone on for something good.

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

Closely related to the feeling of hunger identified above is loneliness. God promises to be the friend who understands when no one else does and will care for us through every step of our journey. Opening our hearts to receive what God is offering us is an important way to deal with feeling lonely.

The tiredness that results from a hard day’s work is a good tired, but it still needs attending to. There is tiredness that results from demands that seem never-ending or challenges that don’t seem to be working out. Whatever our source of tiredness, God wants us to bring all our burdens to Him and find rest for our souls.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to recognize when I am hungry, angry, lonely, or tired and turn to You, so You can care for me and refresh me. Amen

I will give rest to those who are tired. I will satisfy those who are weak.
(Jeremiah 31:25 NIRV)

STRONG AND HEALTHY

When we are feeling sick we usually go to the doctor so that we can find out what might be wrong with us. We list the symptoms we are experiencing and the doctor who has been trained to recognize symptoms associated with certain diseases will make a diagnosis. If the doctor is uncertain about the correct diagnosis, further tests may be needed to rule out other causes. When we come to recognize we are powerless over our dependencies and our life is unmanageable where do we go for help? Do we look to those who are trained in addiction recovery and to God who is the expert in every disease of mankind?

**Respect
the Lord
and stay
away from
evil. This
will make
you
healthy,
and you
will feel
strong.**

*Proverbs 3:7-8
CEV*

I am God Most High! The only sacrifice I want is for you to be thankful and to keep your word. Pray to me in time of trouble. I will rescue you, and you will honor me. (Psalm 50:14-15 CEV)

We may have called out to God in the past for help and made promises that we would stop using, but our hearts were not ready to commit to keeping the words we spoke. We often think we know all there is to know about addiction and how we can control it. If that were true, why are we powerless over it and why is our life unmanageable? We need to seek help from those who have been trained in addiction recovery and from God Most High who, when we are ready, will be faithful to His Word and will help us.

Don't ever think that you are wise enough but respect the Lord and stay away from evil. This will make you healthy, and you will feel strong. (Proverbs 3:7-8 CEV)

When we give our will and life over to God's care, God is already aware of everything that brought us to the point of despair. The wonderful thing about God is, when we call out to Him, He will answer us and will help us get well. Why?

Because we are made in His image and precious in His sight.

No one wants you as a friend or cares what happens to you. But I will heal your injuries, and you will get well. (Jeremiah 30:17 CEV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess I am sick at heart and ask You to heal me and make me whole. Thank You for caring for me. Amen

HATING EVIL, LOVING GOD

Many of us blame God because bad things happened to us when we were powerless to change the situation. Some of us might even have gone as far as to say we hate God because of the evil that happened to us. We see all kinds of suffering in society but hear that God is powerful. If He is good and loves people, why doesn't He do something?

From the beginning, the devil was a murderer. He has never obeyed the truth. There is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his natural language. He does this because he is a liar. He is the father of lies. (John 8:44 NIRV)

The truth is that anything in life that can be described as lying, cheating, stealing, killing, or destroying comes from the devil. Life in our addiction was too often life under the influence of the devil and the same can be said for others who are, or were, addicted to substances, money, power, sex etc. God saw the suffering of mankind and paid the price to turn things around.

Jesus wants each of us to live in a loving relationship with God and enjoy His peace and power operating in our lives every day. Jesus died a horrible death on the cross to give us power over the works of the devil and a new life in loving relationship with the all-powerful God who makes everything new.

A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so they may have life. I want them to have it in the fullest possible way. The Son of God came to destroy the devil's work. (John 10:10, 1 John 3:8 NIRV)

God wants to live in us and enable us to be agents of change, not only in our own life, but in the lives of our friends and neighbours. God invites us to join Him in bringing goodness to those around us, and to each situation we encounter. It is time to put the blame for trouble where it belongs – on the devil – and turn our will and our lives over to the care of God who will bring good out of even the worst evil we may have encountered.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Jesus who came to set me free from the works of the devil. Help me to follow Jesus, and be part of the solution to, rather than part of, the world's problems. Amen

***The Son
of God
came to
destroy
the
devil's
work.***

(1 John 3:8)

SUNDAY PSALM – THE GOOD SHEPHERD

PURE IN HEART

In the Bible, sheep and shepherds are often used to teach us important spiritual lessons. Jesus Himself said He was the “Good Shepherd.” Sheep are helpless animals and have no defense features against predators. If one sheep wanders aimlessly, the others will follow. That is why sheep need a shepherd to guide them and provide for their needs. Without the guidance and care of God in our lives, we are defenseless against the attacks of the devil and of the crowd mentality of doing as others do – good or bad.

When we come into recovery one of our priorities must be sorting life according to what is true. We are sick and in need of healing, and that is the truth. We are weak, sinful, and sometimes crazy. That is also true. We need to be forgiven, cleansed, and enlightened by the truth of God’s word. If we are to live from a pure heart, we need to let the Bible be our handbook and do what it says without compromise.

Without the guidance and care of God in our lives, we are defenseless against the attacks of the devil and of the crowd mentality of doing as others do.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Psalm 23 NIV)

In rocky terrain, a sheep may fall over and while struggling to get upright, land on its back. This is called a “cast down” position and is serious for the sheep as it is unable to get back on its feet. It will flail around, and its stomach will begin to fill up with gas. As its stomach hardens the air passages get blocked and eventually the sheep suffocates. When a shepherd is able to rescue a “cast down” sheep, he first rubs its legs to restore circulation, then gently turns it over and comforts and holds onto the sheep until its equilibrium is restored. When the sheep is restored, the shepherd returns it to the flock.

When we came into recovery, we were much like a “cast down” sheep, unable to help ourselves get back on our feet. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, wants to take care of us in our helpless state and gently comfort us while we are being restored to new life.

Prayer: Loving God, I confess that I am prone to wander from Your guidance and care. Please help me to follow You only in all my ways. Amen

Blessed are those whose hearts are pure. They will see God. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Matthew 5:8 NIRV, Psalm 119:105 NKJV)

God sent His son Jesus into the world to take on human flesh. Jesus, who never sinned, died for our sin so that we might have a new life purified from all sin by His blood. When we admit and confess our sin, and accept what Jesus did for us, His Holy Spirit comes to live within us. He is the “Higher Power” who will give us the will and desire to live in a new way that is pure and true.

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NASB)

God’s way of life and His agenda need to become our priority if we are to live life from a pure heart. We need to guard what we have been given. The evil one will prowl around seeking to turn our hearts away from God. Through prayer and meditation, we can be in conscious contact with God, praying for the knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV)

Prayer: Loving God, I want my life to reflect the truth that the blood of Jesus has purified me from all sin. Help me to prioritize my relationship with You and to live my life guided by Your word. Amen

If we are to live from a pure heart, we need to let the Bible be our handbook and do what it says without compromise.

STEP SIX - DESIRING CHANGE

We will experience freedom and fulfillment in life only when God's desires become our desires, God's way becomes our way, and God's word becomes our action plan.

Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.
(Psalm 37:4, Matthew 16:25, Matthew 6:33 NLT)

We will experience freedom and fulfillment in life only when God's desires become our desires, God's way becomes our way, and God's word becomes our action plan.

Each of us have long established patterns of behaviour that remain a challenge for us. We hang onto harmful ways of doing things because they seem to meet a need in our lives or help us avoid pain. Those who have a positive recovery experience are those who surrender their faulty beliefs and behaviours to God, with the desire that God remove the underlying causes of their sinful behaviour and the woundedness buried deep in their souls.

God says: ***"My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.*** (2 Corinthians 12:9 NLT)

We have all observed the devastating results of individuals who choose to live self-centered lives. Jesus taught and demonstrated that the key to a life that is truly happy, joyous and free is the choosing of God's will over our own. When our goal is simply to be happy we will fall into destructive self-centered life patterns. When our goal is to love God, and have a relationship with Him, joy will be a natural outflowing of that

relationship. A willingness to let God's priorities re-shape our thinking and behaving provides a healthy foundation for a joyful, purposeful life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I need You. Every day, every hour I need you. My request and desire is that You help me recognize my brokenness and come to You for healing. I want to be free from the bondage that holds me captive to my past. I want to live for You and honour You in all my ways. Amen

STEP FIVE - COMING CLEAN ABOUT IT ALL

God created us to live in loving relationship with Him. All destructive and addictive behaviour is rooted in the breakdown of that relationship. Instead of turning to God for help, we try to fix our problems and end up in a worse condition than before. Our rebellion against God and His ways is at the root of all our wrongdoing.

All of us wrestle with our conscience in relationships where we struggle. We use lots of different strategies to rationalize our poor behaviour towards others. We may lie to ourselves and pretend that what we have done is not so bad in comparison to what others have done. We minimize how our conduct negatively impacted others. We hope that working hard at being good will offset the wrongs we have done.

To be at peace with ourselves, we must stop rationalizing our past behaviour, acknowledge the error of our ways, realize the hurt we've caused, and turn away from our destructive lifestyle.

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.
(Proverbs 28:13 NIV)

When we expose the exact nature of our wrongs, we often think God will be surprised by our admission of what we have done. We forget that He already knows every detail of our history and the true nature of all our problems.

For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. (Psalm 51:3-4 NKJV)

When we bring our concerns before God, He will hear our cry for help and rescue us from all our troubles. God has forgiveness for all our wrongdoing, healing for our brokenness, and good guidance for building healthy relationships.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess that the foundation of all my wrongdoing is my unwillingness to trust You and surrender to Your ways. You alone know what is best for me. Today I choose to trust Your plan for my life and thank You for giving me hope and a future. Amen

When we expose the exact nature of our wrongs, we often think God will be surprised by our admission of what we have done.

BEHAVING WITH WISDOM

An owl makes us think of wisdom. We assume a person who reads a lot of books or has a few college degrees must have a lot of wisdom. We certainly want any judge we stand in front of to be wise and discerning.

Corrie Ten Boom, a Dutch woman who lived during the Second World War was a wise woman. In whatever situation she was in, Corrie determined to live for God and do His will. She and her family helped Jewish people escape from persecution by the Nazis. They hid them in their house and helped many get to freedom. She and her family were arrested and ended up in a concentration camp where they endured much suffering. Years later, after Corrie was released, she met one of the camp guards who was the cause of great suffering for her and her sister. By the grace of God, Corrie demonstrated great wisdom by forgiving this man, as God's word had taught her to do.

Everyday life brings challenges where we need God's guidance in order to live wisely.

For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He grants a treasure of common sense to the honest. He is a shield to those who walk with integrity. He guards the paths of the just and protects those who are faithful to him. Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair, and you will find the right way to go. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy. (Proverbs 2:6-10 NLT)

Many of us will never face the extreme challenges that Corrie Ten Boom faced in the concentration camp. However, everyday life brings us challenges where we need God's guidance in order to live wisely. We need help to make the small and big decisions that impact our lives. God offers to live within us and guide us on a safe path. When we trust Jesus to be our Saviour, God fills us with His Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Wisdom. He will empower and guide us as we seek to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's be wise people today. Let's get wisdom and enjoy today by taking time to meditate on God's word, listen for God's direction as we pray, and receive God's guidance as we strive to walk in His truth.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to live wisely. Help me to take time to read Your word and follow Your direction as I walk according to Your truth today and every day. Amen

SUNDAY PSALM – HOW DID I EVER GET TO THIS PLACE?

My Lord, you heard my groaning. You can hear my sighs. My heart is pounding. My strength is gone, and I am going blind. Because of my sickness, my friends and neighbors will not visit me; my family will not come near me. My enemies say bad things about me. They are spreading lies and rumors. They talk about me all the time. But I am like a deaf man and cannot hear. I am like someone who cannot speak. I am like those who cannot hear what people are saying about them. I cannot answer to prove my enemies wrong. Lord, you must defend me. Lord my God, you must speak for me. That's why I prayed, "Don't let my enemies smile at my pain. Full of pride, they will laugh if I stumble and fall." I know I am guilty of doing wrong. I cannot forget my pain. (Psalm 38:9-17 ERV)

Many of us have come from an environment that is described above by the writer of this Psalm. When we began to make unwise decisions, we had no idea where our choices would take us. We never gave a thought to why our behaviour would turn our family, friends and neighbours away from us. We never thought we would get to a place where we could not bear to hear what people were saying about us.

We know that we are not alone. Many people in the world of addiction are like us. Most made foolish choices and were naïve to the way their dependency led them and how far it took them down. That's why the writer of the Psalm turned to God for help. When we get to that place where we hate what we are doing and call on God, He will be there to help us. The significant question for each of us to ask ourselves is, "Do I hate what I have been doing or just hate the suffering I have to endure?"

Like the Psalmist, we must come to God and admit that we are guilty of wrongdoing. We cannot deal with our pain on our own. Our Heavenly Father waits for us to turn our hearts towards Him. When we do, He adopts us as His children, and we have all the power of the Kingdom of Heaven to help us.

Heavenly Father, I confess that my life is a mess of my own making. I have done wrong things and made poor choices. I want to leave all that behind. I want to be born again into Your kingdom and follow Your ways. Please help me! Amen

When we get to that place where we hate what we are doing and call on God, He will be there to help us.

FOCUSED AND EFFICIENT

Years of aimless living in addiction kept us from becoming focused, well-organized, and productive. As we move forward we need to be humble enough to admit that we have efficiency gaps in our current way of living and we need to let God and others teach us new skills.

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16 NIV)

Jesus kept a focused agenda ... we are encouraged today to follow His example.

Our attention runs in many directions. We've lived with distractions for years and now it takes effort to set an agenda for the day and prioritize each thing we need to do. As we focus on doing the most important things first, then one at a time our list will be completed. We need to pay less attention to our phones and allow others to take care of their own responsibilities. We need to keep our attention focused on the task at hand. In the same way we push ourselves in the gym to build stronger muscles by pushing through pain and sweat, so we will have to "push through" and keep working on important things when we are tired and don't really feel like continuing. If we pray and ask God, He will help us in these practical things.

Our daily priority is to give focused time to God so we can communicate with Him and allow Him to encourage and guide us in the best path for each day. Spending time with God reading the Bible and praying will be challenging for us. Our first step to becoming more efficient, is just to begin.

Jesus kept a focused agenda, even when He was heading to painful suffering and death on the cross. We are encouraged to follow His example in our daily routine even when we are not looking forward to facing our assignment.

... fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2 NIV)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You had many distractions to deal with each day but You stayed focused on what Your Heavenly Father had planned for You to do. Help me to seek God's will for my life and stay focused on what He has given me to do. Amen

COMPLETELY NEW

When we turned our will and life over to the care of God, we gave God permission to take our unmanageable life and make us new. We were unsure that God could and would change us, but the darkness was so great around us that we needed to see light. In seeking God to do for us what we are powerless to do for ourselves, do we then sit back and wait for things to happen? Our minds have been immersed in earthly things which enabled us to meet the needs of our dependencies, so now where is our focus meant to be to bring about the change we desire?

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3 NIV)

By the sacrificial death of Jesus, we were deemed perfect when we gave our life into God's care. Our old ways and habitual sins were removed and the new life that we desired came into being. Now it is time to set our minds on things above and not on earthly desires. We need to search the Scriptures and learn the principles that God has established to enable us to live the new life we have been given.

You were taught not to live the way you used to. You must get rid of your old way of life. That's because it has been made impure by the desire for things that lead you astray. (Ephesians 4:22 NIRV)

Our former way of life distanced us from God and sank us into the lowest hell. If we determine to fix our eyes on God's principles and, like an athlete in training set aside everything that would hinder us from running the race before us, we will find that God's divine favour will rest upon us and make us whole in body, mind, and spirit.

Let the one who is wise heed these things and ponder the loving deeds of the Lord. (Psalm 107:43 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your great love for me and for teaching me Your way of living life to the full. Amen

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:3

THE BENEFIT OF EXPERIENCE

One of the promises given to us as we grow in our recovery is: *No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.* (Big Book pages 83-84) Who of us would deny the benefit found in sharing one's experience, strength, and hope with others and being given the same gift in return? We all are excited to share what is working for us. This promise reminds us that it is in being vulnerable and willing to share even the lessons from our weakest times and darkest days that benefits others. Are we willing to give that gift today?

No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

Each time he [God] said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. (2 Corinthians 12:9 NLT)

There's no benefit in sharing "war stories" or wallowing in self-pity about how bad things were. None of us needs the triggering reminders that come from too many details of our experience in the dark days of active addiction. However, what we do need is hope, no matter how far we have fallen. A brief description of circumstances at the time, and the amazing joy we experienced in being uplifted by a loving God from the place we were at to this day of life in sobriety – now that is a story sure to bring hope to someone else.

I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord. (Psalm 40:1-3 NLT)

We were hopeless and powerless until God stepped in to rescue us. The sharing of our getting on board with God and the stability He brought to our lives is a message other strugglers are longing to hear. This will surely spark hope in the darkness of their own struggle.

Prayer: Loving God, I am thankful for where I am today because You rescued and steadied me. Please give me the willingness, humility, and focus to share how You found me in my darkest days and gave me new life so others can be truly amazed at the awesome power You have to help a hopeless addict. Amen

GRATITUDE FOR HARD TIMES

As some of us consider the history of our lives – whether before, during, or after active addiction – gratitude might not be the first response in our hearts. Each season of our lives has pain, often shame, and a real desire to avoid and just "not go there ever again" emotions.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2-4 NIV)

Fortunately, we do not always live under the pressure of trials and temptations. God has called us to peace and God wants to fill our minds and hearts with peace today.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:15-17 NIV)

God will speak directly to us through His Word, through His Holy Spirit, and through the encouragement of others. Are we listening? Are we open to seeing what we have to be grateful for? Are we setting our hearts in the peace of God's faithfulness to us during the hard times and lessons learned?

How have we learned to persevere through the experiences we have had? What experience, strength, and hope do we now have to share with someone who is new to recovery? How has God filled our lives with good things even after the destruction we brought about on ourselves and others through our words and actions?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank You for Your faithful love that has brought me through many trials and temptations to this moment. My desire is to be mature and complete, lacking nothing. Help me to keep my eyes fixed on You and Your goodness, and with a grateful heart enjoy this day You have given me. Amen

Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:17 NIV