

Life With God In Recovery

STEP TWELVE: GENTLY AND HUMBLY CARRYING THE MESSAGE



GENTLY AND HUMBLY CARRYING THE MESSAGE

STEP 12 -- Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs

A common recovery saying is that “you must give it away in order to keep it”. How are we to carry the message? Our new life-style, free of the destructive dependencies of the past, is a living witness to recovery. Sharing our life stories and recovery experiences in support group meetings and in personal conversations is a powerful spoken witness. Intervening lovingly, but firmly, on behalf of those trapped in denial about their own dependencies is another way we faithfully carry out Jesus’ instruction to tell others what great things God has done for us.

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord’s favor has come ... he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. (Isaiah 61:1-3 NLT)

Each of us has a valuable story to tell. We may be shy and feel awkward about speaking. We may wonder if what we share is actually going to help someone else. We may struggle to get beyond the shame of our past. We may be hesitant to tell anyone, especially if we lack confidence that we will be able to maintain our new way of life. But, this is our recovery story, we know exactly where we came from. Truthfully telling our story may encourage those trapped in the pit of their addiction as they identify with the place we were at when we came into recovery.

Within each personal story of the journey from bondage to freedom is the power of the Gospel to save anyone who is lost. We need to share the goodness of God with others through our own story of transformation and ongoing life in God’s grace. We are simply sinners saved by grace and kept clean and sober daily by God’s mercy. When we tell our story we are encouraging others to take steps to a new life; to loosen the chains by which they have been bound and begin the path along their own healing journey with Jesus who said, ***“I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”*** (John 8:12 NLT)

With experience of the process of recovery we are in a special position to carry the message to others. We can recognize the warning signs of addictive and compulsive

tendencies. One way of caring for a struggler is to compassionately challenge destructive behaviour. We seek to say something that will encourage them to seek help. While we need to be willing to be unpopular “in the moment” in order to speak the truth, we need to remember that when touching on such deep and sensitive issues, it’s important to sincerely care, listen long, and gently speak in the language of love. No accusation. No condemnation.

When He (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment. Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. (John 16:8, Galatians 6:1 NLT)

The Bible tells us that if someone struggles we should be kind and humble as we help them back to the right path. We need to remember that we were once slaves to our addiction just as they are now to theirs. It’s important to remind ourselves that, but for the grace of God, we could easily be the one in the wrong and the one who needs to change and turn from a sinful way. Along with a challenge or warning, it’s helpful to support the desire in the spirit of the person to carry out their new life choices even while their flesh is weak. People who struggle need to hear an invitation to more than what they are currently experiencing.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (John 10:10, Lamentations 3:22-23 NIV)

We are not the Saviour but we can love others as God loves us. Love goes beyond mere words. Sometimes it is demonstrated in silence, or in an understanding touch as one comes alongside someone who has strayed from the path of recovery. Love doesn’t accuse but encourages the person to get back on the road and continue the journey. As they move in that direction, our Loving God will show them what needs changing now and how to go about it.

Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important. I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. (Galatians 6:2-3, John 13:34, John 15:13 NLT)

In summarizing some of the aspects of this step the founders of AA wrote these words: *Service, gladly rendered, obligations squarely met, troubles well accepted or solved with God’s help, the knowledge that at home or in the world outside we are partners in a common effort, the well-understood fact that in God’s sight all human beings are important, the proof that love freely given surely brings a full return, the certainty that we are no longer isolated and alone in self-constructed prisons, the surety that we need no longer be square pegs in round holes but can fit and belong in God’s scheme of things—these are the permanent and legitimate satisfactions of right living for which no amount of pomp and circumstance, no heap of material possessions, could possibly be substitutes.* (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions)

Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. (Romans 12:4-5 NLT)

We are strengthened to stay free of our addictions because God is guiding us and supporting us each step of the way. We share with each other and practice these principles in all our affairs because this is the proven way to experience life at its best. As we practice these principles in all our affairs, we will find ourselves drawing closer to God, and the peace and serenity of His love and grace will envelop our very being. This is the good life these steps speak of, and help us walk on a daily basis.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What have I learned about "telling my story"?
2. What attitude should I have as I share my story with someone?
3. How does encouragement work? What are some things others have said or done for us that have encouraged us? How have I encouraged someone in the past day or so?
4. What does it mean to lay down our lives for our friends in a way that does not jeopardize our own recovery?
5. What are the principles I try to practice in my daily life? How am I living the message of new life with vigilance?
6. How do I balance the three aspects of this step in my daily life, sharing my spiritual awakening, carrying the message to others, and practicing these principles in all my affairs?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for bringing me out of darkness into your wonderful light. Help me, to walk in the light of your presence. Sometimes I feel like a small candle in the darkness around me but I know that even the smallest light has impact in a dark room. Help me to shine for you as I gently and humbly share with others how You have changed my life. As I share, would you give me the right words to say so that I might give positive witness to your reliable promise, that “if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.” Thank you for putting your Spirit in my heart. I am forever grateful that You care for me. Amen