

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY

Daily Meditations



JULY 2026



These meditations are available online
for computer, tablets, and smart phones
at:

<https://www.partnersinhope.ca/meditations>

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

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JUST FOR TODAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOME AREAS OF ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCY

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



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

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PRAYER FOR HEALING AND RESTORATION

Loving God, Thank You for rescuing me from the dark power of Satan and bringing me into loving relationship with Your Son, Jesus. I ask for wisdom and understanding from Your Spirit in order to live as a person who honours You. Heal me. Make me new. Make me a strong follower of Christ. Root me deeply in Your love. I place our trust in Your power that can do far more in me than I 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.

NOTES

JULY 1

HAPPY CANADA DAY

Canada is a nation founded on principles that honour the God who created us. Several scriptures are carved into stones in the parliament buildings in Ottawa. They remind all Canadians that we are powerless over many things and without God our lives are unmanageable.

Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:13 NKJV) These words are written around the altar in the memorial chapel in the Peace Tower. We all face temptations and battles each day, and we need the power of the Holy Spirit that God has given us so we can stand strong. On our own, we are powerless.

Carved on the wall in the same memorial chapel beside a list of wars in which Canadians have fought are the words: ***If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.*** (Psalm 139:8-10 NKJV) All Canadians are called to face the powers of evil and darkness that would seek to destroy our nation and the lives of those we love.

Written on the wall outside the Peace Tower are these words. ***Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law. He [God] shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.*** (Proverbs 29:18, Psalm 72:8 NKJV). We all need to grow in our conscious awareness of God's plan for us and our country and, together with faithful people across this land, live and work so God is honoured in every Province and Territory.

As we sing our National Anthem today, let's join our voices and our hearts together in prayer as we sing, "God keep our land glorious and free." We often say in Recovery meetings "When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that, I am responsible." For Canada to remain glorious and free, every Canadian needs to step up, call out to God for help, and do our part. For that we are all responsible.

Prayer: Gracious God, I pray You will keep our land glorious and free. Help me to do my part as I honour You with my life, and seek to make the lives of my family, friends, and neighbours better. Please help me uphold this responsibility with grace and joy. Amen

***God keep
our land
glorious
and free.
O Canada
we stand
on guard
for thee.***

GENTLENESS

Our formerly destructive lifestyle was harsh and filled with many problems. We functioned in an environment of chaos, angry words, and bullying. The new life in recovery to which God invites us, is one of gentleness and speaking the truth in love to those around us.

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. (Colossians 3:12 NLT)

Gentleness is normally observed in a kind gesture or action. We hear it in the tone of voice of a person offering encouragement with comforting words to someone who is troubled. We can see the quality of gentleness in the way a little baby is held or when we see a parent or grandparent kissed on the cheek by a beloved relative. To be present with love and compassion for someone in distress, particularly when that person is frail or vulnerable, is a tender expression of gentleness.

The new life in recovery to which God invites us, is one of gentleness and speaking the truth in love to those around us.

A person who is speaking and acting in a gentle way appears safe and we tend to relax and feel at ease in their presence. When meeting with a person with a gentle disposition, we observe that they do not bring their own agenda but are attentive to those things we are sharing with them. God has a gentle nature. His desire is that the gentleness He shows towards us will be passed on through us to others with whom we have a relationship.

We need to let go of the fearful, angry, impatient way of life that was familiar to us in addiction because it hinders our relationship with Him and with others. Jesus wants us to be kind and compassionate towards one another so we reflect His Spirit living in us.

Jesus said: ***Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*** (Matthew 11:29 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Please help me reflect the nature of Jesus in me and be a humble and gentle person at heart. My desire is to be loving and compassionate towards others as I choose to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with You my God. Amen

HUMILITY

When we notice the shortcomings in our character, do we immediately have a sense of remorse or are we more likely to try to justify them? Some of us attribute our shortcomings to the impact of our harmful life experiences. We believe we are this way because others injured us or did not meet our needs. We play the blame game and allow ourselves to act in irresponsible ways. To truthfully identify our shortcomings, we need to humble ourselves and see our behaviour in the light of God's principles for living life to the full.

The Lord is good and does what is right; he shows the proper path to those who go astray. He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them his way. The Lord leads with unfailing love and faithfulness all who keep his covenant and obey his demands. (Psalm 25:8-10 NLT)

To humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings we must first be aware of how different our behaviour is from God's principles for experiencing life to the full. Whether we have done a formal inventory or have just reviewed our day, we need to admit that our shortcomings are negatively impacting us and those we encounter on our journey. Only the power of the Holy Spirit working in us will enable us to change our ways and help us become the person that God created us to be.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9 NIV)

Without God we can do nothing. We need God's help to identify our shortcomings and the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the will and the courage to remove them. To experience life as God intends, we need to leave behind our flawed knowledge and stubborn pride. It's time to view our life through the lens of truth. God's way will be different from what we have known and acted on in the past but, as we humbly submit to it, it is the sure way to victory over our harmful self-absorption.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Without You I can do nothing. I humbly ask You to remove my character defects and help me live in a way that honours You and others I come into contact with. Amen

We need God's help to identify our shortcomings and the infilling of the Holy Spirit to give us the will and the power to remove them.

FEARLESSLY BRINGING EVERYTHING TO THE LIGHT

When we begin a searching and fearless moral inventory, we often list the obvious things we know that are not in keeping with God's will. If the inventory is to be a fearless and moral one, we need to allow ourselves to look at those events in our life which we have chosen to keep hidden in the darkness of our soul. These are usually events that caused us to feel guilt and shame and which we want to keep hidden from others.

Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief. Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you. (Psalm 143:1-2 NIV)

Jesus came into the world as a light so that those who believe in Him will not stay in darkness.

Because of our fear of Step 5, completing an all-inclusive moral inventory is intimidating, for it means revealing those things we have kept hidden to another human being. As fear overwhelms us, we often choose to do a partial inventory rather than bring to light those things that cause us guilt and shame. We forget the importance of the first three steps which brought the power of God into our lives. If we believe God is who He says He is, and that through Jesus all our sins have been forgiven, and that the Holy Spirit of God now lives within us, then we need not fear a human being.

The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground; he makes me dwell in the darkness like those long dead. So my spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed. (Psalm 143:3-4 NIV)

The enemy of our soul wants us to live in fear and keep the things that cause us pain hidden. We will sink under the weight of guilt if we choose to allow these events to remain in the darkness of our soul. Jesus came into the world as a light so that those who believe in Him will not stay in darkness.

I came into this world as a light. I came so that everyone who believes in me will not stay in darkness. (John 12:46 ERV)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Please help me to make a truthful moral inventory so I can be free from the accusations of the evil one. I believe that You are the light of the world and I want to walk in the light as You are in the light. Amen

SELF – CONTROL

The new birth we receive when we give our will and life over to the care of God is the end of our old life that was dominated by sinful thoughts which were formed in an unspiritual mind. Being born again means we begin a new life in Christ. As our spiritual mind is awakened to the ways of God, new spiritual values form in us, and self-control is one of those qualities.

God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. There is no law against behaving in any of these ways. (Galatians 5:22-23 CEV)

The Bible tells us to consider ourselves dead to sin. When we set out on our spiritual journey in recovery, we often do not feel dead to sin. Our old ways and obsessive thoughts keep coming to mind tempting us to satisfy their desires. This is where we need to exert the discipline of self-control and stand firm on God's Word, reminding ourselves that we are dead to our old self with its passions and desires, for they have been crucified with Christ.

And because we belong to Christ Jesus, we have killed our selfish feelings and desires. (Galatians 5:24 CEV)

It is our minds that need to be controlled and renewed by the truth. We are new creations in Christ and do not need to feed our former character defects. The way we think impacts our behaviour which is why we need to improve our daily conscious contact with God, praying to know His will and have the power to carry it out. As we learn new ways of thinking and behaving, our desire will be to please God in all our affairs. This is the way we develop long-lasting self-control.

Don't be like the people of this world, but let God change the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him. (Romans 12:2 CEV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, My desire is to grow in the truth of who I am in Christ Jesus. Please help me to have self-control over my thoughts and actions for I want to follow Your principles in all my affairs. Please strengthen me by Your power to do so. Amen

God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled.

Galatians 5:22-23a CEV

REPRESS AND DENY

To cope with living an addictive lifestyle we often repressed our moral thinking and denied the downward trend we were on. We made excuses for our behavior and convinced ourselves that we were not as bad as others made out. Our dependency enabled us to selectively forget our responsibilities, and we lived in an unreal world where we refused to admit the changes in our personality.

You have heard my predictions and seen them fulfilled, but you refuse to admit it. Oh, that you had listened to my commands! Then you would have had peace flowing like a gentle river and righteousness rolling over you like waves in the sea. (Isaiah 48:6a, 18 NLT)

Avoiding reality will hinder us from having the meaningful, purposeful life that we desire.

In recovery, avoiding reality will hinder us from having the meaningful, purposeful life that we desire. Feelings of anxiety about our former lifestyle will surface and we need to be willing to set aside our learned defense mechanisms and be honest about what is truly going on inside us. The road to addiction is paved with dishonesty about events that negatively impacted our lives. The truth is, God made us and knows us, and nothing is hidden from His sight.

You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. (Psalm 139:2-3 NLT)

To survive in our home environment, we may have avoided things we were unable to cope with and were afraid that our peers might find out about. The result of this situation may have caused us to become violent towards others or retreat from them. Whichever way we reacted, we were repressing and denying our true self. Letting ourselves be known as the person God created us to be, and not hiding from our fears, will enable us to live the fulfilling life God intended.

My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body. (Proverbs 4:20-22 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You made me and You know me. Please give me understanding of Your Word and help me to be a doer of what it says, so I can truly be the person You created. Amen

GOD'S WILL NO MATTER WHAT

When we say we have given our will and life over to the care of God, what does that mean to us? It means that in every situation we may encounter we have decided that we will obey the principles God has established for the guidance of our behaviour. Many of us suffer because it is often easier, in the moment, to follow self-will rather than follow God's will.

The Bible is full of accounts of people who prospered when they followed the ways of God even when it was not convenient. Daniel and his friends are examples. They were young captives taken from their own land to the land of their conquerors where they were confronted with several challenges to the practice of their faith in God.

Daniel made up his mind to eat and drink only what God had approved for his people to eat. And he asked the king's chief official for permission not to eat the food and wine served in the royal palace. (Daniel 1:8 CEV)

When we read the story of Daniel in the Bible, we find that God moved in miraculous ways to prosper him and his three friends even while great persecution was plotted against them. What would we do if someone asked us to do something which was contrary to the will of God? Are our minds already made up that we will serve God regardless of what may be asked of us? To whom is our heart fully committed?

Your heart will be where your treasure is. You cannot serve two masters at the same time. You will hate one and love the other, or you will be loyal to one and not care about the other. (Matthew 6:21, 25a ERV)

Recovery is the time to get to know about the wisdom, power, and goodness of God to those who believe in Him. None of us can trust someone we do not know. God has revealed Himself to us through the Scriptures and the best course of action we can take is to believe God's Word and obey it no matter what.

So remember that the Lord your God is the only God, and you can trust him! He keeps his agreement. He shows his love and kindness to all people who love him and obey his commands. (Deuteronomy 7:9a ERV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to trust You and be fully committed to obey Your principles in all my affairs regardless of what others might think. Amen

Are our minds already made up that we will serve God regardless of what may be asked of us?

PEACE OR “PICKING UP”

God's kingdom runs on the laws of love and peace. It really does! Whatever is broken around us, or in us, is not of God. It is the failure of humans to know and respond to God's foundational laws.

For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. (Romans 14:17, 8:6 NLT)

Some of us never knew or simply didn't believe that God had prepared a plan for our lives. We believed our dysfunctional circumstances were the controlling factor of our destiny. We longed for peace and went to great lengths to find it. We believed things like money, food, sex, and power would meet the need within us. However, we soon found out that not only were we wrong about trying to meet our needs our way, but the path we chose led us into the bondage of addiction.

When our hearts are surrendered to God, we will desire to choose God's way rather than our own flawed way.

As we make the effort to navigate the road to recovery, we may again seek to meet our own needs. While it is important to “not pick up” our drug or habit of choice, it is even more important to seek the path to a new and sustainable life. We do not have sufficient strength in ourselves to sustain changed behaviour and always do the next right thing, but God offers us new life through faith in Jesus Christ. When our hearts are surrendered to God, we will desire to choose God's way rather than our own flawed way.

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

We need to be filled with an ongoing supply of the power of God which he will generously give to those who are committed to live a life of love, joy, and peace.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Please fill me again with the power of Your Holy Spirit so I can stand strong with confident hope and peace in a world of change and challenge. Thank you for giving me everything I need to live a Godly life in recovery. Amen

HELP FOR THE HOPELESS ADDICT

Do I matter? Does anyone notice me? Does anyone care? These are questions we might ask ourselves and that people who have struggled with hardship and pain have asked for centuries. The longer we have struggled to overcome addiction and have faltered and failed, the harder it is to have hope.

The good news is, as long as we are living and breathing there is still hope because God continues to invite us to a new life with Him. We may think that the temptations we struggle with are too much to handle but God says that if we come to Him, He will make a way of escape for us.

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. (1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT)

What is God's way out?

Look to God for help and saving. ***Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other.*** (Isaiah 45:22 NLT)

Welcome the new perspective on life the Holy Spirit will show us. ***Let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.*** (Ephesians 3:23 NLT)

Make our hearts available to hope: ***When doubts filled my mind, your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer.*** (Psalm 94:19 NLT)

Spend time reading and learning God's ways: ***I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*** (Psalm 119:11 NLT)

Live in gratitude: ***Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. He fills my life with good things.*** (Psalm 103:2-5a NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Today I choose to walk in Your ways and surrender my will and life into Your care. My hope for a new life is based on Your power to strengthen me to face those challenges I see ahead and those that are currently evident in my environment. Thank you for a fresh opportunity to learn and grow in relationship with You. Thank You for loving and caring for me. Amen

As long as we are living and breathing there is still hope because God continues to invite us to a new life with Him.

WHAT IS A FRIEND?

We hang around with all sorts of people in a variety of situations. We “friend” people on social media but what is a true friend? How do we recognize a true friend and how can we be a friend to someone else?

The sweet smell of incense can make you feel good, but true friendship is better still. Just as iron sharpens iron, friends sharpen the minds of each other. (Proverbs 27:9, 17 CEV)

Friends bring colour to our black and white world. They generate a sense of belonging in our daily life and create good memories to look back on. Friends are those we enjoy being with, find ourselves being more truthful with, feel comfortable with most of the time, and want to have around us to share both our joys and sorrows. Friends often share common interests and draw things out of one another that would otherwise remain hidden. With friends we are often more willing to try new things and therefore accomplish more together than we could on our own. True friends watch out for each other, share with each other, and even make sacrifices for each other.

True friends watch out for each other, share with each other, and even make sacrifices for each other.

You can trust a friend who corrects you, but kisses from an enemy are nothing but lies. Don't desert an old friend of your family or visit your relatives when you are in trouble. A friend nearby is better than relatives far away. (Proverbs 27:6, 10 CEV)

True friends tell us the truth, not just what we want to hear or what is convenient in the moment. They do not beat up on us with the truth but find the right way, at the right time, to confront us with things we need to hear. There is wisdom and a depth of caring from a friend that is to be valued even though we may at times feel challenged by them. We need to keep true friends close and learn from their honesty and loyalty.

The One who knows us best and loves us most offers us His friendship today. God, who has done more for us than any person could ever do, invites us to an intimate relationship with Him today. To accept His invitation is our choice.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am grateful for friends and all they contribute to the joy and stability of my life. You are the friend who sticks closer than a brother and I want to share my life with You. Help me to improve my conscious contact with You and obey all You have to teach me. Amen

JUSTICE AND MERCY AND RECOVERY

Depending on a given situation, we often find ourselves caught up in the conflict of our desire for justice or mercy. For those who wrong us, we lean towards the desire for justice. When we assess our own failures, we long for mercy.

He [God] loves whatever is just and good; the unfailing love of the Lord fills the earth. (Psalm 33:5 NLT)

Justice and mercy are both aspects of God's character. For justice to be justice the guilty must be punished. We are all sinners. We have all broken God's laws. We all stand guilty. God cannot ignore our wrongdoing. We have harmed ourselves, others, and our relationship with God. We have trampled carelessly over precious things that matter to God. Our sin must be punished with its stated penalty which is death. Jesus mercifully paid the debt we owed by dying on the cross in our place and gave us life with Him forevermore.

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)

Without a clear picture of our own sinfulness and its awful consequences we will never find it in our hearts to be merciful to others. It is only because of our deep gratitude for God's forgiveness of our sin that we can forgive others as we have been forgiven.

As those who live with God in recovery, we now take a daily inventory of the days happenings to check if we are doing what is right, if we are showing mercy, and if we are walking humbly with God. Where we have done wrong, we promptly admit it, allow God to show mercy to us, and grant us His forgiveness.

The Lord has shown you what is good. He has told you what he requires of you. You must act with justice. You must love to show mercy and you must be humble as you live in the sight of your God. (Micah 6:8 NIRV)

Prayer: Loving God, No one knows about justice and mercy like You do. Thank You for taking care of the just requirements for my sin by giving Jesus in my place to pay in full all that I owe. The love and mercy You have for me is amazing. Please help me to show to others the same love and mercy I have received. Amen

Where we have done wrong, we promptly admit it and allow God to show mercy to us and grant us His forgiveness.

FORGIVING AS WE HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN

Jesus said that the greatest commandment is, to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. And the second is like it, to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. When we accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour, God forgave all our wrongdoing. Through prayer and reading the Scriptures, we begin to grow in our loving relationship with God, and our hearts were filled with thanks for all that He had done for us.

Then he (Jesus) took a cup, gave thanks to God, and gave it to them. "Drink it, all of you," he said; "this is my blood, which seals God's covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matthew 26:27-28 GNT)

Jesus taught that we are to ask God to forgive our wrongs as we forgive those who have wronged us.

We know about God's great love for us and our love for Him, but how do we feel about loving our neighbour, especially a person who has harmed us? To teach us about forgiving as we have been forgiven, Jesus told a story about an unforgiving servant. This story tells of a servant who was unable to pay a huge debt he owed to the king and the king generously forgave the debt he owed. Then he went out and met a fellow servant who owed him a small debt in comparison. This servant who was forgiven was unwilling to forgive his fellow servant and had him put in prison. The king was not happy when he heard this and had the servant who would not forgive put in prison where he was turned over to the torturers.

And Jesus concluded, "That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." (Matthew 18:35 GNT)

Because of God's great love for us Jesus came into the world to pay our sin debt and restore our relationship with God. Jesus taught that we are to ask God to forgive our wrongs as we forgive those who have wronged us. If we are unwilling to forgive those who have wronged us, how can we expect God to forgive us?

And when you stand and pray, forgive anything you may have against anyone, so that your Father in heaven will forgive the wrongs you have done. (Mark 11:25 GNT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess that I struggle to forgive those who have harmed me. In Your mercy, fill me with the grace to forgive others as I have been forgiven by You. Amen

WHO IS THE GOD WHO CAN RESTORE US?

When we think of God, how do we imagine Him to be? Do we see Him as a judge ready to pass sentence on us when we do wrong, or do we see Him as the ever-loving God who has compassion on us and desires to care for us?

The person who wrote the following Psalm saw God as all powerful and praised Him for His majesty and glory. He also saw God with armies of angels who serve Him and do His will and, at His command, are ready to minister to those who trust in Him. Only through prayer and meditation on God's word in the Bible do we begin to see God as He truly is.

Praise the Lord, my soul! O Lord, my God, how great you are! You are clothed with majesty and glory; you cover yourself with light. You have spread out the heavens like a tent and built your home on the waters above. You use the clouds as your chariot and ride on the wings of the wind. You use the winds as your messengers and flashes of lightning as your servants. You have set the earth firmly on its foundations, and it will never be moved. (Psalm 104:1-5 GNT)

The writer of this Psalm describes the movements of God like they are from a sci-fi movie but, the reality is, God moves in ways that are beyond the most incredible things that humans could dream up. God formed those humans whose finite minds conceive fictional space travel. When we study the Bible, we will be amazed at how the earth and the heavens, and even people and the environment, react to the presence of God when He chooses to make Himself known.

Often in life and even in recovery we dwell on our past and allow the evil one to bring guilt and shame over what has already been forgiven. Why not choose to throw off this bondage and focus on getting to know this amazing God to whom we have surrendered our will and our life. Remember, this all-powerful God is our Heavenly Father who takes great delight in us, His precious children.

Prayer: Loving God, Thank You for rescuing me from the darkness of my soul and bringing me into the light of Your presence. As I meditate on the Scriptures, help me to see You clothed in Majesty and rejoice that You are the amazing God who loves and cares for me. Amen

This all-powerful God is our Heavenly Father who takes great delight in us, His precious children.

PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES

“Principles before personalities” is one of those sayings we hear at Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. We often repeat these words together, but what do these words actually mean?

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 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. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important. (Philippians 2:3-4, Galatians 6:2-3 NLT)

Some of the principles we uphold as we work through the 12-Step Program include:- admitting we are powerless; owning our part in a given situation; surrendering to God's will; being patient and humble; maintaining respect for everyone. These are important principles that are a lot easier to talk about than to put into practice, particularly in dealing with those who are "works in progress" just like us.

We need to deal with our feelings about a person in a "let go and let God" way.

Personalities vary greatly. Some personality types fit well with the person we are and are easy for us to get along with. Others provide more of a challenge. In daily life we will certainly encounter people with differing values and beliefs. Some are struggling with their very existence and exhibit toxic behaviours such as:- gossip, blaming, controlling, and/or victimization. How then do we practice putting “principles before personalities”?

Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. We will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ. (Luke 6:28, Ephesians 4:15 NLT)

People are responsible for their own thoughts and actions. We all need to deal with our feelings about a person in a "let go and let God" way. When we disagree with another, we invite God to fill us with peace and show us how to speak and act with respect. We work our own program and leave others to work theirs. As we faithfully practice putting “principles before personalities,” God will strengthen us with the endurance and patience that is required.

Prayer: Loving God, Only by Your work in me can I truly put “principles before personalities.” I praise You that Your Power will strengthen me to overcome my weakness in this area. Amen

CHANGING OUR STINKING THINKING

We are not shaped so much by our environment as we are by our perception of our environment. The way we think has a powerful impact on how we face life each day. If we are not thinking right, it will be reflected in our emotional state and in our actions.

The thought of my suffering and homelessness is bitter beyond words. I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss. (Lamentations 3:19-20 NLT)

In the Bible we read about a man named Jeremiah. He expresses despair and bitterness as he wrongly perceives that God is against him and that God is the cause of his suffering and his difficult circumstances. Even though Jeremiah was having an awful time, God wasn't the cause of his problems. Jeremiah wasn't thinking right in assessing what was happening, so he did not respond correctly. Blaming God does not fix anything!

The way we think has a powerful impact on how we face life each day.

Then Jeremiah remembers the truth about God and his whole way of thinking changes. **Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: The unfailing love of the LORD never ends! By his mercies we have been kept from complete destruction. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each day. I say to myself, "The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!" The LORD is wonderfully good to those who wait for him and seek him. So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD.** (Lamentations 3:21-26 NLT)

What a turnaround! Did God change? No. Did Jeremiah's circumstances change? No. What changed? Jeremiah's perception of God changed and his emotions followed suit.

Life's events don't determine who we are. We can't control people, places, or things but we can choose how we interpret and respond to them. God promises to be with us through any fearful times we may face. We need to fill our minds with this truth and respond accordingly when troubling circumstances arise.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, When life is difficult, help me to remember that with You any difficulty can be worked out and overcome. I am forever grateful that You care for me. Amen

COMMUNITY – TOGETHER WE CAN

Sobriety in recovery is never a one-person activity. As the old saying goes, “It takes a community to raise a child,” and it takes a community to help a person stay clean and sober and find a new way of life. God’s plan has always been that we share our lives with one another. God acted first on this principle by sending Jesus to earth to show His great love for us and then He gave His Holy Spirit to empower and encourage us. As disciples of Christ who are embracing His love and walking in His ways, God invites us to do as He has done and love and care for others as He loves and cares for us.

And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity — all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. (ACTS 2:44-47 NLT)

***God’s plan
has
always
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our lives
with one
another.***

When people began following Jesus, they knew the importance of being together, of sharing with one another, of supporting each other, of praying and praising God together. As they did these things, others saw something in these people that stirred their desire to change their ways and seek this life they were witnessing in the community of faith.

Since we become like the company we keep, it is important to have friends we love and respect. This is the reason that involvement in a support group is important for personal growth. When we are struggling in a certain area it is helpful to know that we are not alone, and that others with experience in that area are willing to share with us. It is also helpful to hear fellow strugglers share ways that have encouraged them to overcome the obstacles to living honestly with perseverance and accountability.

You, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith. And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives. (Jude 1:20a, 22-23 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for the life I have with You in recovery and for the community of people I have found there. Help me to be humble enough to receive help and to also be available to help others as each of us grows together with You in our new life in recovery. Amen

THE FREEDOM OF A CLEAN SLATE

We experience true freedom when we have a clean slate before God. As we humbly confess our sins and faults to God with a sincere desire to change our ways, God will be faithful to forgive us.

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts. (1 John 1:8-10 NLT)

Sometimes we do good things for some people and tell ourselves we are a caring person even though we have a bad attitude or hidden resentment towards others. We list the good things we have done and use that list to excuse ourselves from taking responsibility to right the wrong that remains. The Bible makes a clear distinction between doing good to “look good” and practicing goodness as a character quality.

Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. (Romans 12:9 NLT)

As followers of Jesus, we are required to choose for good regardless of the trials we may face. We are told that evidence of the presence of God within us is a lifestyle of goodness. God created us for a work He has prepared in advance for us to do, a work that flows from a pure heart. The challenging question for us is: are we doing things to make us “look good” or are we loving others because God has transformed us and made us whole?

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 8:31b – 32 NIV)

Freedom comes when we acknowledge the truth that without Jesus, we can do nothing good, but with Jesus, all things are possible!

Prayer: Gracious God, I acknowledge that freedom to love only comes through my obedience to Your Word. Help me to choose to do what is right, to be merciful in all my encounters with others, and to walk humbly with You as I practice Your principles in all my affairs. Amen

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ANGER MANAGEMENT 101

As we sober up in recovery, most of us quickly recognize that we have an anger problem. Losing our temper over something said or done and allowing that anger to control us does great damage. While some may think that expressing anger is a sign of strength, it is actually allowing our weakness to show. For us to get well we need to learn new ways to handle stress or fearful circumstances.

Don't become angry quickly. Anger lives in the hearts of foolish people.
(Ecclesiastes 7:9 NIRV)

***Don't
become
angry
quickly.
Anger lives
in the
hearts of
foolish
people.***

Ecclesiastes 7:9

It is equally damaging to keep anger bottled up inside. Hidden anger continues to hurt us and, if not dealt with, will turn to resentment and bitterness of soul which may lead to emotional or physical illness. The longer we allow anger to live in us, the less effective we will be in the work which we were created to do, that is, the work that will bring us joy and satisfaction.

My dear friends, you should be quick to listen and slow to speak or to get angry. If you are angry, you cannot do any of the good things that God wants done. (James 1:19-20 CEV)

Most anger management programs train us to deal with anger that has risen within us. God wants us to go one level deeper and let Him help us deal with the improper desires that fuel the anger. God's word tells us that selfishness is at the root of much of our anger. God's best anger management tool is prayer – to tell God what is going on and ask God for what we need.

Do you know where your fights and arguments come from? They come from the selfish desires that make war inside you. You want things, but you don't get them. So you kill and are jealous of others. But you still cannot get what you want. So you argue and fight. You don't get what you want because you don't ask God. (James 4:1-2 ERV)

We are too familiar with getting what we want when we want it. With God's help we can learn to be kind and patient with others because we are trusting God to meet all of our needs.

Prayer: Loving God, Forgive me for my selfish and impatient ways which lead to angry outbursts. I bring my problems to You and ask You to give me the help and direction I need. Fill me with Your joy so that peace may reign in my heart. Amen

OVERCOMING OVERWHELMING DISCOURAGEMENT

We sought recovery when we admitted our lives were unmanageable, and we were powerless to change. How we got to where we were may have included a winding trail of events that seemed unfair, and which caused us much pain. With our good intentions we finally settled into a recovery program. However, for most of us, some difficulties surfaced, and we became discouraged and intimidated by not finding quick solutions to our problems. Then, overwhelming feelings of wanting to run set in. The biggest obstacle to staying on course is, looking for solutions to our problems without seeing God's help in the resolution of them.

Answer me now, Lord! I have lost all hope. Don't hide yourself from me, or I will be among those who go down to the world of the dead. Remind me each morning of your constant love, for I put my trust in you. My prayers go up to you; show me the way I should go.
(Psalm 143:7-8 GNT)

Often, we have lost hope that life will ever treat us fairly. We have set goals for ourselves only to see them fail and fall apart. How can we overcome this trend? We need to pray to the God who created us and tell Him all that is in our hearts so that healing can take place. We need to forgive those who have treated us unfairly and own those things which we have done that negatively impacted so many lives. Repenting of our wrongs and forgiving others will give us new hope, and help us see more clearly the events of our life which had major impact on us.

Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. (Hebrews 9:14 NLT)

God says if we call on Him in our day of trouble, He will rescue us. That is a promise that gives us hope as we practice God's principles in all our affairs.

But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:25 GNT)

Prayer: Gracious God, Help me to believe Your Word and never lose hope for a purposeful life. Remind me each morning of Your constant love and care for me. Amen

***Remind me
each
morning of
your
constant
love, for I
put my trust
in you.***

Psalm 143:8 GNT

TEACH ME YOUR WAYS

For you are great and perform wonderful deeds. You alone are God. Teach me your ways, O Lord, that I may live according to your truth! Grant me purity of heart, so that I may honor you. With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God. I will give glory to your name forever, for your love for me is very great. You have rescued me from the depths of death. (Psalm 86:10-13 NLT)

One of the most dangerous characteristics of life in addiction is the mindset that we know what went wrong and exactly what we need to make things right. We know that those around us caused harm to us and believe that resulted in our troubles. We are quick to judge and strongly criticize everyone and everything except ourselves. We know we have things to teach others, if only they were willing to learn!!

God's Word gives us clear instructions, so we can determine how our way of living lines up with His directions.

Life with God in recovery requires that we take a new approach. We humbly recognize that the person needing to be taught a thing or two is us. We need to ask God to show us what a good way of life looks like, because our known way of doing things is leading us to the "depths of death." We also require God's strength to change our ways. God will give us the will and desire to walk in His ways if we choose to seek His wisdom.

Everything we need doesn't come in pretty packages the day we enter recovery. It's in the ups and downs of day-to-day life that we come to truly know ourselves. Sponsors, counsellors, and trusted friends help us recognize our character defects. God's Word gives us clear instructions, so we can determine how our way of living lines up with His directions. However, none of this has power unless we have a teachable spirit and, with a humble heart, put into practice those things we have learned.

Along with the writer of the above Psalm we need to ask God to teach us His ways, so we can live according to His truth.

Prayer: Gracious God, I ask You to teach me Your ways and lead me on the road to a new life. Be my guide into the knowledge of all truth for You alone know my heart and my old ways. I choose to put my faith in You because Your love for me is unfailing and I desire to honour You in all I do and say. Amen

RESTORED FOR SERVICE

Is there still hope for us after years of living in an addictive and destructive lifestyle? The answer is, YES! To build up our hope, the Bible gives us an illustration of the work of a potter making a useful vessel from the same clay of a pot that had become flawed.

But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. (Jeremiah 18:4 NIV)

Though we may find ourselves captive to dark forces because of our wicked ways, God has good plans for us, and He will give us the power to carry them out. God does not forget us when we go astray. God pursues us even when we are lost and alone in the wilderness of our sinful wanderings. There is nowhere we can go and no sin that we can commit that will separate us from the love of God for us. God's unfailing love is expressed in the person of the Lord Jesus who came into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39 NIV)

When the potter finally finishes with the clay, the new vessel he made will be used for the purpose which the potter determined in advance. When our relationship with God has been restored, we are fit for the purpose for which we were created. We are new creations through Jesus Christ our Lord. God, who has begun a good work in us, will see it through until Jesus comes again.

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. (Philippians 1:6 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I trust You to work out Your good purpose for my life. I am thankful for Your unfailing love and power that can do in me what may seem impossible. However, I choose to acknowledge and believe that with You, "All things are possible." Amen

God, who has begun a good work in us, will see it through until Jesus comes again.

STREET SMARTS OR WISE LIVING

In our addictive lifestyle we made poor choices and walked paths that caused harm to ourselves and to others. We picked up a lot of “street smarts” as we tried to figure out cunning ways to deal with our circumstances.

When we managed to lie our way out of trouble, we were considered smart. It didn't matter that we blamed and criticized those around us if we got ourselves “off the hook”. We thought we were clever when we managed to steal from a store without getting caught or when we ripped a person off without them knowing it was us. In the legal system we looked for loopholes to help us “beat the rap” rather than looking at truth and dealing with the consequences of our actions. In the past we relied on our “street smarts” but they are certainly not a foundation for wholesome, healthy living in recovery.

“Street smarts” took us to a dead-end on the road of life. Applying God’s wisdom will bring us to a full and satisfying life.

Wisdom will save you from evil people, from those whose words are twisted. These men turn from the right way to walk down dark paths. They take pleasure in doing wrong, and they enjoy the twisted ways of evil. Their actions are crooked, and their ways are wrong. (Proverbs 2:12-15 NLT)

“Street smarts” took us to a dead-end on the road of life. Applying God’s wisdom will bring us to a full and satisfying life.

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

It's time to admit to ourselves that we need God's help to live wisely. Our lives based on “street smarts” are unmanageable. God wants us to be conscious of His will for us and have the power to carry it out. We need to come to God and ask Him for forgiveness for our rebellious ways and then put our trust in Him to take us forward and meet all our needs.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I repent of my “street smart” way of living and confess that I know very little about the way to live a good life. Please guide me with Your counsel and support me with Your strength. In all my ways, I commit to living my life according to Your Word. Amen

A SEASON OF REFRESHING

This new life we have been given begins each new day. Yesterday's mistakes, blunders, worries and the resulting pain are all behind us. We are unable to change what has been said or done. We need to admit that, repent, turn away from the evil things we have done, and let go of the pain of those harmful things done to us. We need to turn to God who promises us a season of refreshing.

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)

Living as if God did not exist is the first thing we need to repent of. The first steps of the 12-Step Program deal with this issue. We admit we are powerless. We come to believe God can restore us. We turn our life, including our rebellious self-will over to God, and receive salvation and a new way of living through Jesus Christ. We need to recognize the voice of God's Holy Spirit within us as He reveals behaviours and thoughts that are stirred by the insanity of our thinking about the past which cannot be changed.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (Psalm 51:4, 1 John 1:9 NLT)

Refreshing new life is available to us if we will just reach out and embrace it. Whether we are brand new in recovery or returning after many stumbles, God is with us. When we call on Him, He will answer us and provide the love and mercy we need to begin each new day. As our will is surrendered to His, God will give us everything we need to live life with a new sense of joy.

Sprinkled with the blood of Christ, our hearts have been made free from a guilty conscience, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. So come near to God with a sincere heart, full of confidence because of our faith in Christ. (Hebrews 10:22 ERV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your mercy that is new every morning. I repent of my rebellious ways and desire from this day forward to walk in the truth of Your word. Please help me to forgive and forget about past hurts and strengthen my will to practice Your principles in all my affairs. Amen

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

ENTIRELY READY FOR DEFECTS TO BE REMOVED

Asking God to remove all our defects of character is actually giving Him permission to expose and remove those things that are hindering our ability to live life to the full. By reading the Scriptures in the Bible we come to know that God loves us and is committed to taking care of us. To live life to the full we need to focus on, and believe in God's unchanging commitment to care for everyone who walks in His ways.

The Lord is good and does what is right; he shows the proper path to those who go astray. He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them his way. The Lord leads with unfailing love and faithfulness all who keep his covenant and obey his demands. (Psalm 25:8-10 NLT)

Character defects will be removed as we become willing to follow God's principles instead of choosing our own way.

We must choose for God's way each time His direction conflicts with what we think is a better way. Character defects will be removed as we become willing to follow God's principles instead of choosing our own way. We need to admit that choosing for our own way got us to where we are today. We cannot manipulate God's principles because the Bible tells us His Word is forever settled in Heaven.

Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Psalm 119:89; Matthew 6:10 NIV)

Becoming willing to have God remove all our defects of character is a bit like dealing with dirty clothes. We don't put clean clothes on top of dirty clothes. That would give the appearance of change while we just cover the stained clothes and continue with poor hygiene. When sinful habits and defects of character are revealed, we need to give God permission to remove them, cleanse us, and help us become the person He created us to be.

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me—now let me rejoice. (Psalm 51:7-8 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, My desire is to have all my defects of character removed. Help me to live entirely surrendered to Your will and Your ways so I may live as the new creation You say I am. I proclaim the old me has gone and the new me is here. Please help me to live my new life in the light of Your Presence. Amen

GAINING INTEREST IN OTHERS

The contrast of destructive self-centeredness in active addiction versus the healthy lifestyle of supporting one another in recovery is clearly expressed in Promise 7 of A.A.- *We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.* Learning and growing in our recovery and sharing our experience, strength, and hope with others, are ways we fulfill this principle. Long before this was brought to the attention of recovering alcoholics, God's Word in the Bible explained that this was the way God wanted us to live.

Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others too, and in what they are doing. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Philippians 2:4 TLB, Colossians 3:16 ESV)

We help each other by giving time and attention to one another. One of the greatest gifts we can give to a person is a listening ear and time for them to share whatever they need to share. We need to slow down and pay attention to those around us, lending a helping hand as needed, rather than merrily going along doing our own thing. Even though it is not always convenient, and is often hard work, there is something very satisfying about caring for others in a way that strengthens and builds them up.

By "carrying the message", as Step 12 encourages us to do, we make ourselves vulnerable as we share our struggles related to finding sobriety and getting to know God. By sharing our experience, we provide common ground for someone to find themselves at a starting point for moving ahead. This "gaining interest in others" is so important that when Jesus boiled down all the teaching of the Scriptures into two commandments, this was one of them. The success of our life and our recovery depend on living our lives this way.

Jesus replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37-40 NLT)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You put Your own interests aside and came to earth to die for my sins. Help me to be more like You and be more interested in others and less self-focused. Amen

Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others too, and in what they are doing.

Philippians 2:4 TLB

THE DISTRESS OF UNMANAGEABLE PROBLEMS

We all go through times in our lives when we feel the sky is falling and we are unable to do anything about it. This could be the result of irresponsible things we have done, relationship problems we have caused, or the outcome of another’s actions against us. Whatever the cause our mind is in turmoil, and we wrestle with sleepless nights seeking answers we are unable to find.

The writer of today’s Psalm appears to be in a similar mess, and his solution is to tell God about it and cry out to Him for help. What can we learn from his experience that will give us strength and hope in our own times of powerlessness and unmanageability?

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

Psalm 118:5 NLT

Listen to my prayer, O Lord, and hear my cry for help! When I am in trouble, don't turn away from me! Listen to me, and answer me quickly when I call! My life is disappearing like smoke; my body is burning like fire. I am beaten down like dry grass; I have lost my desire for food. I groan aloud; I am nothing but skin and bones. I am like a wild bird in the desert, like an owl in abandoned ruins. I lie awake; I am like a lonely bird on a housetop. All day long my enemies insult me; those who mock me use my name in cursing. (Psalm 102:1-8 GNT)

When we came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity, we gave our will and our life over to the care of this God of our understanding. As we live in His will, we discover that whatever the cause of our anxiety, God is available to help us face any issues head on and overcome the challenges they may bring. Our part is to bring all our worries and concerns to God in prayer, knowing that God will hear and answer our prayers and give us peace that goes beyond our understanding.

In my distress I prayed to the Lord, and the Lord answered me and set me free.
(Psalm 118:5 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, When I am fearful and feeling low because of my stressful circumstances, help me to remember that You are the all-knowing God who guards my heart and mind and takes care of me. Amen

REDUCING SELF-CENTEREDNESS

The Big Book of AA describes the significance of our problem with self-centeredness in this way: *"There often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His [God's] aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help."* (Big Book pages 62-63)

This confirms what the Bible says about needing God to help us deal with self-centeredness and other shortcomings.

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life ... because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. (2 Peter 1:3-4 NLT)

The authors of the Big Book mirror this important truth for us as follows: *"This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life.* (Big Book pages 62-63)

So you should try very hard to add goodness to your faith. To goodness, add knowledge. To knowledge, add the ability to control yourselves. To the ability to control yourselves, add the strength to keep going. To the strength to keep going, add godliness. To godliness, add kindness for one another and to kindness for one another, add love. (2 Peter 1:5-7 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for your help in dealing with my self-centeredness. I surrender all that I am to You. Be the director of my life. Work Your will in me and through me so that I might share in Your divine nature and have sincere affection for everyone I meet. Amen

***“Neither could
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(Big Book of AA)***

NO RECORD OF WRONGS

Keeping a record of wrongs often leads to the winding path of relapse and active addiction. When someone harmed us in the past, we may have been unable to deal with the situation at that time, so we buried the pain. The pain, however, was not dead and it festered with evil thoughts about the person who committed the offence. Other incidences may have added to this and we just kept pushing each one down. We became angry and intolerant and verbally exploded in situations which did not meet with our approval. To deal with the pain and distress we sought medication to make us feel better. At first the medication worked but eventually more and more was needed to help us live with the hurt and bitterness that was inside us.

Keeping a record of wrongs often leads to the winding path of relapse and active addiction.

Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land. (Psalm 37:8-9 NIV)

Our record of wrongs influences the way we think and behave. For example, we think evil about a person who has harmed us and want them to suffer for what they have done. Increasingly we become agitated and anger builds within us. Vengeful thoughts fill our mind. Others find it hard to be around us because we have a super-sensitive attitude, and the fuse of our anger is always smoldering. What can we do about this?

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)

If we have turned our lives over to the care of God, He has forgiven us for the sins we have committed, and He asks us to forgive those who have harmed us. This may be one of the hardest tasks we will face but God will give us the power to do what we cannot do on our own. Obeying God will free us from the wickedness of an unforgiving spirit. Refusal to do so means we are still entertaining that spirit and allowing it to control our lives.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You that through Jesus all my sins are forgiven. Please help me to forgive my offenders and turn them over to You to deal with. As I choose to live by the power of Your Holy Spirit, help me to hear no evil, see no evil, and think no evil. Amen

RESOURCEFUL

Who is more resourceful than an addict in need? Desperation really fuels the ability to find quick and clever ways to overcome difficulties. The God to whom we turn our will and life over to is the God who will use many things in our lives for good – including the resourcefulness we practiced for destructive means. Cleansed of the cheating and manipulation, God wants us to be an example to others of how to tap into His wonderful resources. With faith in God's goodness at work in us, we can now refocus our skills and talents.

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men. (1 Timothy 5:8, Colossians 3:23 ESV)

We can help and offer many creative solutions in a variety of areas from lessons learned through our life experiences during pre-addiction days as well as during dark times. We need to ask God to show us how to use the understanding we have gained for the good of others. We don't have to be the resident expert, and we don't always need to have things done the way that worked for us, but we may be able to offer a fresh viewpoint that may be useful to someone in a given situation.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. (James 1:5, Luke 16:10 ESV)

God has kept us alive and brought us to this day. God Himself says that He has given us every spiritual blessing so we can do those things that He has planned for us to do. His plan is that through our lives – yes our lives – others will see the good things we have done and give God the glory. So, let's be resourceful and put our abilities into the service of God in order that we may offer a helping hand to those around us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, It's amazing that You are able to use some things in my past – the good, the bad, and the ugly – in Your agenda for me today. Help me to live with faith that You brought me and my unique gifts to this day to do good and to glorify Your Name. Amen

God has given us every spiritual blessing so we can do those things that He has planned for us to do.

DIVIDED LOYALTY – REVEALING THE WHOLE TRUTH

We often feel awkward about bringing our recurring sins before God. We are embarrassed by the number of times we have had to deal with the same issues – those things that we don't want to do yet keep doing over and over again. What is going on? Why can't we beat those things that cause trouble in our lives and also in the lives of those we love? What will it take for us to find solid ground on which to build a firm and lasting recovery?

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1 NKJV)

God offers us comfort for our grief and healing for our hurts, but this requires complete honesty in what we are willing to reveal and deal with.

The slogan, "If nothing changes, nothing changes", is true. When we find ourselves coming back from the "same old failure" we need to admit whether we stayed with the necessary lifestyle changes we agreed to make, or are refusing to disclose the enduring pain we hold on to which might be feeding our recurring actions. This may be an opportunity to allow God to take us deeper into our buried pain. We need to reveal if we are feeling resentment, hatred, fear, pain, or deep shame about something in our past, and/or see only our addictive substance as a means of relief. God offers us comfort for our grief and healing for our hurts, but this requires complete honesty in what we will reveal and deal with. Only the truth – the whole truth – will set us free.

So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Humble yourselves before the Lord,

and he will lift you up in honor. (James 4:7-8, 10 NLT)

If we sincerely desire freedom from our dependency, God will help us find it.

Prayer: Gracious God, I do not just want to talk about what has happened in my life but to repent and turn away from my destructive behavior. Please give me the courage to be honest and to confess those memories or situations that still cause me anxiety. Where I see my dependency as relief, help me to see it as an enemy of my survival. In every situation, I look to You for healing. I also ask for strength and determination to accept the things I cannot change and the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to follow Your ways with an undivided heart. Amen

BEING CONFIDENT IN WHO GOD SAYS WE ARE

God has given gifts to everyone; no one has been left out. The gifts He gives to us are not solely for our benefit but are also for the good we can do for others. We are created to serve God and bring joy and blessing to others. God promises to help us. Are you and I willing to step forward confident in who God says we are? Are we willing to follow His ways and the plan He has for each of us?

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. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. (Romans 12:4-6a NLT)

The first step in developing self-confidence is acknowledging that God is our creator and each one of us is exclusively made with special qualities. As members of the human family, we each have gifts because we are made in the image of an awesome God who individually equips us with the potential to fulfill the amazing plan He has for our lives.

Lord ... You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. (Psalm 139:13-14 NLT)

Often, to improve our self-confidence, we need to demonstrate to ourselves that we can achieve what we set out to do. How do we do that? We take a risk and try something new. We leave the safety and security of our comfort zone and take the necessary steps that will help us achieve the task we have set for ourselves.

Am I willing to affirm what God says about me and seek His strength to live confidently in the truth that, with God in charge, I can successfully complete the work He has given me to do?

Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:6 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to faithfully walk with You, learning from both successes and failures as I use the gifts You have given me for my good and for the good of others. As I follow Your will, increase my faith in Your power to help me make a success of my life. Amen

Lord ... You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.

Psalm 139:13 NLT