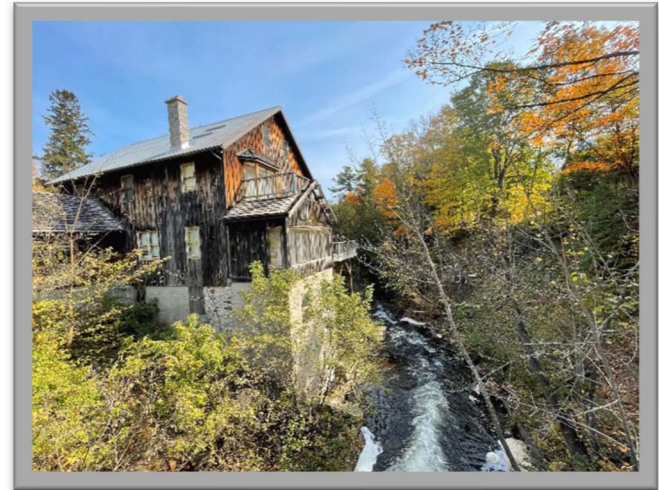


**LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY**

# **Daily Meditations**



**OCTOBER 2024**



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offering hope, support, and healing  
through Jesus Christ  
to victims of  
harmful circumstances and dependencies,  
as they reclaim the gift of their life.*

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## JUST FOR TODAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## SOME AREAS OF ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCY

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



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

## LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY Daily Meditations

**OCTOBER 2024**

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**  
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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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### 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.*

## LOVED WITHOUT CONDITION

We don't really know God until we know that God is love and that God's love for us is unfailing. We can depend on God's love. We often hear the term "unconditional love." What does that mean? Is God's love unconditional? Can we do whatever we like, and God will continue to pour out His love on us?

Often when people speak about God's unconditional love what they are really saying is that God's love is available to everyone. Thankfully, there is no special race or social class we need to belong to in order to be loved by God.

***God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him would not be lost but have eternal life.*** (John 3:16 ERV)

We speak of God's unconditional love because He is willing to forgive all sin. There is no sin that the blood of Jesus will not wash clean. When we humbly repent of our sin and ask God to forgive us, He will cleanse us. There is no further payment required, our sin debt has been paid in full. We need no longer live in guilt and shame.

***In Christ we are made free by his blood sacrifice. We have forgiveness of sins because of God's rich grace.*** (Ephesians 1:7 ERV)

While God is willing, His holiness prevents Him from pouring His love into our hearts when we continue to live in pride and self-sufficiency and refuse to admit these failings.

To live in the love of God requires our willingness to turn away from sin and follow God's way rather than our own. We can't say we are allowing God to love us and live in hatred and self-will. To receive God's love, we must be willing to take these first three steps – admit we are powerless and a mess; get to know this amazing God and believe He can restore us to new life; turn our will and our life over to His care and humbly live there on a moment-by-moment basis.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, I have gone my own way, made a mess of my life, and harmed others in the process. I turn away from living apart from You in self-will. I ask You to forgive me. I place my trust in the freedom from sin that Jesus provided for me when He died in my place. Help me to receive Your unfailing love and live in Your tender care. Amen***

***There's  
no  
special  
race or  
social  
class we  
need to  
belong to  
in order  
to be  
loved by  
God.***

## CONFRONTING MY POWERLESSNESS

For all of us there came a time when we could no longer avoid the realization that our lives were a mess. When we came to this place of brokenness and powerlessness, we knew we needed to make a choice where our life would go from here. We had to admit that our addictive habits and unhealthy relationships were causing us harm and not giving us the relief we were seeking. We had to admit defeat. We had to admit we couldn't do things on our own and come to the point where we knew we needed help.

**When we wake up to our helpless state and surrender ourselves to God, He stands ready to help us find a new life.**

***Have compassion on me, Lord, for I am weak. Heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony. I am sick at heart. How long, O Lord, until you restore me? Return, O Lord, and rescue me. Save me because of your unfailing love.*** (Psalm 6:2-4 NLT)

It is human to want to control our own life and circumstances. We want to feel good, be happy, and live free from pain at all times. However, there comes a time when we must realize that this is not real life. Pain is a part of life. Problems are a regular occurrence. We are powerless to avoid them. When we come to this realization, what are we to do? We can wallow in frustration and self-pity or this can be a moment where we look for a road which will take us forward to a life that may not be perfect but is truly meaningful and satisfying.

***In my distress I cried out to the Lord; yes, I prayed to my God for help. He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry to him reached his ears.*** (Psalm 18:6 NLT)

Our helpless condition is no surprise to God. He already knows we will not succeed when we try to do things on our own. When we awaken to our helpless state and surrender ourselves to God, He stands ready to help us find a new life. God cares for us more than we care for ourselves. He knows a sure way forward and is willing to guide us, plus He has the power to get us safely there. To get the help we need God tells us to call out to Him and He will provide it.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, I admit defeat. I am powerless to live without You. I want a relationship with You to be my focus for a new way of life. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit who will guide me into all truth and give me the power I need to move forward. Amen***

## HIDING BEHIND A MASK

Tonight, many children put on costumes and go door-to-door "trick-or-treating." Some of them wear masks to complete their costume. Many adults also dress in costumes at their workplace and perhaps later in the evening attend parties where a mask is used to disguise who they really are. For a few hours everyone desires to have a good time as they pretend to be someone they are not.

Truth is, many of us don't just don masks at Hallowe'en. Often, we have worn masks for so long that we forget who we really are. A mask, of course, covers the truth of who we truly are with a lie. When we live behind a mask, we are denying our true self and rejecting the person God created us to be.

***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)

God created us in love with a purpose for our lives. God invites us to let our unique personality complement our relationships, and everything we undertake to do. This is what life with God in recovery is all about, becoming the person God created us to be and following the plan He has for our lives. When we dare to take off the mask and let our true self be known, we often experience freedom from the burden of our fake persona.

The question for each of us is, do we want to tell the truth, remove the mask, and find out who we truly are, or do we want to continue telling lies and hiding behind the mask we have constructed?

***What this adds up to, then, is this: no more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ's body we're all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself.*** (Ephesians 4:25 MSG)

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, From this day forward I commit to letting go of everything that hinders me from becoming the person You created me to be. Help me to tell the truth in every circumstance and leave the outcome with You. Amen***

**When we live behind a mask, we are denying our true self and rejecting the person God created us to be.**

## LIVING BEYOND INTOLERANCE

An important character strength to develop is tolerance, which is being patient, understanding, and accepting of something different from what we are familiar with. We live in a world where there is a mixture of many cultures and behaviours, traditions and beliefs. The things one family values will be quite different than those of another. For many of us, part of the challenge to be tolerant is learning how to be around others who are at a different place in recovery than we are.

Too often we expect others to take our weaknesses into account and negate the impact they have, or we expect others to find a clean and sober life the same way we did. Truth is, we all come into this life with God in recovery from different places on the path. God loves all of us. God invites all of us. Jesus paid the price for the wrongdoing of all of us.

**Be  
tolerant  
with one  
another  
and  
forgive  
one  
another**

Jesus confronted a group of people, who themselves weren't perfect, yet who were condemning a woman for her wrongs, wanting to stone her to death. His advice to them was:

*So he [Jesus] stood up and said to them, "Has any one of you not sinned? Then you be the first to throw a stone at her." ...Those who heard what he had said began to go away. They left one at a time, the older ones first ... Jesus stood up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Hasn't anyone found you guilty?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then I don't find you guilty either," Jesus said. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:7-11 NIRV)*

**Colossians 3:13  
GNB**

Jesus calls all of us to receive forgiveness for the sins we have committed and then to stop sinning. Showing respect and tolerance doesn't hide the need for a person to change but it does help all of us to remember that we are on equal ground. We would do well to focus on making an inventory of our own character defects and simply focus on loving others, blessing them and praying that they will find the forgiveness and healing Jesus is offering them.

***Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. (Colossians 3:13 GNT)***

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, At my worst, You treated me with compassion and mercy. Help me to walk with respect and humility among others who live and act differently from the way I now value. Help all of us to come to You for forgiveness and receive new life. Amen*

## GIVING UP THE LIE

Addicts tell lies. We tell ourselves we need our substance of choice to deal with the day. We believe the truth about our lives is too painful to face, that we're different, and that our circumstances are too traumatic to overcome. We lie because we are embarrassed and ashamed. We lie because we are in denial about where our addiction has taken us. The bottom line is, we lie because it helps us remain in the familiar place where we are.

***Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. (Colossians 3:9 NLT)***

One of the greatest challenges we face in recovery is giving up the lie we tell ourselves, that we need to lie. We have not changed much if we lie to get money from the government or lie because we are ashamed of who we are now, remembering and telling only part of the truth about our past.

***Honest people can always feel secure but lying cheaters will be caught. Kind words are like a life-giving tree but lying words will crush your spirit. (Proverbs 10:9, 15:4 ERV)***

Lies keep us hidden in isolation and shame. They cloud our ability to seek solutions that bring us real freedom. It's time to choose truth and work hard on changing the environment of lying that we have created. One truth at a time – even an acknowledgement that we just lied – will bring freedom and relief. Nothing brings peace and a sense of wellbeing more than living in the truth. Our recovery is a journey of developing trust in the truth that God's principles are reliable, and that God is trustworthy. Each time we tell the truth, regardless of the inconvenience, we will deepen our experience of true freedom and become more stable because God is faithful to His word and will bless us.

***But you must do this: Tell the truth to your neighbors. When you make decisions in your cities, be fair and do what is right. Do what brings peace. (Zechariah 8:16 ERV)***

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, I admit that lying often seems much easier than telling the truth. I desire the life of freedom and peace that You promise to those who live in the truth. Today, help me to notice when I lie and give me the courage to deal with it immediately. Amen*

***One of the  
greatest  
challenges  
we face is  
giving up  
the lie we  
tell  
ourselves,  
that we  
need to  
lie.***

## JUST FOR TODAY – LEARNING TO LET GO

*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.*

Holding on to anger and pain doesn't fix anything. Burying a grudge deep within and putting layers of blame on top of the hurt doesn't bring healing. Whether the wound is recent or something we have carried for a long time, perhaps today is the day to let go of the hurt within us so we can choose to be joyful, optimistic and grateful.

***For everything there is a season ... A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away.*** (Ecclesiastes 3:1a, 6 NLT)

***It's time to let the past go into the cleansing river of God's unlimited forgiveness.***

Our shame about things done in the past is often the greatest barrier to living joyfully today. Jesus paid with His life so we could have eternal life and freedom from guilt and shame through forgiveness of our sins. The devil seeks to keep us hiding in the darkness of unforgiveness so we will feel like damaged goods. It's time to let the past go into the cleansing river of God's unlimited forgiveness.

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

Admittedly, life isn't perfect and we may face circumstances and challenges that seem bigger than we can handle. Thankfully we can let our feelings of worry and fear point us to our need for God's help, which will surely be available if we ask for it. As many others have done in the past, let's get rid of everything that slows us down and causes us to fall. Let's notice the gifts we have been given and let the rest go.

***We have all these great people around us as examples. Their lives tell us what faith means. So we, too, should run the race that is before us and never quit. We should remove from our lives anything that would slow us down and the sin that so often makes us fall.*** (Hebrews 12:1 ERV)

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, You know me, and You know all about my circumstances and the state of my heart. I choose to let go of all unforgiveness and allow Your cleansing river to make me clean, so that I may have joy and peace in my life today and forevermore. Amen*

## HANDLING STRESS

Stress comes in many areas of life for all of us. We experience what seems like too much pressure at home or at work. Perhaps we can't sleep, or we walk around with an uncomfortable level of anxiety. For a number of us, dealing with stress was a contributing factor in our drug and alcohol use and eventually led us to addiction. The key to effective handling of stress is to lean on God's power at the initial stage of any problem.

***The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. I say to myself, "The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!"*** (Lamentations 3:22-24 NLT)

God's strength comes as He stabilizes our emotions with His peace, infuses our hearts with His joy, and provides us with His wisdom to deal with any hardship in life. It's important to admit we're stressed, first to God, and then perhaps to someone we trust. God is with us. God cares. God has promised to act on our behalf when we give our will and life over to His care.

***Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.*** (Philippians 4:6 NLT)

When we are under stress, we need to be aware of things we tend to project into the situation, things that don't exist but are the base of our worries and fears. We need to let go of past events and hurts and concentrate only on what today's challenges are. Perhaps we need to set reasonable priorities and let other things go. Many of us dislike asking for help. This may be a time to live more realistically and reach out for help.

God says: ***"Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you. I've called your name. You're mine. When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you. When you're in rough waters, you will not go down. When you're between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end—Because I am God, your personal God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*** (Isaiah 43:1-3 MSG)

*Prayer: Loving God, You know me and the pressures and stresses I face. Help me to trust You and let go of those things that concern me. Help me to be realistic about what I can achieve. Strengthen my resolve to develop wisdom in the handling of all my affairs. Amen*

***The key to effective handling of stress is to lean on God's power at the initial stage of any problem.***



## COURAGE TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP

How do we find the courage to try something new or go after what we really want? Fear can feel overwhelming and too often we let it interfere with the next step we need to take to build a solid foundation in recovery.

Courage isn't the absence of fear. Courage means that we take advantage of the little strength we find within ourselves and stubbornly obey God who will provide all the strength we need. Having the courage to change does not mean we will never experience fear. It simply means we trust God to support us as we take the next step.

In the Bible when Jesus walks on the water, the disciples are terrified when they see him. ***“Lord, is it you?” Peter asked. “If it is, tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” Jesus said. So Peter got out of the boat. He walked on the water toward Jesus. But when Peter saw the wind, he was afraid. He began to sink. He cried out, “Lord! Save me!” Right away Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “Your faith is so small!” he said. “Why did you doubt me?”*** (Matthew 14:28-31 NIRV).

***All we need is the courage to take the next step.***

Peter was a “crazy man”, but he was also someone who accomplished much and we are still talking about him and learning from him over 2000 years later. Just like us, Peter made several bad choices when he was afraid. However, Peter also learned from the things Jesus taught him in those moments. In the story quoted above Peter was bold enough to climb out of a boat in a storm and walk toward Jesus. Peter gathered up enough courage to take one step. He ventured out into a new experience. When he looked at the

circumstances around him, he suddenly got scared and started to sink. At that moment Peter made a good choice. He called out to Jesus and found the help he needed. Jesus then simply said to Peter as He would say to us, “Why did you doubt me?”

As we move forward in recovery, all we need is the courage to take the next step. This doesn't mean that we won't be afraid or won't need help. It means that we will summon the faith and courage to take one more step. As we do, God will support us with the necessary strength to continue our journey.

***Prayer: Loving God, Help me to find the courage to take the next right step. Remind me that You are always with me, and I can call to You for help in every situation. Amen***

## FEEL YOUR FEELINGS

One of the things which many of us experienced while growing up, and which probably had something to do with our journey into an addictive and destructive lifestyle, was the lack of attention paid to us as children. We got used to being side-tracked in favour of other agendas which silenced our feelings and expectations. We gave up on going to anyone with our needs because we felt that no one knew us or even cared about who we were.

***Don't turn away from me. Don't be angry with your servant. You are the only one who can help me. My God, don't leave me all alone. You are my Savior. Even if my mother and father leave me, the Lord will take me in.*** (Psalm 27:9-10 ERV)

What a relief it is to find out that we matter to God. We can call out to God whenever we need to because He is always listening. We can speak to God as often as we like. God is interested in everything that concern us. In His love and tenderness God is reaching out to us and inviting us to come close to His heart. Our feelings, however, may not be receptive to this unfamiliar love and care. We are so used to our negative feelings that positive feelings are abnormal, and it may take some time to recognize what love and care truly feel like.

***I was patient while I waited for the Lord. He turned to me and heard my cry for help. I was sliding down into the pit of death, and he pulled me out. He brought me up out of the mud and dirt. He set my feet on a rock. He gave me a firm place to stand on.*** (Psalm 40:1-2 NIRV)

The Lord is a good Father and knows His children well. God is patient, compassionate and loving and will bring us to that place of trust where we will be willing to feel our feelings. Resentment against others, which is evident in our not being willing to feel, will be replaced with love, joy, and peace as we are healed and restored by the love and power of our ever-patient God.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Please help me to let go of the darkness within me and trust Your compassionate presence ever with me to care for me. Thank You for bringing me hope of a life of joy and peace in Your devoted care. Amen***

***God is patient, compassionate and loving and will bring us to that place of trust where we will be willing to feel our feelings.***

## SINCERITY

A sincere person is one who is honest, who doesn't create false impressions, and who doesn't operate with selfish motives. What you see is what you get. They do the right thing for the right reasons. They don't have a hidden agenda.

***My words come from an upright heart; my lips sincerely speak what I know.***  
(Job 33:3 NIV)

The meaning of the word sincere comes from the ancient practice of pottery making. If rocks were not sifted out of the clay, pots would have defects and deceitful potters would fill the small holes with wax. Later, when the buyer heated the pot, the wax would melt, and the pot would leak. Good potters, whose clay was sifted, would write on their pots "sine cera" – without wax. Are we as genuine on the inside as we try to portray on the outside? God wants us to know who we are in relationship with Him and then live that out with truth and grace in our human relationships.

***Are we as genuine on the inside as we try to portray on the outside?***

***The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*** (1 Timothy 1:5 NIV)

We need to say what we mean and mean what we say without lies, or exaggeration, or evasiveness. We need to be honest about what we think or feel – expressing ourselves with respect and politeness for sure – but not thinking one thing and intentionally saying something else. To be sincere is to "walk the walk not just talk the talk."

For us to live before God and others with sincerity of heart, we need to practice being honest in all our affairs and not merely seek to gain advantage for ourselves. When we are impressed with something that has been done right, we should give a compliment with sincerity. When we have done something wrong, we should take responsibility and apologize with sincere regret and a willingness to make things right. With God's help, we can live as a person of sincerity today.

***Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace.*** (2 Corinthians 1:12 NIV)

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Please work in me so that any character defects that would keep me from being sincere are brought to light and removed. Amen***

## SLOGAN – LIVE AND LET LIVE

"Live and let live" is one of those slogans that encourage us to consider if our desire for control is becoming an issue we need to deal with. The Serenity Prayer wisely encourages us to ask God to grant us the serenity to "accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

***Be humble under God's powerful hand. Then he will lift you up when the right time comes. Give all your worries to him, because he cares for you. Control yourselves and be careful!***  
(1 Peter 5:6-8 ERV)

We are not in control of other people, places, or things. Some of our family members struggle with addiction and our desire is that they find sobriety. Others continue to exhibit character defects that are harmful to themselves and to others. People in positions of power in our work or community will make choices that we may not like but are powerless to change. Some people will have an inaccurate understanding of who we are and why we are making certain life choices.

While we could hope for things to be different, we need to let go of situations that are out of our control. We need to focus our thoughts and efforts on those things God has given us to do – "praying only for the knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out." We need to trust God and respect the choices others make. Live and let live.

It's too easy for us to live co-dependently, worrying about others, trying to rescue and fix things beyond our control, or just obsessing in our thoughts and emotions about things we don't like.

Today is another opportunity for us to live as the person God created us to be. Today is a day to relax, to be ourselves, and let go of things that are not ours to hold, and to let God be God.

***Prayer: Loving God, I surrender my life and the circumstances around me into Your hands. Help me to stay focused on Your plan for my life and let everything else go. Amen***

***We need to trust God and respect the choices others make.***

## FACING GUILT

When we turn our will and our life over to God's care and trust in the new life Jesus gives us, does that mean we should never reflect on guilty feelings? No! There is a valid source of guilt which comes when we fall back into self-will and disobey God's commands. The Holy Spirit will warn us that we are off track. We call this, being convicted of sin. We've done wrong and we feel guilty. This is a wake-up signal from God that we are sliding downhill into dangerous and destructive patterns. Guilt is our indicator to turn and get back on the right path.

***And when he (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment.*** (John 16:8 NLT)

Satan wants us to wallow in our guilt, believing we have pushed God's grace beyond its limit. However, restoration is the intention of the Holy Spirit's conviction of sin and our experience of guilt. God's desire is always to set us free, restore us, and lead us back onto the path of righteousness. We need to promptly recognize and resist condemnation and false guilt from the accuser of God's people. Similarly, we must acknowledge genuine guilt and promptly surrender to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Our Step 10 daily inventory is a great time to sort through these issues and get back on track with God.

***We must acknowledge genuine guilt and promptly surrender to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.***

***People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.*** (Proverbs 28:13 NLT)

The more quickly we confess, repent, and make amends for our wrongdoing, the more quickly the weight of guilt will be removed from our shoulders. We can then get back to living life to the full, free of all condemnation.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess that I have been falling back into self-will in my thoughts, my words, and my deeds. In Your mercy, forgive me and cleanse me from my sin. Thank You for freeing me from all condemnation and restoring me to the blessed life I have received from You. Amen*

## LIVING BEYOND VIOLENCE

God hates violence and His heart is grieved by the things that humans do to one another. God's desire is that we live our lives without violence and do all we can to limit the spread of it.

***The Lord examines those who are good and those who are wicked; he hates those who enjoy hurting others.*** (Psalm 11:5 ERV)

Most of us who have come out of a destructive lifestyle have needed (or still need) forgiveness for the way we acted abusively or violently towards others, their property, and their person. The list of ways we were violent with our words or our actions brings remorse as we make our inventories and realize how much harm we have caused. God is able and willing to forgive us and one of the best ways to stop ongoing violence is to let God heal our woundedness so we live in His peace rather than in the darkness of our own heart.

Jesus said, ***"The things that make people wrong are the things that come from the inside. All these bad things begin inside a person, in the mind: bad thoughts, sexual sins, stealing, murder, adultery, greed, doing bad things to people, lying, doing things that are morally wrong, jealousy, insulting people, proud talking, and foolish living."*** (Mark 7:20-22 ERV)

We are wounded people mingling with other wounded people. The result is spiteful attitudes, words, and actions. While we don't want to condone violence in any way and need to set whatever healthy boundaries are necessary, we also need to humble ourselves and let God teach us about overcoming evil with good, rather than letting another's evil and violence draw similar responses from us.

***Don't pay back evil with evil. Don't pay back unkind words with unkind words. Instead, pay back evil with kind words. This is what you have been chosen to do. You will receive a blessing by doing this.*** (1 Peter 3:9 NIRV)

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have shown me Your way of love and blessing in the face of violence. Help me to receive Your forgiveness for my own failings and live in the power of Your Spirit so I can bless others rather than respond to their evil with further evil. Amen*

***God's desire is that we live our lives without violence and do all we can to limit the spread of it.***

## STEP SEVEN - COMING HUMBLY FOR GOD'S HELP

What does it mean to humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings? If we truly have come to that place where we want God to remove our shortcomings, then we will have given some thought to what they actually are. We will be mindful of the negative effect they have had on our lives and strongly desire to have them removed.

*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)

**When we think of our character shortcomings is there a sense of regret, or do we attempt to justify what we have done, and perhaps continue to do?**

When we think of our character shortcomings is there a sense of regret, or do we attempt to justify what we have done, and perhaps continue to do? To humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings reveals that we have become aware of how far we have strayed from the ways of God, and from being the person He created us to be. We are humbled by the price Jesus paid to set us free from our sin and make us right with God. We know that only by the power of the Holy Spirit living in us will we be able to live the purposeful life we have been given. We are truly humbled by the fact that God has promised to provide everything we need to live a life devoted to Him.

We will strengthen the new foundation we have laid in recovery by our daily admission that, without God we can do nothing. Obedience to God's word is the tried-and-true way to have victory over self-absorption. God does not want us to focus on our faults. He wants us to focus on getting to know His

will for our lives as revealed in the Bible, and then put that knowledge into action.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, I recognize the shortcomings in my character and humbly ask You to remove them. I receive Your forgiveness for my sins and look to You for rest for my soul. I surrender my fear and worries to You. I ask You to change my thinking and believing until I am totally secure in your love and goodness. I choose to embrace life on your terms. Amen*

## BEING GRACIOUS TO ALL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## FINDING THE PERSON GOD CREATED ME TO BE

Many of us lost our true identity because we grew up in dysfunctional families and were forced to assume survival roles. God invites us to know the truth that we are loved and that living now in the embrace of His love we can become the complete person He created us to be. Our life with God in recovery is about finding both character strengths to build on and identifying character defects that hinder us from becoming loving, fulfilled individuals.

***Our life with God in recovery is about finding both character strengths to build on and character defects that hinder us from becoming loving, fulfilled individuals.***

The God who created us knows what living in love looks like. He is more than willing to teach us about that. However, we must give up control of what we think works because our best efforts led us to lives of addiction and pain. God wants to show us a new way of achieving the life filled with love that we desire.

***We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.*** (1 John 4:19-21 NIV)

How often have we felt we were doing well in recovery, only to be confronted with a situation that showed us another character defect in need of attention. We cannot excuse one area of defect by simply pointing to all the things we are doing well. While we need to see growth and build on that, we also need to remain humble and recognize that there are still things to learn and put into practice.

***The Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*** (Micah 6:8 NLT)

As we walk with God, consult wise people, and make an ongoing inventory of our lives, God will show us the adjustments we need to make and give us the desire to do so.

*Prayer: Loving God, help me to reclaim the life You planned for me when You created me in love. Give me the humility to see my lingering defects and the willingness to change. I desire to embrace Your way of living and loving in all my ways. Amen*

## BUILDING CONFIDENCE FOR SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY

Moving forward in identifying character defects and allowing God to help us develop our true character is no easy process. Few of us are confident in our ability to succeed. We have too much history of our trying and failing and if we are totally honest, we wonder at this time if we will be able to maintain our sobriety. Many of us slipped into addiction to cover up our lack of confidence and low self-esteem. It is no easy task to look at ourselves in the mirror and believe that we can be something other than what we have become.

In His kindness, God affirms repeatedly in the Bible that there is a way forward for us and that He will be with us every step of the way supplying all that we need.

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

God knows us better than we know ourselves. God knows that on our own we will fail but as we surrender our will and life to His care He will show us a new way. God will support us in each step we take and as we experience success our confidence will grow.

***This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*** (1 John 5:14, Hebrews 4:16 NIV)

We are not aware of all that we truly need. Our understanding is too clouded by our pain and the destructive pattern of our life in addiction. God has never lost sight of the truth of who we are and what we need to succeed. If we remain close to God and let Him guide us on the pathway to peace, we can be confident of finding and living the wonderful life God has planned for us

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, I cannot do life on my own. We both know that. Help me to trust Your view of me and who You say I am. Help me to listen carefully to the voice of Your Spirit as He gives me urgings in my spirit and teaches me how to apply Your Word to my circumstances and actions. Give me the courage and humility to return to You again and again for help in my times of need. Amen*

***God will support us each step of the way and as we experience success, our confidence will grow.***

## FINDING RELIEF FROM LONELINESS

God made us for relationship with Him and with each other. Sharing life with friends is a natural yearning of the human heart. In the past we often tried to cover up our loneliness with a substance, destructive habit, and/or an unhealthy relationship. Living in relationships in recovery without whatever we were using is a challenge. God desires to give us relief from our loneliness and welcome us into His family today.

**Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart and free me from my anguish. He [God] heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.** (Psalm 25:16-17, 147:3 NIV)

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Loneliness has several different expressions. Grief and loss can trigger intense loneliness. Sometimes it's a feeling of being ignored or left out. Being misunderstood and feeling uncared for is high on the list of loneliness indicators. Feeling drained or empty is also labelled as being lonely. We can feel lonely on our own or when surrounded by lots of people. It's all about feeling disconnected and adrift.

**God, who lives in his holy palace, is a father to orphans, and he takes care of widows. God provides homes for those who are lonely. He frees people from prison and makes them happy.** (Psalm 68:5-6a ERV)

As we identify what's going on in us we can begin to sort out an appropriate solution. Are we reaching out to spend time with God and others? Are we hiding behind walls of self-protection or are we being real with others so connections can be made? When we are feeling worthless and lonely, what positive truths are we choosing to affirm? When we

seek Him, God promises to strengthen and comfort us with His unfailing love.

**Be strong and be brave. Don't be afraid of those people because the Lord your God is with you. He will not fail you or leave you. Even if my mother and father leave me, the Lord will take me in.** (Deuteronomy 31:6, Psalm 27:10 ERV)

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your unfailing love for me. When I feel disconnected, help me to affirm that I am Your child and You will never leave or forsake me. Help me to experience healthy relationships built on the foundation of Your Word. Amen*

## WILLING TO ACCEPT GOD AS HE IS

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, I repent of my sin and ask for the clean heart and the gift of your Holy Spirit that You promise me. I trust You to do in me more than I could ever ask for or imagine. I pray that Your will, not mine, be done. Help me to choose for Your way in every situation of life that I encounter. Amen*

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

## BROKEN PROMISES

A dollar bill is only as good as the government or bank that has promised to give value to the holder of the bill. The piece of paper itself is of little value but the issuer or backer of the bill is what makes it valuable. Even if a dollar bill is worn, dirty and crumpled, it still has the same value as that of a new note. Unfortunately some countries have had their currency devalued because of being unable to fulfill the promises written on their monetary bills. However, when it comes to God's promises as recorded in the Bible, we can rest assured that they have eternal value.

**Our value for all eternity is backed by God's promise that whoever believes in Jesus will have everlasting life.**

***I bow before your holy Temple as I worship. I praise your name for your unfailing love and faithfulness; for your promises are backed by all the honor of your name. (Psalm 138:2 NLT)***

In our self-obsessed lifestyle we devalued ourselves in many ways. We made promises to family members and friends which we never intended to keep. The promises we made to those to whom we really mattered were of no value, and we didn't care about the harm we caused them. We were captive to our addiction and our lives were unmanageable. Even in our confused state, God continued to pursue us with His love, and we responded.

***God, you're my last chance of the day. I spend the night on my knees before you. Put me on your salvation agenda; take notes on the trouble I'm in. (Psalm 88:1-2 MSG)***

In recovery, we have grieved over our broken promises. We desired to make amends to those we had harmed, and some people have been willing to accept and forgive us, while others have doubted that we were genuine.

God knows our hearts and our value is determined by who He says we are. Our value for all eternity is backed by God's promise that whoever believes in Jesus will have everlasting life. If we wholeheartedly give our will and life over to the care of God, that's a promise that will be fulfilled!

***Prayer: Gracious Father, I repent of the times I made promises without any intention of fulfillment. I ask Your forgiveness for all my rebellious ways and choose to give my will and life over to Your care. I am grateful for the value You see in me. Amen***

## OVERLY RESPONSIBLE

As we have moved forward in recovery we have come to realize that we are accountable for our actions, for the behaviour that has impacted our relationships, and for the problems we created while in bondage to our addiction. It has not been easy for us to identify and take responsibility for these things, but as we have done so, it has been liberating and life changing.

For some of us it's been a balancing act between taking responsibility for our part and being overly responsible for the actions of others that were beyond our control. While we may have had a part to play in making life difficult for others, their choices remain their responsibility. It is up to each person to identify their own issues and take any necessary action to resolve them. It is not our job to sort others out and fix their problems.

***The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. (Isaiah 58:11 NLT)***

It is important that we care for and support others, assisting them when help is truly needed. We do a disservice to others when we continually do things for them that, with instruction, they could do for themselves. By being overly responsible we get in God's way because God uses all the circumstances of a person's life to draw them to Himself.

***People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy. A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls. (Proverbs 28:13, 25:28 NLT)***

Boundaries help us live respectfully and safely in our relationships. When we define and maintain personal boundaries, they contribute to our peace. When we get a clearer picture of what it takes to live in healthy ways, God will be honoured by having first place in all our decision making and actions.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to identify and live within healthy boundaries. I want to be supportive of others but avoid causing harm by getting in the way of Your work in their lives. Please help me to be both caring and wise each day. Amen***

***We do a disservice to others when we continually do things for them that, with instruction, they could do for themselves.***

## ACCEPTING HARSHIP AS A WAY TO PEACE

When we pray the full version of the Serenity Prayer, what are we asking God to do for us? "... accepting hardship as a pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is not as I would have it, trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will..."

Many of us came into recovery because the hardships of life in addiction became more than we were able to cope with. Getting sober and cleaning up took care of some of the problems but other painful issues we had buried suddenly became front and center in our thoughts and emotions. Health and money problems, education and employment issues, and relationship breakdowns are all issues that are painful to deal with, especially by those of us who chose to bury the related events in the haze of our addictive dependency.

**God will give us all we need to face hardship, rather than run away from it.**

***But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. He [God] gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.*** (2 Thessalonians 3:3; Isaiah 40:29 NIV)

Jesus faced hardship in his life on earth. He was persecuted by the evil and sin that brought Him to earth to die on the cross. However, Jesus overcame death and rose to life again. Jesus' resurrection changes everything because we can now have the amazing power of God's Holy Spirit living in us, strengthening us to be overcomers as we courageously face painful challenges.

As we face the adversities of worry, irritation, stress or anger, together with the God who cares for us, we will find that He is faithful in all His ways to support and help us. God gives us all that we need to get through the hardships we encounter, and what a joy it is to experience the peace that awaits us on the other side.

***You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** (1 John 4:4, Philippians 4:6-7 NIV)

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, I'm through running. I put my trust in You to give me the strength I need to stand firm and face whatever comes my way. Amen***

## KNOWING GOD'S WILL

*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.*

***So don't be foolish with your lives, but learn what the Lord wants you to do.*** (Ephesians 5:17 ERV)

The founders of AA were clear that we needed to get to know both God's will and receive the power to carry it out. It's important that we admit we need help to do God's will. We need to ask for the gift of understanding and for God to do for us that which we cannot do for ourselves. God is more than willing to give us gifts, but we need to be humble and admit that we need to open our hearts and minds to receive what God has to offer.

***We keep asking God to fill you with the knowledge of what he wants. We pray he will give you the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives.*** (Colossians 1:9b NIRV)

We need to lay down our perspective of what we think is needed in any given situation in our day and be willing to see things from God's perspective. Our familiar way of thinking is flawed. It took us to dark and destructive places. We need what is new, even though that often means trying something different and unknown.

We can be encouraged and overcome our vulnerability as we hear the testimony of others and how doing things God's way made a positive difference in their lives. We prosper and grow in our own faith each time we choose to follow God's will as laid out in the Bible, and peace within us increases as we discover that God is true to all His promises.

***Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days.*** (Deuteronomy 5:33 NIV)

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to humble myself and let go of my own perspective of life. I desire to know Your will for my life and put it into practice in all my affairs. Please give me the gift of understanding and the will to do this. Amen***

***The founders of AA were clear that we needed to get to know both God's will and receive the power to carry it out.***



## CHARACTER STRENGTH – BEING THOROUGH

*Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path .... With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely. (How It Works, Big Book)*

One of the great indicators of success in maintaining sobriety is being thorough. Old timers in the program tell us that it was the things they failed to deal with that tripped them up. Things changed only when they were willing to come completely clean, became willing to have God remove all their defects of character, and made amends for all the trouble caused in their relationships. It didn't happen in a day but the willingness to get on with the job and stick with it until it was done – being thorough – has been key to their sobriety.

***When we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, forgiveness and cleansing of our sins is fully accomplished.***

***Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them. (Psalm 119:140 NIV)***

God sets the pattern for us by being thorough in what He has done. He gave us His written word of truth in the Bible, and He gave us Jesus, the living truth. When we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, forgiveness and cleansing of our sins is fully accomplished.

***He gave himself for us. By doing that, he set us free from all evil. He wanted to make us pure. He wanted us to be his very own people. He wanted us to desire to do what is good. (Titus 2:14 NIRV)***

Walking the path of life with God in recovery is clearly laid out for us in God's word, so we are "thoroughly equipped" to be people of integrity and good work.

***All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV)***

What dark corner of our soul needs the light of God's truth today? What needs sorting out so we can be thorough in making things right in all our affairs?

*Prayer: Gracious Father, I want to be thorough in everything I do. Help me to let go of my old ideas and fix my eyes on Your Word and be intentional on following You in all my ways. Amen*

## COPING STRATEGIES

When we turned our will and life over to the care of God, we started a life journey of living sober. We are not alone on this journey for God is always with us. However, we need to prepare ourselves for the battle that is to come. We are naive if we think the one who Jesus said wants to steal, kill and destroy us will just retreat and forget about us. The truth is Satan will do everything within his power to bring us back into bondage.

***God sent Christ to be our sacrifice. Christ offered his life's blood, so that by faith in him we could come to God. We are people of flesh and blood. That is why Jesus became one of us. He died to destroy the devil, who had power over death. (Romans 3:25a; Hebrews 2:14 CEV)***

No army would go into battle without a strategy against the enemy. Similarly, we need to prepare a strategy for battle against our adversary. By His death, Jesus redeemed us from the power of sin. By His resurrection, Jesus was victorious over him who had the power over evil and death. This is the truth we are to stand on when the enemy attempts to drag us back into bondage. Satan's strategy is always to twist the word of God and have us doubt its truth. We will have victory if we are willing to arm ourselves, as Jesus did, with the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

***Put on the helmet of salvation. And take the sword of the Holy Spirit. The sword is God's word. (Ephesians 6:17 NIRV)***

Satan makes our addiction appealing and we need to prepare for that. The battle for our souls is in our minds and the helmet of salvation protects our minds. When temptation comes, we need to call out to the Lord for help and then decisively stand firm on His word that Jesus has set us free from every dependency that would seek to keep us in bondage.

***Lord, there isn't anyone like you. You help the weak against the strong. Lord our God, help us. We trust in you. (2 Chronicles 14:11b NIRV)***

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, When temptation comes, help me to stand firm on the truth of Your word and continue to do the next right thing. Amen*

***When temptation comes, we need to call out to the Lord for help and then decisively stand firm on His word.***

## THANKSGIVING DAY

Being grateful for the things we have and for the people around us, contributes to a contented life in recovery. Acknowledging small blessings reduces stress and increases joy. No one has a perfect life with everything they want, but all of us have much to be grateful for. Thanksgiving is a great time to step back and notice the things that are truly important.

***Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*** (1 Thessalonians 5:18 NLT)

***Being grateful for the things we have and for the people around us, contributes to a contented life in recovery.***

This Thanksgiving holiday celebration may be stressful for some of us because our relationship with family and loved ones remains challenging. However, we can still give thanks for our friends that are around us in recovery and know that with God's help things will get better. Perhaps there is someone in our family that we could contact and let know that we are thankful for the family's patience with us as we struggled to do life. We can also pray and look forward with hope that family relationships will be restored.

***May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*** (Romans 15:13 NIV)

As we daily turn our will and life over to God's care, His unfailing love and forgiveness will encourage and strengthen us for the journey ahead. The road to recovery is one of experiencing the relentless love of God for us and being thankful that He lifted us out of the pit of sin and brought us into the light of His presence. We will set ourselves up for darkness, and confusion, and eventually relapse, if we abandon the practice of humbly thanking God for all He has done for us.

***Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.*** (1 Chronicles 16:34, NIV; Romans 1:21 NLT)

***Prayer: Gracious God, Thank You for the opportunities that lie ahead as I surrender my will and life to Your care. Thank You also for my life, for hope, for family, and for friends. Amen***

## PRIDE

Our pride often keeps us from asking for what we need. We may have grown up in a family where we were consistently ignored or disappointed. Perhaps our needs were seldom met. Some of us reacted by becoming self-sufficient and determined that we would never ask anyone for help. Jesus, who knows we will not succeed on our own, tells us to not just ask, but to keep on asking for help. Only the work of God's Holy Spirit in us will enable us to become healthy people.

***Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*** (Luke 11:9-10 NIV)

Pride born out of hurt shows up when we refuse to acknowledge our need for help. Sooner or later the independent road we are choosing will take us back to active addiction. Are we willing to humbly admit that there is another way – a better way – to deal with the brokenness inside us? This way begins with giving our will and life over to the care of God.

***Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. Pride leads to conflict; those who take advice are wise. Human pride will be humbled, and human arrogance will be brought down. Only the Lord will be exalted on that day of judgment.*** (Proverbs 11:2, 13:10, Isaiah 2:17 NLT)

The challenge for us is the giving up of our prideful effort to be self-sufficient. We really don't know what is best for us. God alone has the solution to living life to the full. These principles are recorded in the Bible. We must be persistent and ask repeatedly for help until all the tangled mess of our problems gets sorted out. God's promise to us is that everyone who turns from their independent ways and seeks healing and freedom will find it through believing in Jesus' finished work on the cross.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, Forgive me for being prideful and for thinking I could live a joyful life in recovery without You, and without those who counsel and mentor me. Thank You for pursuing me with Your unfailing love. I surrender my will and life to You and choose to follow Your direction in all my affairs. Please help me! Amen***

***Only the work of God's Holy Spirit in us will enable us to become healthy people.***

## CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

None of us like criticism but all of us should take time to hear what is being said and deal with it.

***Better to be criticized by a wise person than to be praised by a fool.***  
(Ecclesiastes 7:5 NLT)

We are not referring to the negative talk that doesn't seek to understand where we are coming from or what we are trying to do. The kind of criticism we do need is what comes from an honest caring person who points out where our character defects are coming into play, or someone who recognizes that we don't know all there is to know in a situation and, with that in mind, helps us see that we need to make a change. This kind of honest feedback that has a healthy goal is something we can benefit from rather than something we need to run from.

***None of us like criticism but all of us should take time to hear what is being said and deal with it.***

***If you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise. If you reject discipline, you only harm yourself; but if you listen to correction, you grow in understanding. Fear of the Lord teaches wisdom; humility precedes honor.*** (Proverbs 15:31-33 NLT)

Too often we hear helpful input as an attack on our character and our identity. God wants to help us grow in appreciation of the wonderful person He created us to be, with a unique set of strengths and weaknesses. He also wants us to learn and grow and develop skills and not just settle for what we can do today. Constructive criticism points out the good as well as what needs to be changed.

If we trust someone and they bring criticism in a kind way, we may be able to accept it, but the struggle comes when someone criticizes us harshly. It's hard then not to reject everything they said and react in anger. God's way for us is to grow in grace and learn even from mixed input. Honest feedback is necessary for this to take place. We will learn to keep the fish and throw away the bones.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to grow in grace and knowledge and become all you created me to be. Help me to welcome the input of wise and caring people in my life and learn from constructive criticism. Continue to heal me from the wounds that make it difficult for me to separate my self-worth from my need to grow and change. Amen***

## SETTING THE RIGHT GOALS

Many who struggle with addictive behaviours are not happy because their lives are unfulfilled, and they are failing in what they truly want from life. Happiness and satisfaction are measures of reasonable success in the goals and plans a person is working towards.

Living effectively with goals requires planning and effort and being accountable for how one is progressing toward their plan. Some goals include short-term activities, like what we will accomplish today or this week or in a few months. Others are long-term, so require planning for several years to achieve the intended goal. These are all important components of a satisfying and successful life. However, our plans must include working towards character goals which are God's principles for successful living, not just for today but for life.

***Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.*** (2 Peter 1:5-7 NIV)

What would character development look like in my life if I applied common "goal setting strategies" and identified a few things that are important to me, and that I am willing to work on? What would be required in the short term to work towards these goals? Am I willing to get specific about the steps to be taken and the time frame required to accomplish them? Am I willing to note my progress and see any stumble in the light of the overall progress I am making?

***I cry out to God Most High, to God who will fulfill his purpose for me.*** (Psalm 57:2 NLT)

The first task is to agree with God's plan for character development. Character goals include: - goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. Focusing on God's plan will lead to ultimate success, success as defined in God's Word. We are promised that as these qualities are exhibited in our life, we will be useful and fruitful and will not easily stumble. Sounds like a great relapse prevention plan!

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to give You the opportunity to grow my character. Please show me the goals I should set that will enable me to fulfill Your plan for my life. Amen***

***Focusing on God's plan will lead to ultimate success, success as defined in God's Word.***

Common sense and wisdom are learned in many ways. We are encouraged to pursue habits that draw wisdom into our daily living and interactions with others.

***Wise people always think before they do anything, but fools show how stupid they are by what they do. If you refuse to learn from your mistakes, you will be poor, and no one will respect you. If you listen when you are criticized, you will be honored. Be friends with those who are wise, and you will become wise. Choose fools to be your friends, and you will have trouble.*** (Proverbs 13:16, 18, 20 ERV)

Think before you speak or act. Most of us have heard that advice from the time we were small. When we feel pressured, it is easy to neglect it, but it remains a wise practice to develop.

***Common sense and wisdom are learned in many ways.***

We all make mistakes but are we willing to learn from those mistakes? Shame and embarrassment keep some of us from being able to admit and confront our mistakes. John Newton said, "We serve a gracious Master who knows how to overrule even our mistakes to His glory and our own advantage." The sooner we realize that we are all learning and growing and some of our most important lessons are attached to our greatest failures, the sooner we will humbly accept that God is working for good in all things – including our mistakes.

***So turn away from your sins. Turn to God. Then your sins will be wiped away. The time will come when the Lord will make everything new.*** (Acts 3:19 NIRV)

Criticism is hard to swallow but we are told that we will become wise if we listen and learn when we are criticized. We are within our right to check with a trusted sponsor or guide to sort out what is real and what might be someone else's baggage. However, we can all learn from another's perspective on our actions.

Our choice of companions and the people we listen to for wisdom and guidance are also important. We are told to love everyone and to serve others, but we are advised to wisely select our friends, those with whom we share our heart.

Applying one simple practice at a time will enable us to walk in wisdom.

***Prayer: Loving God, I want to be wise, and I know I have much to learn. Please help me to put into practice the lessons You are teaching me each day. Amen***

## AFFIRMED AND ACCOMPANIED BY A LOVING GOD

After years of listening to another's harsh and condemning words about us, it's wonderful to have an opportunity to experience the affirmation of God and to be reminded that as we walk with Him, He is well pleased with us.

***God, have mercy on us and bless us. May you be pleased with us. Then your ways will be known on earth. All nations will see that you have the power to save. God, may the nations praise you. May all the people on earth praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy. You rule the people of the earth fairly. You guide the nations of the earth.*** (Psalm 67:1-4 NIRV)

These verses remind us that it was God who, in his mercy, reached out and rescued us. He didn't just set us on a path and expect us to find our own way but, with great joy, He accompanies us. In an amazing turnaround of events, God now gets praise from others through the witness of our life with Him in recovery.

We invited Jesus into our lives to forgive and save us. By the power of God's Spirit, we are now being transformed into His likeness. Others notice, and perhaps some ask about what happened that caused us to change. As we share our experience, strength, and hope with them, they will come to realize that it was God's power that made the difference in our lives.

Recovery does not bring about a perfect world but, as we navigate relationships with others and walk with God, minus hiding behind substances, God will show us what is right and what is wrong. Seeking recovery with others can be messy. Life itself is sometimes messy. But together with God, who guides and governs individuals and whole groups of people fairly and with justice, we can take the necessary steps that will help us all live together in peace.

***Prayer: Heavenly Father, It really is a pleasure to walk in the acceptance and affirmation of Your love. You have called me to belong to You and through Jesus, made that possible for me. At times, when it is a challenge to endure others, help me to take a moment and reach out to You for guidance and then do as You say. Help me to see myself as Your beloved child and know that You are well pleased with me. Amen***

***God now gets praise from others through the witness of our life with Him in recovery.***