

## I Can't Do It Alone

**Step One:** We ADMITTED that we were powerless over our dependencies, that our lives had become unmanageable.

It is natural to want to be in control of our life and our circumstances. We don't want pain and sadness from our past to overwhelm us. We want to be prepared for events in the future so we are not surprised in a harmful way. We want to feel good, be happy, and live free at all times. However, there comes a time in many of our lives when we realize that this is just not possible. We find ourselves with no way out but to admit defeat.

It can be a moment of self-pity or it can be an opportunity for finally beginning to live as we were created to live—in relationship with God our Saviour. We can give in to despair or surrender to loving control and new direction from the God who cares for us more than we care for ourselves. We need help from someone outside of ourselves and the only way to get it is to call out to God.

*Have compassion on me, Lord, for I am weak. Heal me, Lord, for my body is in agony. I am sick at heart ... Return, O Lord, and rescue me. Save me because of your unfailing love ... I am worn out from sobbing. Every night tears drench my bed; my pillow is wet from weeping.* (From Psalm 6 NIV)

For a time, in our addiction, we may have felt successful. Partying made us feel good. A relationship made us feel loved. A chemical gave us an unbelievable rush. A couple of drinks helped us relax and feel like we were somebody. A pocketful of stolen money paid for what we desperately wanted. Another pizza and a pop tasted so good. Playing games, surfing the net, or watching the TV took our mind off worries and frustrations. However, before long these habits brought their own set of troubles and worries and hardships. Instead of life getting better, it was spinning out of control. Instead of relationships growing closer they fell apart. Instead of getting closer to the good life, we realized we were further and further away from anything that even hinted at goodness.

Solomon, known as one of the wisest men who ever lived, accomplished much in life. But even he had to come to a point of realizing his limits and his inability to do anything to bring meaning and purpose to his existence.

*I said to myself, "Come now, let's give pleasure a try. Let's look for the 'good things' in life." But I found that this, too, was meaningless. "It is silly to be laughing all the time," I said. "What good does it do to seek only pleasure?" After much thought, I decided to cheer myself with wine ... I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards ... I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both*

*men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire! But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless. It was like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.* (From Ecclesiastes 2)

For all of us there comes a moment when we can no longer avoid the horrible realization that things are just a mess. When we come to these moments of brokenness and helplessness and finally admit that all is not well, we have a choice to make. We can try even harder to avoid the pain and hopelessness or we can step out into freedom. How? We must admit that these habits are harming us rather than helping us. They are not solving problems but creating many more. We must admit defeat, admit we can't do things on our own, admit we need help. **For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.** (Romans 3:23 NLT)

The good news is that our helpless condition is not a surprise to God. He knows that we fall short when we try to do things on our own and He stands ready to help us chart a new course and find a new life. When we clear the lie out of the way that addictive behaviours are helping us, God is able to show us that there are two powers active in our world, seeking to influence us: the devil who is seeking to bring us to harm and God is seeking to bring us to life. **Jesus said, "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness."** (From John 10). We are not left dangling helplessly between the two but we have been given power to choose whose power to embrace as the controlling influence for us - destructive evil compulsions or God's loving power and control. There is no neutral ground. We have a choice to make. We are powerless on our own.

God, in His love, names an option for us that is powerful, available and totally effective in leading us forward. God is longing for us to know the good life that He has created us to live. The first step to finding that life is admitting the emptiness and meaninglessness inside. Are we done trying to figure things out on our own? Are we finished trying to cover up our pain with short term activities? Are we willing today to look in a new direction and let God show us something different and embrace it with everything we have?

**For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me in earnest, you will find me when you seek me. I will be found by you," says the LORD. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes."** (From Jeremiah 29 NIV)

### Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What's not working in my life? In what ways has my life been a disaster?
2. What behaviours have I used to compensate for or cover up my uncomfortable feelings? What kinds of activities and behaviours have I assumed would give me the pleasure and satisfaction I crave?
3. What positive action can I take today to acknowledge my powerlessness?
4. What does it mean to me today to say before God, "I can't do it alone"?