

Life With God In Recovery

Getting Started



*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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Book 1

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

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Partners in Hope LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY MEETING

THE WELCOME: We are a Christian 12-Step Recovery Group. We practice the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and welcome individuals seeking healing and recovery from a variety of destructive and addictive lifestyles. The only requirement for membership is a desire to love and be loved regardless of one's current condition in life.

We choose to affirm God, the Creator, as our higher power. We believe He has revealed Himself to us through His Son Jesus Christ, who said, **"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. I am the way, the truth, and the life."**

We share through stories, discussion, singing and prayer, the experience, strength and hope we have found in relationship with God and with each other. We seek to gain strength from one another in order to carry this message of hope to others who suffer. We gratefully acknowledge God's presence and pray for His guidance and direction in all we do and say.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and
Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

SOME AREAS OF ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCY

<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>

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.

12 STEPS AND BIBLE PRINCIPLES

<p>1. We admitted that we were powerless over our dependencies -- that our life had become unmanageable.</p>	<p>1. I know nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. (Romans 7:18)</p>
<p>2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.</p>	<p>2. For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. (Philippians 2:13)</p>
<p>3. We made a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God as we understood Him.</p>	<p>3. Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God -- which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)</p>
<p>4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.</p>	<p>4. Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord. (Lamentations 3:40)</p>
<p>5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.</p>	<p>5. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:16)</p>
<p>6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.</p>	<p>6. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)</p>
<p>7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.</p>	<p>7. 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)</p>

8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.

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

8. Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Luke 6:31)

9. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother. Then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)

10. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. (1 Corinthians 10:12)

11. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. (Colossians 3:16a)

12. Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)

LIFE AFFIRMATIONS:

1. *I am loved by God, always. I am loved without condition.*
2. *My life is of great beauty and infinite value. God has a plan for my life that is meaningful, purposeful and joyful. There is a work for me to do today that will bless others and give me deep satisfaction.*
3. *God is always with me. I need never face my problems alone. Together with God, any difficulty can be worked out and overcome.*

SERENITY PRAYER:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time; 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; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

GETTING STARTED COMING INTO RECOVERY



ADDICTION AND THE WHOLE PERSON

Some Core Beliefs Underlying Addiction:

- No one really knows me or cares about me.
- I'm not safe.
- I don't have what I need.
- I'm no good.
- I can't be forgiven.
- There's no hope.
- No one understands me.
- My needs are never met when I depend on another.
- I need "this" to feel good and I deserve to feel good.

Addiction affects the whole person – physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and socially. To actually live well in recovery, we have to examine our whole person, not just the substance we used in active addiction. We need to discover the root of the underlying pain we are trying to cover and the default reactions which come out when thoughts and feelings are challenged. What false beliefs do we still carry about who we are and what we need when we are faced with frustration and pain?

In recovery, as we come to know the living God, the true power greater than ourselves, we find strength to change our deep-seated thought patterns and feelings. God brings us into a safe, nurturing relationship with Himself and with

others. In the depths of our being we long to be the person God created us to be but becoming that person seems almost impossible. On our own we just don't know who that person is or how to make the necessary changes. The good news is that with God all things are possible.

The tools of our trade aren't for marketing or manipulation, but they are for demolishing that entire massively corrupt culture. We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:4-5 MSG)

Addictions and dependencies are not specific to alcohol and street drugs. We often switch to new expressions of our addictive personality when we leave one set of behaviours behind. To really break free and finally experience life, we need to come to God and let Him heal us in the deepest areas of our being, areas where we've been wounded, where we carry shame, where we are afraid to trust. Only in the presence of God's unconditional love and dependable help can we begin to take steps to face real problems. God has been drawing us close and as we respond to Him this is His promise to us:

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“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 wholeheartedly, you will find Me.”
 (Jeremiah 29:11-13 NLT)

From the beginning of time God knew that we could not fix ourselves. Life is a gift from God. Healing is a gift from God. Our commitment to the work of God in our lives is to believe on Jesus, the one God sent into the world to give us new life. Our response to Him should be “Jesus, whatever, whenever, wherever, and however You want to change me, my answer is YES”. Do we dare believe that God can give us this new quality of life to experience and enjoy and sustain it in us?

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10 NIV)

God knows each one of us and created us to live at a specific time, in a specific place, and for a specific purpose. We were destined for a better life than we have previously experienced. Jesus said: ***“I have come that they may have life and that they may have it to the full.”*** (John 10:10 NIV)

It is God’s desire that we turn away from the existing chaos of our lives and enter into the life He planned for us. In each area of life, physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social, God will meet our needs. His plan is individually shaped for each of us. This is His promise: ***“God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.”*** (2 Corinthians 9:8 NLT) To have new life we have to leave behind our way of meeting our needs and allow God to show us His.

If our desire is to end the cycle of addiction and enter into a new life of freedom and hope, we will: **1)** rebuild our system of beliefs; **2)** allow God to counsel and instruct us through His word in the Bible; **3)** humble ourselves and pay attention to the direction of the Holy Spirit as He guides us into the knowledge of all truth; **4)** pay attention to those around us who offer support; **5)** believe the truth of God’s word no matter what our unreliable feelings tell us; **6)** enter into a life of dependence and trust in the God who created us, who loves us, and who breathes life into us each day so we can do the good works He has prepared in advance for us to do.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV)

The question we need to truthfully answer is, “Do I desire to be a whole person with life in every area of my being or do I want the source of my addiction to control my life and being?”

Questions for Reflection and Group Discussion

1. What harmful core beliefs keep me cycling through one addictive behaviour after another?
2. What have I learned about God that will help me surrender to His plan and purpose for my life?
3. What practical strategies and plans do I need to put in place so my default becomes reliance of God rather than returning to my addiction?
1. In each of the 4 areas of addiction and dependency, (Page 9) where do I see evidence of my brokenness?
2. What “Core Beliefs” (Page 8) are my first thoughts when I am faced with fear, frustration, or pain?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 – In my own words, what does God say needs changing in my thinking?
4. What’s my response to the statement that God’s love is unconditional and his help is dependable?
5. Read Ephesians 2:8-10 – If life and healing are a gift, what is my part in getting well?
6. What particular way of meeting my own needs do I need to stop so God can show me His new ways?
7. There are 6 suggested action points given (Page 10) in the process of ending the cycle of addiction. Where am I at with each of these 6 actions?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, Thank You for pursuing us with Your love when we were completely helpless. Help us to come to know You and to trust Your wisdom and guidance in every area of our lives. Help us to let go of those things that bind us to the past and help us to forgive others as we have been forgiven by You. We are forever grateful that You sent Jesus into the world to pay the price of all sin and wrong doing. Where we have doubt, help us to believe in Your mighty power to restore us to sanity. Strengthen us in body, mind and spirit. We are forever grateful that You care for us. AMEN

OVERCOMING A VICTIM MENTALITY

In our society, and particularly in the world of addiction and recovery, a victim mentality is quite widespread. A victim mentality is devastating to relationships, and relationship with others is key to recovery. Each person is created by God with a need for intimacy, both with Him and with others. People with a victim mentality struggle with emotional intimacy in relationships and they often have no idea why. What’s going on? A person with a victim mentality continually sabotages life and relationships by their way of thinking and believing.

What is the root of that mindset? ...***whatever is in your heart determines what you say.*** (Matt. 12:34b NLT)

A victim is a person who has been abused or hurt or oppressed and, was without power to change their circumstances. As a result of one incident, or a pattern of incidents, that person now believes these experiences left them so marred that they no longer are able to take responsibility for their life. They blame others for what they are experiencing in life today. They develop a way of thinking and interpreting life that comes from unresolved offences, grief, and bitterness. Even though physically, the abuse is no longer happening, in their minds they live as though it is.

God says, ***I have swept away your sins like a cloud. I have scattered your offenses like the morning mist. Oh, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free.*** (Isaiah 44:22 NLT)

Instead of embracing the solutions God is offering, victims remain obsessed with the pain and injustice of the past. Some isolate and live behind high walls. They complain and blame. Others live with frustration and are prone to get angry. Some bury their feelings, opinions and desires and just do what they are told, believing they are powerless. They expect others to rescue them and be responsible for their life today. They believe that others “make them” live as powerless victims in their current circumstances and their life can only improve if someone else can fix what is wrong.

How does a person with a victim mentality break free? We have to ask God to help us let go of the insanity that comes from our past and fill our hearts and minds with truth.

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep." No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. (Romans 8:35-37 NLT)

These verses name a number of difficult, challenging, and very painful situations. While our experience of pain might not be specifically mentioned here, the intent of the writer is to tell us that whatever injustice and trouble we have suffered, God's word applies in our situation. As amazing as it sounds, God promises us that we will not just survive and cope with what life has handed us, but that we will live with overwhelming victory. We CAN have this full and satisfying life he has planned for us. Our future success has not been stolen by the abusive person in our past. God offers you and me abundant life today and Jesus has made a way for us to have that life. No one and no circumstance can rob us of that life. Our lives and well-being come from God, not another person.

Jesus suffered and died on the cross to take away our sin and enable us to have life with God forever – a life that is full and satisfying. Jesus dealt with all sin and injustice on the cross. Jesus assumed all the evil and victimization of sin and injustice so you and I could go free. Jesus became a victim so we no longer have to live as one. His death in our place covers sins done by us and injustices done to us.

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6 NIV)

What Jesus has done for us is good news. However, it is very challenging for a person who has spent years living with a victim mentality to move into the experience of being an overcomer. Why? We've become familiar with a lifestyle of not taking the initiative for ourselves and wanting someone else to "do it for us." Under our conscious fear of rejection is often an unconscious layer of anger, not just against the abuser, but also against those who "should have" protected us and did not. In these circumstances, it seems impossible to us that we could face our fears and take responsibility for our actions while living in the overcoming love of God. And yet, God's way is, that we live in love and not in fear. God asks us today, "Do you want to get well?"

Implicit in this question are two promises:

1) I know all about your trouble but my love in you can overcome it. ***In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*** (John 16:33 NIV).

2) If you will trust me with your life, I can make something good out of everything that has happened: ***And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*** (Romans 8:28 NLT)

What's my part in overcoming a victim mentality?

1) I need to make a decision that, with God's help, I can and will face my pattern of victim mentality and behaving.

2) Held safe in God's powerful protection I will take responsibility for dealing with the root issues and for the process of change.

3) I will quit blaming others for not protecting me or meeting my needs.

4) I will trust God to heal me and allow Him to deal with those who caused me harm.

5) I will work with God to resolve my grief, anger, resentment, and roots of bitterness.

6) I will renew my mind and describe myself as God sees me: I am an overcomer, not a victim.

7) I will do everything I can today to build healthy relationships, set healthy boundaries, and trust God to make me adequate for every task.

Questions for Reflection and Group Discussion

1. Where do I recognize the victim mentality in me?
2. How is God's unfailing love changing me from being a victim to an overcomer?
3. In what areas do I still need help to surrender to God's truth?
4. Page 12 lists a number of expressions of victim mentality. Make a personal list and offer that list to God, expressing your willingness to find freedom and healing from this bondage.
5. Romans 8:35-37 challenges the victim mentality. How?
6. What does Jesus' death on the cross have to do with the injustices I've experienced and their impact on my life?
7. For each area of victim mentality I've listed in part 1, how do I apply the promises given in John 16:33 and Romans 8:28?
8. Seven suggestions for action in letting go of a victim mentality are given (Page 14). On a scale of 1-10 (not doing anything <-> doing well), rate yourself in each area.
9. What next step can I take today to make progress in letting go of a victim mentality?

PRAYER: Loving God, Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your word. I ask forgiveness for the times I have rejected Your word in favour of my own self-pity. Help me to reject my stinking thinking and acknowledge that Your word is truth. Please comfort me as I seek to overcome my victim mentality by the renewing of my mind. Tonight I surrender to the truth of Your word. I ask that You work everything together for my good and Your glory. Thank You for Your unfailing love and care for me. AMEN

AM I WILLING TO LIVE IN GOD'S LOVE?

When we come to Christian recovery gatherings we often hear of the unconditional love that God has for each of us. Are we actually willing to live in God's unconditional love or are we still seeking a life that will ultimately bring pain and shame? God's invites us to a recovered life of peace and love and joy.

Many of us have questioned God regarding the purpose of our existence and the reason why things have happened to us as they have. Jesus spoke to another questioner one night about God's great plan for us, and how that plan actually works. Jesus said, ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."*** (John 3:16-17 NKJV)

God created us for a life with Him that is full and good -- an abundant life. So what happened and why have we not experienced that? Love is only true love when it is freely chosen and not compelled. God gave us the freedom to choose. God offered us a loving relationship with Him that is anchored in our trust in His care but we have chosen to make our own way. God, who knows everything, has invited us to live within His infinite knowledge of how life works. However, in our fear of the unknown, we choose to navigate each day in our own limited knowledge. The foundation of trouble and addiction in our lives is our failure to trust our life choices to the direction of this all-wise, all-loving God. We always bring pain and disaster into our lives when we attempt to live life on our own terms. We just don't know enough to make safe plans for ourselves.

God knew the knowledge of good and evil, that was awakened in humans by their disobedience, would bring shame, fear, pain, suffering, broken bodies and broken hearts. God cared so much about that suffering that He sent His Beloved Son to die for the destructive sins of every human being. His desire is that we live free from sinful rebellion and instead experience love, joy, and peace both in this world and in the world to come.

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV)

What hinders us experiencing this loving relationship with God? Most often it is our unwillingness to rebuild our system of beliefs based on God's word as recorded in the Bible. We continue to believe that no one cares for us as much as we deserve. We believe we have to manage our own care if we are to have a good life.

We may talk about God's unconditional love for us but until we actually believe Him and do what His word says, we are only relating facts about Him – facts we don't completely believe. We will never experience a life-changing relationship with God until we change our beliefs and our behaviour to reflect the principles of His word. ***But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them his way.*** (James 1:22; Psalm 25:9 NLT)

When we first came into recovery we tended to focus primarily on our past behaviour. For years we tried to cover our pain with addictive substances or destructive behaviour because that was what seemed good at the time. We suffered injustice and so we felt we deserved comfort and went after comfort in whatever convenient ways we found it. We didn't question the impact our choices might have had on others. We did what we felt we had to do to survive and have a little happiness. Sadly, despite some momentary pleasure, we fell deeper and deeper into sin and heartache. Outside of God's love and wisdom, there is no good way of life. As we progress in our recovery, God invites us to shift our focus from behaviours to the real heart of the addiction issue – our need to know Him and live in His loving care for us.

God wants us to live such a satisfying life that we can honestly report to others, "My life is good, pleasing, and perfect." Most of us would say today, "Sign me up for that life." Or would we?

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2 NIV)

We know we have problems. We know we need to find a better way. The issue remains, do we want God's good, perfect, and pleasing way or our own way?

What is God's way? ***Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*** (Hebrews 13:5-6 NKJV)

God's way is simple. We choose to believe He is good and has our best interests at heart. Regardless of what we may feel, we choose to follow His direction. We become willing, with God's help, to change the way we think and respond to life today. When our thinking and God's word clash, we repent, lay down our own thoughts, and choose for God's way. Every day, in every circumstance we match our behaviour with God's principles. Here's how this is described in the Bible: ***We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.*** (2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NLT)

Without God's help we will never be able to sort out our own path and get it right. Are we willing to acknowledge this as the guiding principle of all of our decisions and behaviour today? Are we willing to surrender to God, obey His Word and receive His forgiveness? If we are willing, this will be the beginning of a new life in love today.

Questions For Reflection and Group Discussion

1. What's the real root of my destructive addictive lifestyle?
2. What steps am I taking to bring my thinking, believing, and behaving into obedience to God's word?
3. What do I need to do today to become willing to live in God's love?
1. What is God's loving plan for my life as described in John 3:16-17?
2. What hinders me from experiencing this abundant life? (Name my part only – not the behaviour of others)
3. How do I see that my knowledge is limited about what the good life is and how a person lives it? (see page 16)
4. In what ways do I think and act as though God's love is NOT unconditional? (see beliefs and behaviours on page 17)
5. Read Romans 12:1-2. What would I need to do, based on these verses, to find a life that is good, pleasing, and perfect?
6. Page 18 lists some behaviour choices that demonstrate our willingness to trust in God's way. What one step can I take this week to grow in this area?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, Thank you for your unconditional love for me. I ask for your help in removing every stronghold of human reasoning and every false argument that produces rebellious thoughts in me. I want to cast off everything that hinders me from having an intimate relationship with you. Help me to know your good, pleasing and perfect will for my life, and help me to walk in it. Thank you that you never leave me nor forsake me. I am forever grateful. AMEN

DENIAL

For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. (Romans 7:18-20 NIV)

The first step towards recovery is in recognizing and admitting that we have a dependency on a substance and/or a person. Denial of that fact is the first obstacle we must overcome. When we are in denial, we truly believe that we do not have a problem with dependency, and we don't need help. Others may have identified the behaviour associated with our dependency but we continue to deny that the problem even exists.

The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives. (Jeremiah 17:9-10 NLT)

Denial keeps us in slavery because we are lying to ourselves. We also lie to others in an attempt to cover up even though our addictive behaviour is glaringly evident. As we become slaves to our addiction, we lose the right to choose any other way of life. It is only when we break the cycle of denial, when we become brutally honest with ourselves about our bondage, that there is any chance for real freedom.

Denial comes in many forms. How can we identify denial in ourselves or in someone we love?

1. Avoidance: We either withdraw from others to avoid talking about addiction or we try to manipulate the conversation to talk about "anything but my real problems."

2. Arguing: Addicts easily get into arguments about their addictive behaviour and somehow think that strenuously denying it will take the problem away.

3. Complete Denial: Addicts refuse to admit they have a problem. They believe others have misinterpreted their situation.

4. Minimizing: The addict will minimize how much or how often they use their substance of choice or how bad the problem actually is. They are unable to see that using is destroying their relationships, ability to work, and other aspects of their lives. They may admit they have a problem and even attempt change by their own efforts, but, they cannot admit they really do need help.

5. Rationalizing: Addicts make excuses for their behaviour hoping that their reasons will be enough for them to avoid taking any action. "I can do what I want because I'm not hurting anyone except myself."

6. Blaming: Addicts try to shift responsibility for their own behaviour to the behaviour of others.

7. Comparing: Addicts attempt to show that because someone else's problem is greater than their own they don't have a serious problem

8. Bargaining: Addicts often make deals with themselves or others, "I'll just have one. I'll stop tomorrow. I just need a bit to get through today."

9. Manipulating: Addicts pretend to take positive steps, hoping others will leave them alone. Addicts may admit they have a problem but do nothing, expecting others to solve their problem.

When we come to new life in Christ we seek after truth in all our affairs. We desire to know what is real and good and to identify what is harmful so it loses the power to negatively impact us.

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24 NIV)

We become aware that only God can show us the way to new life and where harm can be avoided. Recovery that confronts denial invites God to show us where our thinking and perceiving have become twisted and where our ways and God's ways are different. God's power and wisdom

will help us make changes according to what God shows us. ***Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.*** (Matthew 11:28 NLT)

While in recovery we learn to accept responsibility for our actions. We come to realize that our actions yield consequences. Some of us may have deceived ourselves into thinking we could escape the consequences of the things we did. But with time, we have become aware that God has made accountability a necessary element of healthy human living.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7-8 NIV)

The good news is that God will help us face what we need to deal with. God will show us a way forward for ourselves and also with those we may have harmed. God wants us to live in self-worth before Him and others. We fear the humiliation and pain of naming the truth but with God's forgiveness there is great joy and deep peace in finally acknowledging truth, even when it reveals our shameful and broken past. Truth leads to freedom. Deceit and denial lead to bondage and death. God encourages us to fearlessly admit truth today. Let's live in the life and freedom God offers by doing life in God's way today.

Questions for Reflection and Group Discussion

1. In what ways am I vulnerable to denial?
2. How does God's loving presence in my life help me overcome denial and walk in life-giving truth?
3. Where am I in need of God's help today to turn from denial to embracing truth and responsible living?
 1. How did others try to help me face reality? What denial techniques did I use to maintain the lie that I didn't have a problem?
 2. For each of the 9 areas of denial (Pages 20-21), list personal examples both from the past and from current living.
 3. How do I allow God to search me and name any thoughts, motives, or behaviour that are offensive to Him? What do I do with what God reveals?
 4. Where do I notice good results coming from living in truth rather than denial?
 5. What lingering problems with denial do I still struggle with?
 6. What will I do this week to root out denial so I can experience the joyful life God promises?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I know from experience that my heart deceives me. Forgive me for the ways I've sought to escape responsibility for my actions through various forms of denial. Tonight I invite You to show me the truth about the impact of my actions and behaviour. I ask you to fill me with strength and courage to acknowledge and deal with what You reveal to me. I come to You weary of my burdens and desiring a new life of healing and hope that You promise will come when I live in truth. Thank You for Your unfailing love and care for me. AMEN

SEEKING GOOD COUNSELORS

Why are we strongly encouraged to quickly find a sponsor and listen to the advice of people who have been in the program for a while? It's not a new concept introduced by Alcoholics Anonymous. For thousands of years the wisdom of God, as recorded in the Bible, has been reminding us that we need wise counsel if we are to succeed in recovery, and in all of life. ***I'm absorbed in pondering your wise counsel. Yes, your sayings on life are what give me delight; I listen to them as to good neighbors! (Psalm 119:24 MSG)***

Jesus knew his disciples would experience deep grief as they observed His suffering and death on the cross. He was concerned for them, and is equally concerned for us when we go through grief and severe trials. When Jesus' time had come He gathered His disciples around Him and spoke with them about the future. He asked them to show their love for Him by doing those things He had taught them. He also said that He would ask His Father to give them a wise counselor who would be with them forever. Jesus wanted them to be cared for as His friends and not as people who were left without someone to counsel and guide them. He told them, ***"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you.*** (John 14:15-18 RSV)

We live in difficult days. Jesus knows what we need. His prayer for us today is that we too would seek and find wise counsel to help us on our journey to life and peace. Jesus is always present with us in the person of the Holy Spirit and He is the wisest counselor that anyone could have. As we seek Him for guidance in every area of our lives He will show us fullness of truth. Jesus said, ***"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free"*** (John 8:32 NIV)

In recovery we must find new direction for our lives, new ways of responding to issues, and new guidelines for making decisions. Our old pattern of thinking and behaving brought us to where we are today. As we establish new and healthy boundaries and actions based on God's Word, God will support us through the power of His Holy Spirit. He will also put us in the way of human counselors and trustworthy people who are walking with Him. We certainly need help from people who continue to walk the path that remains unfamiliar to us. Through

sharing our life's stories, these people will inspire us to receive healing for past traumas that hinder our recovery. They will also have worthwhile suggestions on how to cope with the changes we need to make. The Bible says, "**Where there is no counsel, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety**". (Proverbs 11:14 NKJV) When we surround ourselves with wise, dependable counselors, we are building a solid foundation for recovery.

Good counsel can come from many sources, the Bible, pastors, friends who know and live for God, or books and media that honour the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It may also come from a professional Christian counselor who understands addiction and recovery. Knowledgeable people we encounter on our journey may also encourage us by sharing the Godly wisdom they received when dealing with issues similar to those we are currently experiencing. **Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down the other can help him up. But if someone is alone ... there is no one to help him ... Two men can resist an attack that would defeat one man alone.** (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 GNT)

We need help from everyone who can enlarge our vision and broaden our perspective. We need to share honestly about the temptations we are experiencing. The family of believers understands temptation because they continue to experience it. We are not unique! We need to pay attention to what God and others are saying to us. We need to respond in humility to honest feedback others are giving us, and, foundational to all other counsel, we need to seek the Holy Spirit who will guide us into all truth. **As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.** (Proverbs 27:17 NIV)

The founders of AA and the 12 Steps were aware of Biblical principles and based on these, they structured the program to include counselors whom we call sponsors. If we haven't done so, it's probably time to prioritize the involvement of wise counsel into our lives. Following is some helpful information to consider as we prayerfully seek a sponsor.

What is the Role of a Sponsor?

1. A sponsor may discuss, in detail, troubling issues that are too personal to share, or would take up too much time, in a group meeting.
2. A sponsor is available in times of crisis or potential relapse.
3. A sponsor serves as a sounding board by providing an objective point of view.

4. A sponsor is there to encourage one to work through recovery principles at one's own speed.
5. A sponsor attempts to model the lifestyle that results from personally working the steps.

What are the Qualities to look for in a Sponsor?

1. Does he/she have a growing relationship with Jesus Christ?
2. Does he/she exhibit the character of Jesus in their life?
Does their walk match their talk?
3. Does the person express the desire to help others on the road to recovery?
(Helping others find help versus trying to fix others)
4. Does he/she show compassion, care and hope but not pity? (I don't need someone who is simply going to feel sorry for me.)
5. Is the person a good listener? (Does the person really care about what I have to say?)
6. Is he/she strong enough to confront my denial or procrastination?
7. Can the person share his/her own current struggles with others?
(Openness, vulnerability, transparency)

Questions for Reflection and Group Discussion

1. How often do I use God's word to give me guidance and counsel?
2. How have I sought to broaden my circle of Godly counselors?
3. When I am given feedback I don't like, what do I do with it?
1. Why are we strongly encouraged to quickly find a sponsor and listen to the advice of people who've been in the program a while?
2. What am I doing these days to seek wise counsel from trusted individuals?
3. What obstacles am I facing in my search?
4. How am I seeking wise counsel in the Bible and through prayer? How often am I reading the Bible? What help do I need to make this meaningful?
5. Make a list of the sources of good counsel I am currently using (church, meetings, sponsor, pastor, group leader, books, Christian TV teaching, counselor, sober peers). For each, list my use of them in the last week.
6. What am I doing with feedback I know is good for me?
7. What am I doing with feedback I don't like?
8. Where am I avoiding seeking counsel and keeping things to myself?
9. What action will I take this week to seek out and welcome wise counsel?

NOTES

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, Thank You for pursuing me with Your love and for sending Your Holy Spirit to give me counsel and to help me come to the knowledge of all truth. Give me ears to hear what You have to say. I commit to lay down my pride and seek help from other wise counsellors. Keep me honest. Help me walk in the light of Your presence and follow the path of recovery to new life in You. I am forever grateful that you care. 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.