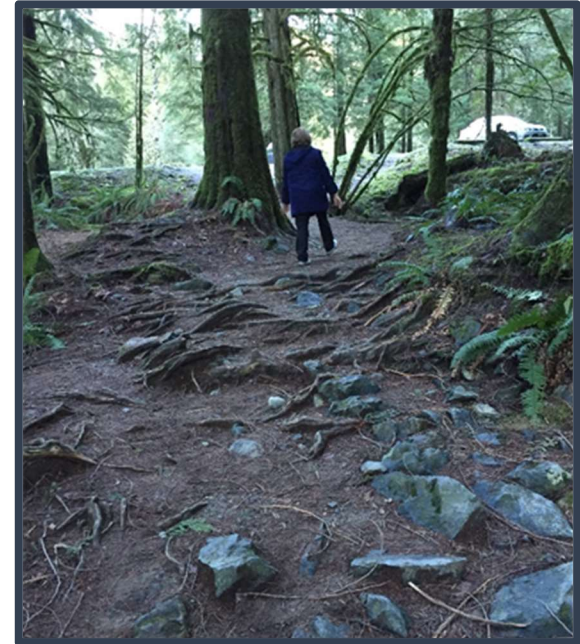


Life With God In Recovery

EARLY STEPS



Book 2

*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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*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*

How To Enjoy A 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 them independently from God. This is a wonderful 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 our lives over to God's care, we find a solid foundation upon which to build a new life. All it takes is confession of our sin and brokenness to God and a decision to turn our will and our lives over to God's loving care. When we invite God to come into our lives we find that He is ready and waiting. 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 filled up 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 filled up with Your Spirit. Come into my heart and make me clean. Teach me your will. Transform my way of thinking. Strengthen me to obey all that you show me.

If you prayed that prayer sincerely from your heart, God receives you and forgives 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 helpful information to help you move forward in your journey with God. Please contact us. You'll find our contact information on the front cover of this booklet.

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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What does it mean to turn my will and my life over to the care of God?
2. What hinders me from completely turning my life and my will over to God?
3. What is this new heart that God promises to give me?
4. What action am I taking to show that I have entrusted my life to God?
5. What do the promises of Philippians 2:13 and 4:13 mean to me?
6. What is one example from my week of how I let God's word reshape how I think or live?
7. What evidence do I see that it makes a positive difference in me, and in my circumstances, as I surrender my will and life to God?

STEP THREE PRAYER: Heavenly Father, Thank you for making a way for me to experience a life that is meaningful and satisfying. On my own I lived a sinful life, co-operating with the forces of evil, and hurt both myself and others. Although I don't always understand this new way of living with You, I tell you once again that I turn my will and my life over to your care. Jesus, I need the clean heart you promise and the gift of your Holy Spirit that You put in me. I need the instructions You give me in Your word as I read the Bible, and in my heart as I pray and listen for your voice. God, I trust you to do in me more than I can even ask or imagine. Your will, not mine, be done. Help me choose Your way every time. Amen

us. When we recognize and reflect on the past destruction and pain we caused ourselves and others, by doing things our way, it often helps to reflect on how things might have been had we done things God's way. Part of this step is coming to understand life as this loving God planned it to be, and is now offering it to each of us.

As we get to know God by reading the Bible and spending time with Him in prayer, God begins to transform us from the inside out. God, through the guidance of His Spirit within us, helps us to know Him and what He says works. The Spirit of God also gives us the wisdom and power to obey what is right and good. When we choose to make healthy choices, often in spite of our feelings, we begin to experience peace within and a satisfying life beyond anything we've ever known.

Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see. (Hebrews 11:1 NLT)

Shaping our lives around God's word fills us with peace for today and hope for the future. This is the result of turning our will and our life over to the care of God.

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.

who sincerely seek him. If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. (Hebrews 11:6, 1 John 1:9 NLT)

Turning our will and our life over to the care of God always involves action. If we say that we have entrusted our life to God but do not make changes in how we think and act, then we are only fooling ourselves. We need to be aware that we are in a battle against the forces of evil that want to keep us in bondage. This enemy has been defeated by the power of the cross and we need to stand firm in the truth that Jesus won the victory for us and we have been set free from the bondage of sin. Effective living involves continually turning our will and our life over to the care of this powerful loving God. We may not understand how everything works, but we simply choose to follow whatever God says is necessary for our ongoing recovery. As we step out in faith, we discover that God works all things together for our good.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:21-21 NKJV)

After living so many years in self-will, some of us may wonder how we will ever succeed at doing things God's way. We have already admitted that we are powerless over the pull of our addictions. Our past record would indicate that it is impossible for us to live by God's principles. Thankfully, God not only commands us to live a godly life, He also provides us with the power to do so. God promises the help of His Holy Spirit within us to empower us to do what He asks us to do.

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him ... I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. (Philippians 2:13, 4:13 NLT)

Our world would experience amazing peace and prosperity if God's principles were obeyed by everyone, every day. Life would have meaning and people would be filled with joy. Sadly, all of us regularly reject God's principles and do things our own way. We live for personal gratification and are often blind to the needs of our family, friends and others around

STEP THREE: TURNING OVER MY WILL AND MY LIFE

Step Three: We turned our will and our life over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Living in recovery and following the Twelve Steps is a spiritual journey. It requires a conscious commitment to a spiritual way of living. Step Three invites us to turn our life, as it is today, over to the care of God as we understand and know Him to be.

You will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 29:12-14a NIV)

By this point most of us recognize that our way of doing things has only resulted in pain, frustration, sickness, and despair. We come to God now because we know we need help. We come to God because someone has shared with us that God is the Higher Power who restored them to sanity. Step Three is not simply one decision. Step Three is an ongoing process of continuous surrender to the will of God. As we do this, we can expect to have many instances where beliefs we've held, and practices we've known in addiction, are now challenged in our recovery with God.

Our experience of living outside the care and will of God is one of helplessness and hopelessness when facing the evil powers of destruction. The good news of Step Three is that when we respond to God's gracious offer of a new and living relationship with Him, God gives us a brand new life and fills us with his Spirit. This new life is God's gift to those who have believed that Jesus' death on the cross accomplished everything necessary for the forgiveness of our sins. As we repent of our self-willed rebellion and turn our life over to God's care, God's Spirit comes to live within us and enables us to make decisions that follow God's principles for fullness of life. In a way that may surprise both ourselves and others, we actually become individuals who please God and find satisfaction in doing so. How does God bring about this incredible transformation in us?

And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those

12 STEPS AND BIBLE PRINCIPLES

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our dependencies -- that our life had become unmanageable.	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)
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.	2. For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. (Philippians 2:13)
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God as we understood Him.	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)
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.	4. Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord. (Lamentations 3:40)
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.	5. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:16)
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.	6. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.	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)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Who is currently in control of my life? What indicators are there that this is the case?
2. What kind of care can we expect when we turn our will and our lives over to God?
3. What broken perception of God that's resulted from my painful experiences do I need to replace?
4. In what areas of my thinking and behaving does it stretch and challenge me to do things God's way rather than my own?
5. How do I invite God to live in me and to direct me throughout my day?
6. How am I discovering that God does care for me and that His promise of a good life for me is beginning to be revealed?

STEP THREE PRAYER: Heavenly Father, Thank you for making a way for me to experience a life that is meaningful and satisfying. On my own I lived a sinful life, co-operating with the forces of evil, and hurt both myself and others. Although I don't always understand this new way of living with You, I tell you once again that I turn my will and my life over to your care. Jesus, I need the clean heart you promise and the gift of your Holy Spirit that You put in me. I need the instructions You give me in Your word as I read the Bible, and in my heart as I pray and listen for your voice. God, I trust you to do in me more than I can even ask or imagine. Your will, not mine, be done. Help me choose Your way every time. Amen

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|--|---|
| 8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. | 8. Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Luke 6:31) |
| 9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. | 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. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. | 10. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. (1 Corinthians 10:12) |
| 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. | 11. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. (Colossians 3:16a) |
| 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. | 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) |

**Taken from: The Twelve Steps -- A Spiritual Journey, ©1988 RPI Publishing, Inc, San Diego, CA*

Only by surrendering to God and inviting Him to live within us will we ever find what we've been seeking throughout life. When we begin to live yielded to God's will and God's care it's like the light goes on and we recognize, "This is it. This is what I've been looking for all my life." In that moment something new within us comes alive. We've never experienced this before and it is truly satisfying. Now we can truly affirm that submitting to God's will is what actually satisfies.

Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind He will accept. Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect His will really is. (Romans 12:1-2 NLT)

During the adjustment stages of our life with God in recovery we will find ourselves being irritated and stretched by new demands. The real challenge of turning our will and our lives over to the care of God will be the exercise of humility that says, "God knows better than I do. I need to trust God and make this change even though I don't FEEL like it." Turning our will and our life over to the care of God is not simply asking God to bless what we think and what we figure out, but actively researching what God says brings satisfaction to daily life and then submitting ourselves to that new practise on a daily basis. Surrendering our will and our life to God's care is the process of coming to understand that God knows the best way through life and all we have to do is follow.

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. (Jeremiah 29:11 NLT)

Who is this God to whom I should surrender my will and my life? I may not know Him yet or how good He is, but if I choose to begin this journey with even the little understanding I have, I will discover that His promises are trustworthy and He's even better than I could hope for or even 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)

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

EARLY STEPS

Steps 1-3



turn our will and our life over to the care of God, we need have no fear of this God who is faithful and worthy to be trusted.

Turning our will over to the care of God involves becoming willing to accept God as He is, instead of insisting on creating Him in our own image, based on our own broken ideas. When we meet God with an open heart and mind we will find Him.

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. For God has said, "I will never fail you. will never abandon you." So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?" (1 Peter 5:7, Hebrews 13:5-6 NLT)

To give our will and our life over to the care of God requires that we receive His principles, as set out in the Bible, for a whole new way of living. We were never meant to operate in life independent of God's wisdom and care. The longer we tried to live life independently from God, the more problems we had. God warns us that hardship and death are the natural consequences of sinful self-willed living. We will never navigate recovery successfully until we make a fundamental change and begin a life-long relationship with God by surrendering our will and our life into His care.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV)

Why would we bother to give our will and our life over to God's care? Why take on this challenging action? The truth is, we will never experience satisfaction in our life 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 of love and blessing. His desire is for us to know a satisfying way of life and live it well.

STEP THREE: THE CARE OF GOD

Step Three: We turned our will and our life over to the care of God as we understood Him.

What does it mean to turn our will and our life over to the care of God? What kind of care can we actually expect to receive from God? This is who God says He is and what He says He does. ***“I’ll pour pure water over you and scrub you clean. I’ll give you a new heart, put a new spirit in you. I’ll remove the stone heart from your body and replace it with a heart that’s God-willed, not self-willed. I’ll put my Spirit in you and make it possible for you to do what I tell you and live by my commands.”*** (Ezekiel 36:25-27 MSG)

Even during our rebellious days in addiction, God has always loved us and only because God has been calling out to us and drawing us in His love have we even got to where we are today.

I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love, I have drawn you to myself. When Israel was a child, I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt. But the more I called to him, the farther he moved from me ... I myself taught Israel how to walk, leading him along by the hand. But he doesn’t know or even care that it was I who took care of him. I led Israel along with my ropes of kindness and love. I lifted the yoke from his neck, and I myself stooped to feed him. (Jeremiah 31:3, Hosea 11:1-4 NLT)

Since God always loved us and consistently called us to Himself, now as we choose for recovery it makes sense that 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?

It is not uncommon to link our perceptions about God to our childhood experiences with people who played powerful roles in our life. Just because God is a power greater than we are, and the people who victimized us represented a power greater than we were, we must not conclude that God is like them and would be harmful to us if we entrusted our lives to him. In Step Three when we make a conscious decision to

STEP ONE: CONFRONTING MY POWERLESSNESS

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

For all of us there comes a time when we can no longer avoid the realization that our lives are a horrible mess. When we come to this place of brokenness and helplessness, and finally admit that all is not well, we need to make a choice about where life is going from here. How do we do that? We admit that our addictive habits are causing us further harm and not giving us relief from the reality of life we are trying to avoid. Not only is the addiction not masking our problems but it is creating many more that we are unable to cover up. We must admit defeat, admit we can’t do things on our own, and acknowledge that we need help.

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)

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 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 were falling apart. Instead of getting closer to the good life, we realized we were drifting 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 came to a point where he realized his own limits and inability to do anything which brought 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 2:1-5, 8-11 NLT)

It is human to want to control our own life and circumstances when we have experienced unmet needs, particularly in childhood. We don't want the pain and sadness from our past to overwhelm our future. 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. When anyone is unable to feel pain they are dead to life even though they are clinically alive.

The grave wrapped its ropes around me; death laid a trap in my path. But 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 18:5-6 NLT)

When we come to a place on the path of life we have been travelling, and find our way forward is blocked in every direction, we must find another path. This roadblock can be a place where we can wallow in self-pity or, it can be a place to turn around and look for a different road, a road which will take us to where we want to go from here. We can flounder in despair or we can surrender to the loving control and direction of the God who cares for us more than we care for ourselves. We really need guidance from someone who knows the way from here. To get the help we need we only have to call out to the awesome God who promises to supply it.

"Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." (Psalm 50:15 NRSV)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How is God helping me make a new beginning?
2. What's the difference for me in knowing about a higher power being there and actually reaching out to connect?
3. How is God giving me courage to hope for a better future?
4. What do I know/believe about Jesus Christ and His offer to be my Higher Power?
5. In what ways can Jesus, my Higher Power, not just sort out my past but actually help me rebuild what has been broken and empty in my heart and life?
6. What promises of God encourage me to hold on and keep going?
7. Into what dark caves of my thinking and feeling can I, or will I, invite Jesus, my Higher Power to restore me to sanity?
8. What changes are necessary if God is to become the one in charge of my life rather than me?

STEP TWO PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I've lived so long not knowing that there was a loving God in heaven who cared enough about me to send His Son to die in my place. Thank you Jesus, for being willing to die for my sins and offer me new life today. I turn away from looking for any other power to sort out my pain and confusion. I turn to You. Help me. Forgive me. Heal me. Help me know You more and more and about who I am as I allow you to live in me. Thank You that as I live according to Your will I have the promise of a new life that is good, pleasing, and perfect. Amen.

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." (Matthew 11:28-30 NLT)

Have we finally come to that place where we are willing to give up the illusion that we can manage our lives on our own? If we surrender to Jesus Christ we are "plugged in" to the power that will help us change our lives. Without surrender we will likely return to our old life of frustration and emptiness. Without daily reliance on the loving care and guidance from our Heavenly Father our lives truly are unmanageable.

God invites us to surrender our lives to Him and ask Him to show us His plans for our future. God invites us to trust in His control and His provision as He guides our way forward. God is our Loving Father and He encourages us to come to Him as children, ready to trust, ready to learn, and ready to obey and act upon what He says is best for us. God invites us to get connected to people who will help us pray, and think, and choose for responsible ways to face life situations. Are we willing to give up our own solutions when what we learn about life and recovery is something different from what we have previously known? God is the only one we can fully rely on to restore our sanity.

"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. I will be found by you," says the Lord. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. (Jeremiah 29:11-14 NLT)

The good news is that our helpless condition is not a surprise to God. He already knows we will not succeed when we try to do things on our own. When we surrender ourselves to God, He stands ready to help us chart a new course and find a new life. In the Bible we are told there are two powers active in our world, the devil who is seeking to bring us harm and God who desires to give us fullness of life.

Jesus said, ***"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*** (John 10:10 NIV)

We are not however left dangling helplessly between two powers. Jesus came in the flesh to destroy the power of mankind's bondage to sin. The Bible says, ***Since the children are made of flesh and blood, it's logical that the Savior took on flesh and blood in order to rescue them by his death. By embracing death, taking it into himself, he destroyed the Devil's hold on death and freed all who cower through life, scared to death of death.*** (Hebrews 2:14-15 MSG)

We have a choice to make. We are powerless against the forces of evil on our own. We need the power of God in our lives which is greater than any power that is of ourselves.

The first step in finding the life that Jesus died to give us is to admit we are powerless over our dependencies and that our lives have become unmanageable. Second, we need to invite Jesus to rule and reign in our hearts and seek His guidance in all our ways. Third, we resolve in our mind that we will be guided by Him in good times and in trying times.

Let's look forward to what we can be and do with God's help. Let's get rid of everything that hinders our journey to fullness of life.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What are some signs that my life is unmanageable?
2. What specific behaviours are problems? What behaviours have I been defending or excusing?
3. What lies do I tell myself to excuse my addictive behaviour?
4. What "escape plans" often surface for me in my thoughts and actions when I want to run away from problems or difficulties? (habits, addictions, attitudes)
5. Where was Jesus during my time in addiction and where is He now as I admit that I'm powerless and my life is unmanageable?
6. What positive action can I take to help me stay on my chosen path to recovery?

STEP ONE PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I admit defeat. I am powerless to live on my own without you. You know the things I've tried and what a disappointment they've all turned out to be. My life is truly unmanageable without you. I give up trying to meet my own needs. I give up covering pain and confusion with substances and destructive habits and relationships. Heavenly Father, I turn to You. I accept Your word as the truth around which I will build my life. I accept relationship with you as the new way of life for me. Fill me with Your Spirit who gives me peace, power, and truth. I receive hope to fill my despair. I receive truth to sort out my confusion. I choose for Your will and surrender my own. Amen

place? Step 2 tells us that God can restore us to sanity and new life. What does that look like? Can we find safety and security in a situation where we actually surrender control of our lives to God? What does God promise?

You who sit down in the High God's presence, spend the night in Shaddai's shadow, Say this: "God, you're my refuge. I trust in you and I'm safe!" That's right—he rescues you from hidden traps, shields you from deadly hazards. His huge outstretched arms protect you— under them you're perfectly safe; his arms fend off all harm. (Psalm 91:1-4 MSG)

God has promised to show us a way through our pain and confusion, to a life that is fulfilling and satisfying. God does not lie. Life will be good if we make the choice to do things God's way. Will it all be fixed in a day? No. Will there be challenges that stretch us to face our pain? Yes. Will we need support and encouragement to carry on and do the right thing when we feel like giving up because we've experienced some problems? Yes. Will we be tempted to jump into a short term "solution" as we did in the past, a solution that involves familiar coping strategies like anger, lying, silence, sleeping, cover-ups, violence, or alternate addictions? Yes. Did they work before? No. Will they work now? No. Are we willing to give up handling things in our own way and embrace the new way God has shown us? If not, we need to ask ourselves, why not?

God shows us His way of restoration and recovery in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus came from heaven to earth and completely surrendered Himself to the will of His Father. Jesus, who never sinned, died on the cross for our sin so that, through Him, we might experience forgiveness and freedom from the power of sin in our lives. He was resurrected from the dead to demonstrate God's power over him who held the power of death, that is the devil. That resurrection power is the same power at work in us to help restore us to the life God planned for us when we were created. God is willing and able to take us forward into a satisfying life. We need new thoughts, new desires, and the ability to make new choices. God wants to give those to us as we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ and welcome His Spirit to guide us in every life situation.

STEP TWO – WHO CAN RESTORE ME?

Step Two --We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! You can make this choice by loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. (Deuteronomy 30:19-20 NLT)

It is sinful human nature to want to be in complete control of our lives and our circumstances. However, truthful people come to a point in their lives when they realize that this is neither possible, nor even desirable. The people, who come to this conclusion, are the fortunate ones because they have come to the end of themselves. They are free to go beyond the emptiness of their own resources, free to surrender doing things in their own strength, and free to accept God's unlimited resources.

At some point in our lives each of us came to the understanding that we could not continue to live in the insanity that was our daily routine. There were times when we were so confused and overwhelmed by "our life" that we wished we could die just to get relief from it. No matter what we did we seemed powerless to change things for the better and the weight of the sadness we felt seemed too heavy to bear. Our lives were unmanageable and we knew it. We longed to have some kind of control over the chaos and confusion. We tried anger and intimidation and violence thinking it would shield us, or get our needs met. We lied, cheated, and manipulated to get our way. We've tried "walking on egg shells", running away, silence, or co-dependently propping up those we feared. All these were attempts to develop a security system around us.

This may be where we came from, but now, in recovery, we are again faced with the reality that life is uncertain and unpredictable and sometimes seems beyond our control. What do we do with that? How do we find a way to live well in the middle of it all? We're committed to giving up the addictive substances but are we also committed to giving up the unhealthy coping mechanisms that got us into addiction in the first

STEP ONE – I CAN'T DO IT ALONE

Step One: We admitted that we were powerless over our dependencies, that our life has become unmanageable.

Step One is an admission of our powerlessness over addictive substances, people around us, and those things we've become dependent on to sustain life as we know it. We have acknowledged that where we find ourselves today is not life giving and, if we continue on this path it will cause a further downward spiral in our well-being. Regardless of what we have gained or lost, what we have achieved, or where we have fallen short, we have reached the point where we can no longer cope with life as it is right now.

We admit defeat and turn to God for mercy and grace. God assures us that if we get to know and trust Him, He will rescue us and help us do what we cannot do for ourselves. In fact, Jesus said He came to seek and save people exactly like us, in circumstances just like ours.

Jesus said: ***For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.*** (Luke 19:10; Matthew 9:13 NLT)

We are not suffering solely because we've misused chemicals or developed destructive habits and co-dependent relationships. We are not suffering because we were created as a second class human being or because we grew up in a less than perfect environment. We are suffering because we believed the lie that we could meet our needs and solve our own problems in our own way. We are suffering because we believed that masking the unbearable pain inside us with a substance, a habit, or a relationship would give us lasting pleasure and make life worth living. We are suffering because we did not believe our need to have an ongoing relationship with God above all else.

In Step One we finally come to the point where we acknowledge we've been living under a lie. Our way does not work. We admit we are powerless over our problems, powerless to function in a healthy way in daily routines and responsibilities. Daily life itself has become totally unmanageable.

Jesus, who has been watching and waiting as we stumbled around doing our own thing, again invites each of us to the life He has prepared in advance for us to live. He knows we can't find our way on our own and that it's impossible for us to consistently choose to behave in healthy ways no matter how much we think we want to. In His love, God calls us to come close to Him and enter into a new way of living. He will gently teach us what works and give us the strength to be doers of what we have learned.

Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light. (Matthew 11:28-30 NLT)

We wonder how God could value us as a person and be willing to give us another chance at life. In our addiction we never asked for nor even desired His guidance. We did not want to consider life on His terms nor learn from Him. Over and over again we chose our own way. In spite of our persistent arrogance and disdain for God, God loves us and He cares about us. God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours and He invites us to look at our lives from His perspective.

Jesus came to earth to redeem us, to heal us, and to set us free. Jesus said, ***"The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD's favor has come."*** (Luke 4:18-19 NLT)

God calls us now to let go of all that is unmanageable in our lives and to turn to Him. When we do, God will work everything together for our ultimate good, including those things in our past that are harsh and cruel; all our confusion, past, present and future; and all fear of the unfamiliar and the unknown.

As we surrender our self-centered way of life for God's way, we begin an exciting journey with Him. God promises He will never leave or forsake us. He promises to fill us with His Holy Spirit who will teach us what is

No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:39 NLT)

To wholeheartedly believe in God and live in His unchanging love, regardless of our feelings, restores us to sanity. God's power is infinitely greater than the evil of Satan and the arrogance of self. Are we willing to believe this truth and surrender to the God who loves us unconditionally and whose mighty power frees us from every harmful dependency which keeps us in bondage?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What is going on in my life that indicates I need a higher power to restore my life?
2. In what ways have I failed to recognize that God is ultimately in control?
3. How have I avoided acceptance of God's power over my life?
4. In what areas of my life do I demonstrate self-will or defiance toward God?
5. What is keeping me from truly believing that a power greater than myself can restore me to sanity?
6. Where do I see evidence around me that there is a power greater than myself?
7. What does the phrase "We came to believe ..." mean to me?
8. How might changing my belief system restore me to sanity?
9. How am I moving beyond the desire for a "quick solution" to a peaceful journey of trust and hope?
10. What action can I take that will help me along in the process of coming to believe?

STEP TWO PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I've lived so long not knowing that there was a loving God in heaven who cared enough about me to send His Son to die in my place. Thank you Jesus, for being willing to die for my sins and offer me new life today. I turn away from looking for any other power to sort out my pain and confusion. I turn to You. Help me. Forgive me. Heal me. Help me know You more and more and about who I am as I allow you to live in me. Thank You that as I live according to Your will I have the promise of a new life that is good, pleasing, and perfect. Amen.

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. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. (Romans 1:20-22 NLT)

The root of our problems is our belief system. In our hearts we tell ourselves that if God truly loved us He should have spared us from the troubles that harmed us and He didn't. How could He love us and let us experience such pain and injustice? How could a loving God have our best interests in mind when He asks us to walk a difficult and challenging way of confronting the pain and brokenness in our lives? Wouldn't a loving God give something softer and easier after all the hardship we've experienced?

God loves us so much that He gave His only begotten son, Jesus, to die on a cross, laying down His life for all sin and wrong doing. To come to full freedom and restoration to sanity requires that we believe Jesus' death on the cross paid the price for our sins. He also died for the parent, the partner, and any other person who sinned against us. If we want to be forgiven for our sins against others, we need to offer forgiveness to those who sinned against us and confidently commit all of these sins to God, the only righteous judge. Living free from addiction requires us to acknowledge our painful past, take it to the foot of the cross, and leave it there.

The Lord is slow to get angry, but his power is great, and he never lets the guilty go unpunished. Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. (Nahum 1:3; Luke 6:37 NLT)

It is God's desire to restore us to a relationship with Him that is life giving and satisfying. Sanity will return when we actively live according to God's word as recorded in the Bible. As we purposefully work to free those sections of our heart that are locked in hatred and victimization, healing will come. We will also more easily enter into a loving relationship with God and into healthy relationships with others. God's love for us is unchanging. His mighty power helps us do what He say, even when it makes no sense to us at all.

truth in every area of our life. This same Holy Spirit, the power of God, will sustain us and guide us in all our ways.

In this new life of relying on God, we no longer live powerless. God helps us bring order into our lives and fills us with peace.... **Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.** (1 Corinthians 14:33 NLT; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NIV)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How has addiction affected my self-image?
2. What coping skills did I use as a child? What coping skills have I brought into adulthood as I have tried to avoid pain and fix things?
3. What has kept me from expressing true feelings and seeking support and comfort?
4. What do I do with failure?
5. What does it mean to me today to say to God, "I can't do it alone?"
6. How does admitting all this give me hope for the future?

STEP ONE PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I admit defeat. I am powerless to live on my own without you. You know the things I've tried and what a disappointment they've all turned out to be. My life is truly unmanageable without you. I give up trying to meet my own needs. I give up covering pain and confusion with substances and destructive habits and relationships. Heavenly Father, I turn to You. I accept Your word as the truth around which I will build my life. I accept relationship with you as the new way of life for me. Fill me with Your Spirit who gives me peace, power, and truth. I receive hope to fill my despair. I receive truth to sort out my confusion. I choose for Your will and surrender my own. Amen

STEP TWO: WE CAME TO BELIEVE

Step Two: We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

The foundation for addiction was laid down in many of our lives when we experienced events that left us feeling unsafe or unfulfilled. Other people, including some who were close to us, harmed us and we didn't know what to do with the pain, the humiliation, or the sense of feeling dirty and stained. We lived in fear. Anger built up within us because of the helplessness we felt when we were exposed to these traumatic experiences. Our own angry hurtful actions towards others caused more guilt and shame to be layered on. Answers and solutions seemed clouded in confusion and problems and burdens were just too much to bear. The mixture of injustice done to us, and then by us, was too complicated to deal with. All we knew to do was to cover up our painful emotions with addictive practices.

At some point, we recognized that we were powerless over our dependencies and that our lives had become unmanageable. By some miracle we found ourselves in rooms where we were told the next step to a healthy life was "coming to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." The challenge for us is, how do we come to believe? We might even question whether there really is a power greater than ourselves to help us. We certainly wonder how long and what is involved in the healing and restoration process? Can we really come to know what sanity is and how to get it?

God meets us at this important place in our journey and in the Bible reassures us of His love, His care, and all the help He has already made available to us.

When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:6-8 NLT)

To believe is to have confidence or faith that something is true or real. The evidence that this greater power exists is obvious in those who have encountered Him in their recovery journey and received life from Him. In meetings we attend, people talk of how their lives were changed through this Higher Power. It seems like a simple thing to just believe, but is it? Most of us have been too fearful or too angry to put our lives into anyone's hands let alone the hands of this unknown power. We want to decide what is best for us. In the past however, this has not worked well for us at all. In fact, we have lots of evidence of how we steered ourselves into the path of substance addiction and unhealthy relationships when we relied on our own knowledge and power. The evil powers in the spiritual realm gladly influenced our own flawed thinking to accelerate us down the road to destruction.

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12 NLT)

As we turn towards life and healing we now have to confront both the power of self-will and the power of evil in our lives. Consenting to the power of the devil and his demons is something we want to rid ourselves of so that may seem possible. More often, the harder work for us is surrendering our own personal power and control.

If we're honest we will admit that we struggle to completely lay down self-control and surrender our ways to the ways of God. We've personally decided what taking care of us involves, and as long as God's plan fits with that, we're willing to go along with Him. However, when God leads us by another way – and He surely will, because He knows everything about love and life and freedom – then we refuse to go His way and take back control. Why? We don't believe in a power and a love greater than ourselves. God's characteristics are evident in all that He does and says yet our belief system tells us that we know better. How arrogant!

For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship