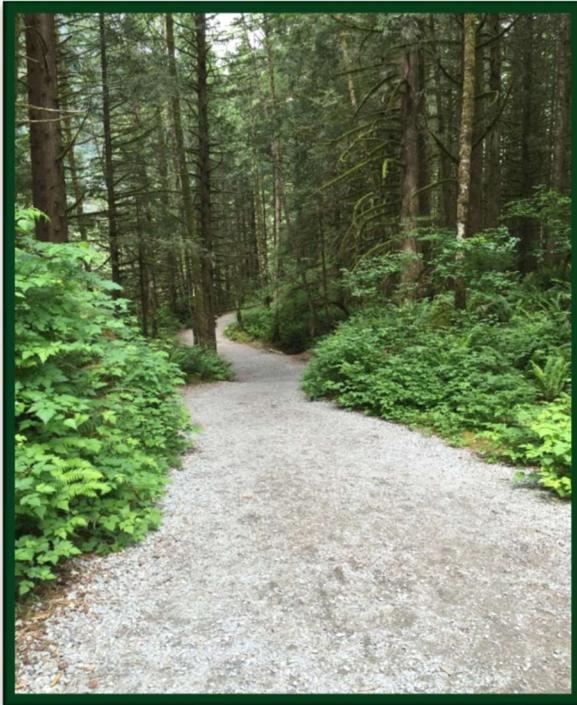


Life With God In Recovery

WALKING THE NEW PATH



Book 6

*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

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

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

WALKING THE NEW PATH Steps 10-12



CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY

Step Ten – Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

We live in a world that says, “If it feels good do it.” For many of us, in our addiction, we ran after numerous destructive things to try to feel good. Now, in recovery, God invites you and I to measure our quality of life based on principles that He knows give true meaning and satisfaction to our daily living. Many practices that God prescribes, do not feed our “feel good fast” addictive emotions. We struggle to do what is right while favoring what is convenient. One of the purposes of a continual Step 10 inventory is to help us recognize our ongoing temptation to what we believe is a “softer, easier way of life”.

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable. (Hebrews 4:12-13 NLT)

The founders of AA were careful to give us reasons and benefits of taking personal inventory: *A continuous look at our assets and liabilities, and a real desire to learn and grow by this means, are necessities for us. ... The emphasis on inventory is heavy only because a great many of us have never really acquired the habit of accurate self-appraisal. ... Learning daily to spot, admit, and correct these flaws is the essence of character-building and good living. An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek.* (Excerpts from The Twelve by Twelves pages 88-95)

Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked so hard to achieve. Be diligent so that you receive your full reward. (2 John 8 NLT)

Our old ways of thinking and behaving are being replaced as we journey with God in our new life in recovery. Too many people attempt to piece together a new way of life based on the practices of others and things that seem to “work for us”. The word of God is clear that this way is not sufficient. The only way to build a new life is to study and follow God’s Word in the Bible, which is a blueprint for living. It is important to discipline ourselves to read the word of God and develop a habit of listening to God, rather than simply relying on our own thoughts. We need to learn God’s principles for healthy living and allow those principles to reshape the way we think and act. Step Ten is about bringing our lives to the mirror of God’s Word to assess how we are practicing His principles in all our ways.

Trust in the Lord and do good; live in the land and be safe. Seek your happiness in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desire. Give yourself to the Lord; trust in him, and he will help you. (Psalm 37:3-5a GNT)

It is amazing to see what a human being can achieve through consistent disciplined effort. How many times have we watched athletes and marveled at the ease with which they perform their sport? We know that they developed their ability through rigorous training, the discipline that sets the athlete apart from the spectator. What are we doing from day to day, even moment by moment, to train ourselves to hear and respond to the calling of God in our lives? Are we praying and reading God’s word, allowing it to challenge, stretch, and develop us? We may experience some discomfort in the fact that we are not where we would like to be. However, if we choose to practice these disciplines, regardless of how we feel, we will soon achieve a spiritual ease of living at peace with God, with ourselves, and with our neighbor.

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it. Exercise daily in God—no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so,

making you fit both today and forever.” (James 1:22, 25 NLT, 1 Timothy 4:7-8 MSG)

Spot-check inventories, daily inventories, and periodic check-up inventories are all practices we are encouraged to use to maintain spiritual, emotional, and relational health.

SPOT CHECK INVENTORY: In each situation where we begin to experience things not going well, we pause and note what’s right and what’s wrong. What are we feeling? What’s going on beneath the feeling? What are we expecting? What is God’s direction in what is going on? Are we living the Golden Rule in this moment, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you?”

DAILY INVENTORY: At the end of each day we talk with God about the events of our day and listen for His encouragement, His correction, and His instruction. Where we need forgiving we ask for and receive it from God. Where we notice our good intentions, good thoughts, good actions, we note them and give thanks.

PERIODIC CHECK-UP INVENTORY: On a regular basis we take some time alone or in the company of a sponsor or adviser to make a careful review of our progress. An annual or semi-annual house cleaning of the heart will help us recognize growth as well as defects in need of attention. Some people like to take a day or more, and retreat to a quiet place for a time of prayer, meditation, and review of their lives.

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand. (Psalm 37:23-24 NIV)

God has a plan for our lives which will bring satisfaction, meaning, and joy. As we plot our course, God will direct our steps and we will be enriched by goodness and love through each step of the journey. Our Step Ten inventory will help keep us on the path as we work out God’s good, pleasing and perfect plan for our lives.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Am I continuing to take personal inventory as I reflect on God's principles for my life?
2. When, and in which circumstances, do I hear the addictive voice within me enticing me to an "If it feels good, do it" way of life?
3. What am I doing on a regular basis, to understand and live the principles for life as defined in the Bible?
4. How am I seeking to respond to God's directives?
5. In what ways am I challenging myself to grow in the new habit of surrendering to God?
6. Complete a spot-check, daily, or periodic inventory using the guides listed above.

Heavenly Father, Thank You for loving and caring for me. Help me to draw closer to You as I follow Your plan for my life. I ask You to shine your light into any dark areas of my heart and help me sort through my motives and actions. When my actions or attitude differ from what You require of me, help me to promptly re-align my ways in accordance with Yours. I ask You to lead me along the path of peace and love. Help me to be conscious of how I treat others. Help me to be compassionate and self-giving in all my relationships. I desire to be a person who honours

WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT

Step Ten – Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

By the time we get to Step Ten we may feel that we are well on our way to recovery and have it all figured out. Daily life has become easier and we can quickly forget what got us into trouble and what brought us to, and keeps us in recovery. Making a regular Step Ten inventory helps us maintain a clear and balanced view of our progress. We need to be reminded of our strengths, our weaknesses, and the areas where we remain vulnerable to stumbles.

We need to ask ourselves, and answer truthfully, questions such as: What is my current overall condition? How am I feeling? What is happening today? What unmet needs do I have? How am I living within the boundaries that protect me and those around me? How am I welcoming God's guidance rather than living in my own self-will?

Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. (Romans 12:3 NLT)

Our life with God in recovery should be one of continual learning and growing. We need to be diligent as we reflect on our motives and behaviour in situations that arise, and ask God to shine his light on our souls to help us sort them. When our actions or attitudes conflict with God's principles, we need to re-align our ways with what God is saying, and we need to do it sooner rather than later. Where we are wrong or out of balance, it's important to take quick action and admit it. We also need to make any necessary adjustments and amends. This builds our character, strengthens our relationship with God, and helps us find the satisfying life of living in community as God intended.

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. (Philippians 2:12-13 NLT)

Suppose we looked in a mirror and found we had something smeared around our mouth. We would be foolish if we didn't immediately wash our face and

clear up the problem. In the same way, we need to routinely look at ourselves in a spiritual mirror. The dirt on our face, which the mirror revealed, will not go away until we remove it by washing our face. The same applies to a problem that could lead to relapse in our recovery; the problem needs to be corrected as soon as we become aware of it. If we avoid taking care of a problem, it will not go away just because we refuse to deal with it.

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. (James 1:22-24 NLT)

Step 10 encourages us to regularly take a personal inventory, which for persons in recovery, should be a daily process. Here are some suggested components for this ongoing inventory:

1. How are our basic needs for love, acceptance, and security being met each day?
2. What are our feelings - both positive and negative? Have we noticed anger rising within us? Are we willing to identify the hurt beneath it? In any situation, did we act or react out of fear of rejection, abandonment, pain, or other unmet needs?
3. What's the status of our relationship with God? Where have we surrendered to God's will and where have we operated in pride and self-will? How are we living "Not my will but Yours be done"?
4. Have we acted codependently in our desire to meet our needs? Have we been controlling, rescuing, acting the victim, enabling, been compulsive or perfectionistic? Have we respectfully maintained boundaries - our own set and those of others?
5. Have we been fair-minded and flexible with others? Did we make snap judgments or take time to listen and understand the other person's point of view? Have we been critical and disagreeable in our interactions, or respectful and patient?
6. In our relationships with others have we "Done to others as we would have them do to us?"

Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak. I listen carefully to what God the Lord is saying, for he speaks peace to his faithful people. But let them not return to their foolish ways. Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, so our land will be filled with his glory. (Mark 14:38, Psalm 85:8-9 NLT)

As we reflect on our behaviour, what are some of the principles that God gives us in His word around which we can base our inventory?

How was love my motivation? ***You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.'*** And, ***'Love your neighbor as yourself.*** (Luke 10:27 NLT)

What was the nature of my attitude and behaviour? ***When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*** Galatians 5:19-20, 22-23 NLT)

What was I thinking? ***And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*** (Philippians 4:8-9 NLT)

When I reflect on God's values, did I live today according to the wisdom He gives me when I ask? ***If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere.*** (James 3:13-14, 17 NLT)

We need to take regular personal inventory measuring ourselves against God's tried and true principles. We also need to take appropriate action when problems are revealed. As we maintain this discipline we will move forward in our recovery and discover a life that is meaningful, purposeful, and joyful.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What tools am I using to help me assess, reflect, learn, and grow in my recovery?
2. What does “when we were wrong, promptly admitted it” look like in my daily practice?
3. Using the six questions listed above in the Step Ten inventory, practice completing an inventory at this moment in time.
4. Using the four questions with Bible quotes, what does my life look like today in comparison with God’s principles?

Gracious God, May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. Amen (Psalm 19:14, Psalm 139:23-24 NLT)

CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD

Step Eleven – 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.

From the beginning God created us to live in conscious contact with Him. His desire is that every person will know Him and the unfailing love He has for us. His will is for us to walk safely and securely in the conscious knowledge of His infinite love and care. God wants to be involved in our lives and to share in our daily experiences. Are we seeking conscious contact with this amazing God?

I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. We love because he first loved us. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer. How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! I can’t even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! (Song of Solomon 6:3, 1 John 4:16, 19, 1 Peter 3:12a NIV, Psalm 139:17-18 NLT)

In the past, when life became overwhelming, we used our addictions as a hiding place. Now that we are in recovery, life at times may still feel overwhelming, and sometimes even more so, because we aren't self-medicating to cover the pain. Like a ship at sea we need a safe harbour where we can find protection from the storms that arise, often throughout the day. God is available to be that safe harbour as we turn our attention to His Word, as recorded in the Bible, and seek through prayer and meditation to hear His voice. Whenever we call on His name, God is always ready to shield and protect us from the overwhelming storms of life. We need never doubt that the Lord hears us because God’s Word promises that His eyes are on the righteous, and His ears are attentive to their cry.

Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:28-31 NLT)

Being conscious of ourselves and our place in life is often known these days as “self-perception.” We develop our self-perception by noticing how the important people in our lives see us. If we grew up in a dysfunctional family, their skewed view of us probably warped our ability to see ourselves as we truly are in God’s eyes. The place God has made for us in His plan is amazing. The place we hold in His thoughts on a continual basis is incredible.

O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens. When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place—what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority (From Psalm 8:1, 3-6 NLT))

God cares about us and the things that matter to us. The God who created the universe holds His gaze and attention on us in love and delight. God wants us to realize how precious we are to Him and to begin to see ourselves in the light of His love. The greatest demonstration of how precious we are in God’s sight is that Jesus gave His life for us. Are we living in conscious awareness of this great love?

Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim His greatness. Let the whole world know what He has done. ... Search for the Lord and for his strength; continually seek him. Remember the wonders he has

performed, his miracles, and the rulings he has given (Psalm 105:1, 4-5 NLT)

The prayer and meditation to which Step 11 invites us is so much more than just trying to figure out what God’s plans are for us. Meditation and reading scripture show us all that God promises to do and be for us. Underneath these spiritual exercises is God's desire to confirm to us the heart of love He has for each of us.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:16-19 NIV)

In the same way that young lovers seek to spend as much time as possible together, so God’s constant presence is with us, His beloved ones. Young lovers live to share all of who they are and what they experience with the one they love. They share memories and experiences from the past to nourish the life they now have together. They share hopes and dreams. They get to know the likes and dislikes of each other. They are filled with wonder at what the loved one does.

As men and women who are learning to live in a relationship of love and care with God, it’s important that we take time to notice what God is doing, to speak to God in prayer about it with joy and thanksgiving, and to share our circumstances with Him asking for the strength we need today. God is available today with His attentive presence, His faithful help in all circumstances, and His encouraging hope for us and for life as we walk in conscious contact with Him. Are we available to God? Are we living in conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out?

KNOWING AND CARRYING OUT GOD'S WILL

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How would I describe my experience of Step 11 – a spiritual practice or heart-to-heart sharing in confidence with a close friend?
2. What am I doing to improve my conscious contact with God?
3. What's it like to know someone loves you? Do I believe that God loves me? How am I nurturing that today?
4. Who is the most precious person in my life? What place do they hold in my thoughts and feelings? What would I be willing to do for that person? How does this hint at how God cares for us and wants to be a part of our lives?
5. How am I inviting God to be a conscious part of my daily living?
6. What does it mean to me to watch and listen to what God wants to share with me? In good moments? When life is difficult and I'm feeling frustrated or confused?
7. What effect does living conscious of God's presence have on the way I live my life?

God, I come to You through Your beloved son Jesus. I thank You that, on the cross, Jesus opened a way for me to have relationship with You. Fill me over and over again with Your Holy Spirit so I can know You more deeply and more personally than ever before. I want to come close to You. I want to live in heart-to-heart communication with You throughout each day. You know everything and you want to speak with me and my desire is to listen to You. I want to be more and more conscious of Your voice. I want to trust that Your loving plans are best for me and that You will safely guide me through everything I will face. Once again I surrender my will to You and give myself wholeheartedly to obeying your word. Amen

Step Eleven – 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.

The purpose of prayer and meditation in the 12 Step program is to help us learn how to hear from God and to act according to His will. As we read and meditate on God's word as recorded in the Bible, we are purposefully communicating with God. We need to seek God daily and let Him teach us how to live life through the guidance the Bible is giving us. When we listen, and obey God in this way, God will respond and reveal His will to us.

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. "For I know the plans I have for you", says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. "In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me in earnest, you will find me when you seek me. I will be found by you", says the Lord. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes". (Philippians 2:13, Jeremiah 29:11-14a NLT)

When we turn our will and our lives over to the care of God He begins to work immediately to help us change. The discipline of prayer and meditation is to help us hear from God so we can correctly interpret the events going on in our lives and in the world around us. God will respond personally to each of us by revealing His good and pleasing and perfect will for us. As we put into practice what God says, we learn to recognize His voice and His way of guiding us. We then learn through our relationship with God how to communicate with others.

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave

of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. (Jeremiah 33:3; James 1:5-6; NIV)

As we continue to pay attention to what God says, He will reveal more of His will for our lives. God has good plans for our day to day living and He's more than willing to make those plans known to us. He's promised us a life that is even better than we could imagine. This is the purpose of prayer and meditation -- to get to know the good things God has planned for our lives and then to shape our lives around His promises and plans. As we act on what God teaches, we become more and more conscious of how well His ways work in all our relationships.

Jesus said: ***But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! Ask me and I will tell you remarkable secrets you do not know about things to come. If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for.*** (John 15:7, Jeremiah 33:3, James 1:5-6, 1 John 5:14-15 NLT)

The prayer and meditation to which Step 11 invites us is more than just trying to figure out what God's plans are for us. Meditation and reading scripture reveal to us the nature of God and all the promises He has made. Underneath the "spiritual exercises" is God's desire to affirm the unfailing love He has for us. In our daily devotions, we are not seeking to simply learn facts about God but rather to consciously get to know Him. As we become familiar with His character and ways, and make them the foundation for our daily living, we will become more and more aware of the presence of God in our lives.

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love

as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. (Jude 20-21 NIV)

As we draw closer to God, we develop a consciousness of Him as a loving friend. This friend knew us before we were born, knows all about us, and cares deeply for us. The Holy Spirit, who has come to live within us, strengthens us to face the deepest, most confusing, most fearful, most painful, and most traumatized areas of our life. As we linger in God's loving presence our whole being -- body, mind and spirit-- is being renewed.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. The humble will see their God at work and be glad. Let all who seek God's help be encouraged. (John 16:13, Psalm 69:32 NLT)

Conscious contact with God is the best way to begin with, remain in, and end each day with. The foundation of our new life in recovery is the knowledge that we cannot manage life on our own and that we have come to believe that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity. As we surrender our will and our lives over to the power of God, we will surely find the life we seek. Step Eleven shows us how to find this life in a practical way each moment of our day. Whatever circumstances may arise, if we will consciously contact God and invite Him into the situation, He will give us the wisdom we need to thrive and not just survive in our daily environment.

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8 NIV)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What do I do to help me “pay attention” to God’s presence in my life throughout the day?
2. In my recovery program, do I prioritize prayer, meditation, and seeking God’s will for my life?
3. When and how am I getting familiar with God’s will and guidance as it is recorded in the Bible?
4. How do I get to know what God's will is?
5. What am I doing with the knowledge, direction and guidance God has already spoken into my life?
6. When I am in the middle of challenging circumstances, how can I practice this step and improve my conscious contact with God and move from something negative to God’s positive will?
7. How do I move from the point of knowing God's will to getting the power to carry it out?

Heavenly Father, thank you for inviting me into a loving relationship with You. I am forever grateful that you sought me and set me free from my destructive self-will and lifestyle. I choose to lay down my flawed understanding of how life works and desire to know your good, pleasing and perfect way. I welcome the work of Your Holy Spirit in me as You reveal Your will for my life. I am grateful that you also give me the desire and power to carry it out. Help me to live humbly in Your divine purposes and to honour You in all my ways. Thank You for the consciousness of Your presence with me as I carry Your message to others. Amen

WONDERFULLY AWAKE

Step 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.

What is the spiritual awakening we come to experience as we walk with God in recovery? What is the message that we share? What is the life we seek to practice?

When we came into recovery we had a spiritual awakening. We realized that because of the sin in our lives we were separated from God. We were powerless over our addictions and our lives had become unmanageable. Up to this point in our lives, we probably never thought much about God or consulted Him about the plans he had for us when we were created. We lived our lives as though God did not exist. As we came to believe that God, our Higher Power, could and would restore us to sanity, we sought after Him and turned our will and our lives over to His care. He received us and we became children of God.

Under our Heavenly Father’s loving guidance, we looked at our lives and relationships, became aware of character defects and asked for His help to remove them. He forgave us for our rebellious ways and strengthened us to behave in new ways. We admitted that our uncovered defects had negatively impacted our relationships and, with God’s help, began the process of making amends to those we had harmed. As we’ve walked with God, seeking to know and do His will, we have come to realize that He is the all-knowing Creator of all things who knew us before we were born, loves us, accompanies us, and guides us as we move forward in our life in recovery.

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. (Psalm 139:1-10 NLT)

The spiritual awakening pointed to by Step 12 is not a passive, static, or historical one-time event. It is an ongoing, unfolding life experience of God's mercy and grace which is new every morning. At the end of each day we reflect on God's faithfulness as we chose to seek Him throughout that day.

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. (Lamentations 3:22-26 NLT)

Only a spiritual awakening could bring us to the place where we believe this intimate relationship with the Living God is possible for us. Only a spiritual awakening could support us as we take the "leap of faith" into this amazing intimacy with the living God. This is the serenity and security we crave. This is what gives us rest, gives us comfort, gives us peace. This is the reality that affirms deeply within us that our future will be fine, and that circumstances with God's help, are just circumstances. This is what makes life real. This is the life experience we've run all over the place to find and now have found it in the embrace of the Living God.

The founders of AA described it this way: *We discovered the best possible source of emotional stability to be God Himself. We found that dependence upon His perfect justice, forgiveness, and love was healthy, and that it would work where nothing else would. If we really depended upon God, we couldn't very well play God to our fellows nor would we feel the urge wholly to rely on human protection and care.* (Twelve Steps and Twelve page 116)

God says to each of us; ***Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.*** (Isaiah 41:10 NKJV)

Our belief in Jesus is foundational to our ongoing recovery, not only as the one who saved us out of our wreckage, but also as the one who knows the life-giving way forward. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to help us be doers of the Word and not hearers only, or as the AA slogan says, "Don't just talk the talk but walk the walk".

Jesus said, "I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me. Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come

to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly. (John 14:6-7, Matthew 11:28-30 MSG)

The founders of AA spoke about this: *When a man or a woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being. He has been set on a path which tells him he is really going somewhere, that life is not a dead end, not something to be endured or mastered. In a very real sense he has been transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength which, in one way or another, he had hitherto denied himself.* (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions pages 106-107)

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to the Most High. It is good to proclaim your unfailing love in the morning, your faithfulness in the evening, You thrill me, Lord, with all you have done for me! I sing for joy because of what you have done (Psalm 92:1-2,4 NLT)

Only union with God, through Jesus, can satisfy the deep desire in us to belong. Only God living within us can make us alive. Being filled with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit can give us clarity and confidence to move forward on the path of life that is real and filled with meaning and purpose. This is the spiritual awakening we come to realize in Step Twelve, the message we seek to carry to others, and the principle we strive to practice in all our affairs.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What was my life like before I encountered God's love through Jesus Christ?
2. What kind of a life has God given me today as compared to my life in addiction?
3. How has practicing the Twelve Steps taught me who God is and what it means to walk with God each day?
4. How does Jesus Christ empower me to live in a new way today?
5. What enables me to continually surrender all that I am to God's will and God's way
6. What does it mean to me today to be consciously awake to God? How have I experienced "a spiritual awakening?"

Heavenly Father, thank you for inviting me into this loving relationship with You. You truly are an awesome God and my desire is to get to know You more intimately. You knew me even before I was born and are familiar with all my ways. Thank You for rescuing me from the darkness of my addiction and bringing me to new life in You. As I begin to share the Good News of Your grace with others, I ask that You fill me with Your love so that I can love them as You love me. Lord, please help me to practice Your principles in everything I do and say. Amen

GENTLY AND HUMBLY CARRYING THE MESSAGE

STEP 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

A common recovery saying is that "you must give it away in order to keep it". How are we to carry the message? Our new life-style, free of the destructive dependencies of the past, is a living witness to recovery. Sharing our life stories and recovery experiences in support group meetings and in personal conversations is a powerful spoken witness. Intervening lovingly, but firmly, on behalf of those trapped in denial about their own dependencies is another way we faithfully carry out Jesus' instruction to tell others what great things God has done for us.

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord's favor has come ... he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. (Isaiah 61:1-3 NLT)

Each of us has a valuable story to tell. We may be shy and feel awkward about speaking. We may wonder if what we share is actually going to help someone else. We may struggle to get beyond the shame of our past. We may be hesitant to tell anyone, especially if we lack confidence that we will be able to maintain our new way of life. But, this is our recovery story, we know exactly where we came from. Truthfully telling our story may encourage those trapped in the pit of their addiction as they identify with the place we were at when we came into recovery.

Within each personal story of the journey from bondage to freedom is the power of the Gospel to save anyone who is lost. We need to share the goodness of God with others through our own story of transformation and ongoing life in God's grace. We are simply sinners saved by grace and kept clean and sober daily by God's mercy. When we tell our story we are encouraging others to take steps to a new life; to loosen the chains by which they have been bound and begin the path along their own healing

journey with Jesus who said, ***“I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”*** (John 8:12 NLT)

With experience of the process of recovery we are in a special position to carry the message to others. We can recognize the warning signs of addictive and compulsive tendencies. One way of caring for a struggler is to compassionately challenge destructive behaviour. We seek to say something that will encourage them to seek help. While we need to be willing to be unpopular “in the moment” in order to speak the truth, we need to remember that when touching on such deep and sensitive issues, it’s important to sincerely care, listen long, and gently speak in the language of love. No accusation. No condemnation.

When He (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment. Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. (John 16:8, Galatians 6:1 NLT)

The Bible tells us that if someone struggles we should be kind and humble as we help them back to the right path. We need to remember that we were once slaves to our addiction just as they are now to theirs. It’s important to remind ourselves that, but for the grace of God, we could easily be the one in the wrong and the one who needs to change and turn from a sinful way. Along with a challenge or warning, it’s helpful to support the desire in the spirit of the person to carry out their new life choices even while their flesh is weak. People who struggle need to hear an invitation to more than what they are currently experiencing.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (John 10:10, Lamentations 3:22-23 NIV)

We are not the Saviour but we can love others as God loves us. Love goes beyond mere words. Sometimes it is demonstrated in silence, or in an understanding touch as one comes alongside someone who has strayed

from the path of recovery. Love doesn’t accuse but encourages the person to get back on the road and continue the journey. As they move in that direction, our Loving God will show them what needs changing now and how to go about it.

Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important. I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. (Galatians 6:2-3, John 13:34, John 15:13 NLT)

In summarizing some of the aspects of this step the founders of AA wrote these words: *Service, gladly rendered, obligations squarely met, troubles well accepted or solved with God’s help, the knowledge that at home or in the world outside we are partners in a common effort, the well-understood fact that in God’s sight all human beings are important, the proof that love freely given surely brings a full return, the certainty that we are no longer isolated and alone in self-constructed prisons, the surety that we need no longer be square pegs in round holes but can fit and belong in God’s scheme of things—these are the permanent and legitimate satisfactions of right living for which no amount of pomp and circumstance, no heap of material possessions, could possibly be substitutes.* (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions)

Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. (Romans 12:4-5 NLT)

We are strengthened to stay free of our addictions because God is guiding us and supporting us each step of the way. We share with each other and practice these principles in all our affairs because this is the proven way to experience life at its best. As we practice these principles in all our affairs, we will find ourselves drawing closer to God, and the peace and serenity of His love and grace will envelop our very being. This is the good life these steps speak of, and help us walk on a daily basis.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What have I learned about "telling my story"?
2. What attitude should I have as I share my story with someone?
3. How does encouragement work? What are some things others have said or done for us that have encouraged us? How have I encouraged someone in the past day or so?
4. What does it mean to lay down our lives for our friends in a way that does not jeopardize our own recovery?
5. What are the principles I try to practice in my daily life?
6. How am I living the message of new life with vigilance?
7. How do I balance the three aspects of this step in my daily life, sharing my spiritual awakening, carrying the message to others, and practicing these principles in all my affairs?
8. How am I intentionally walking this journey with other people so we support one another and function as a "body" the way God intends?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for bringing me out of darkness into your wonderful light. Help me, to walk in the light of your presence. Sometimes I feel like a small candle in the darkness around me but I know that even the smallest light has impact in a dark room. Help me to shine for you as I gently and humbly share with others how You have changed my life. As I share, would you give me the right words to say so that I might give positive witness to your reliable promise, that "if the Son sets you free, you are truly free." Thank you for putting your Spirit in my heart. I am forever grateful that You care for me. Amen

GOING FORWARD

Having had a spiritual awakening, we are endeavoring to practice the principles we have learned, and to also carry the message to others. As we move forward in our life's journey, we need to take time to reflect on where we have been and where we want to go from here. Like any journey we plan to take, we need to know our starting place, our destination, and the way to get there. If we do not plan our course we will wander along paths that may lead us in a way we don't want to go and consequently, we'll end up lost or in a dangerous place.

This is what the Lord says your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. (Isaiah 48:17 NIV)

The Bible reveals how God interacted with the children of Israel when they were in trouble. They cried out to God when they were slaves in Egypt and asked Him to deliver them from their hard taskmasters. Through amazing interventions God enabled them to be released from slavery. His presence led them forward during the day in the form of a cloud and at night as a pillar of fire. God also heard us when we cried out to Him in the bondage of our addiction and, by His sovereign intervention, He led us to the place where we started our journey to freedom. God did not leave us as orphans but gave us His Holy Spirit to be with us, and in us. His Holy Spirit will be our guide on our way forward.

....when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (John 16:13 NKJV)

After their release from Egypt the Israelites set out on a journey to the land God had promised to their forefathers. As they journeyed, they encountered a few problems. God met their needs but they began to reflect on what they remembered as 'good' back in Egypt. They forgot the hard taskmasters and the fact that they were slaves. They began to lust after those things they did not have on their journey and complained

that they would be better off back in Egypt. How quickly they forgot the miraculous things God did to release them from their life of slavery to Egyptian masters.

We too can forget where we have come from and what it was like when we were in the pit of our addiction. At times, we may reflect on what was 'good' about our life in addiction. We forget the chaos and the slavery to our drug of choice or to a dysfunctional relationship or lifestyle.

Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits. All your lives you've let sin tell you what to do. But thank God you've started listening to a new master, one whose commands set you free to live openly in his freedom! (Romans 6:16-18 MSG)

When we came into recovery we had a spiritual awakening. We realized that because of the sin in our lives we were separated from God. Up to this point we never thought about God or consulted Him about the plans He had for us when we were created. We travelled along the road of life living as if God did not exist. Now we realize that He is the Higher Power who will accompany us as we move forward in our life in recovery. Not only do we need His caring presence with us, we are desperately in need of His guidance and direction. Our belief in Jesus is foundational to our ongoing recovery, not only as the one who saved us out of our wreckage but also as the one who knows the healthy way forward. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to help us be doers of the Word and not hearers only, or as the AA slogan says, "Don't just talk the talk but walk the walk".

Jesus said, ***"These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock. But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a***

storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards." (Matthew 7:24-27 MSG)

Because of our spiritual awakening, we experience the difference that results in our daily lives when we follow the ways of God. To obey God is more acceptable to Him than all the "good deeds" we may perform in his name. When we obey Him we can leave all the consequences of our actions with Him.

As we journey along, we'll find our lives filled with good things we want to share about. Telling our story is a way to encourage others who are still living in darkness without God. We can tell them how we once lived in that same darkness but found our way to life in the light of God's presence. As we tell our story of God's amazing grace given to us, we will realize the joy of our salvation keeps building.

God says to each of us; ***Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.*** (Isaiah 41:10 NKJV)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What plans or strategies have I considered to help move me forward with God in recovery?
2. What plans do I have in place to deal with thoughts of “the good old ways in addiction” that will come to mind from time to time? In what positive ways can I respond to these thoughts?
3. In what specific ways am I welcoming God to accompany me in my new life in recovery?
4. What life changes am I experiencing as I follow the ways of God?
5. I will face fear and discouragement in my journey. How will I counter them? How am I prepared to move on in spite of them?
6. In what ways am I making God’s word the foundation of my recovery?
7. When have I “told my story” in recent days? How am I making my experience, strength, and hope available to people around me – not just those “in the program” but “normies” and others I encounter?
8. When and how am I seeking opportunities to encourage others who are still living in darkness?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for hearing me when I cried out to you from the bondage of my addiction and for rescuing me. May I never forget Your continued presence with me as I move forward in my recovery. Help me to build my life on the solid foundation of Your word as recorded in the Bible. Empower me to not only talk the talk, but to walk the walk. May the light of Your love shine through me as I carry this message to others. I am forever grateful that You care. AMEN

NOTES:

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.