

# *Life With God In Recovery*

## **ENCOURAGEMENT**



**Elsie Quick and Evelyn Leeburn**

## LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY

# ENCOURAGEMENT

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## *How To Enjoy New Life With God In Recovery*

*God created us to have a wonderful life. In love, God planned for us and carefully put us together. God has always been calling out to us to enter into a relationship of love with Him. He doesn't force us but He invites us. Many of us have learned what a painful and confusing wreck our lives become when we try to live independently from God. Today is a good day to begin to live the full and rich life God intended for us. Nothing in our past can keep us from this life, if we want it and choose for it.*

*The 12-Steps remind us that our lives are unmanageable without the loving care of God and that we can get to know and come to believe that He is a power greater than ourselves. As we turn our will and our lives over to God's care, we find a solid foundation upon which to build a new life.*

*When we confess our sin and brokenness to God, repent and turn towards God, He gives us new life. When we invite God to come into our lives we find that He is ready and waiting for us. A simple prayer like the following, offered sincerely, establishes this new relationship with God that will last forever.*

***God, my life is unmanageable without you. You created me to live in relationship with you. There really is no good way to live on my own. Forgive me for not including you. I turn from my independent ways and surrender my will and my life to you. Thank you Jesus for dying on the cross for my sins and making a way for me to have new life and be filled up with Your Holy Spirit. Come into my heart and wash me clean. Teach me to do your will. Transform my way of thinking. Strengthen me to obey You in all I do. Amen***

*If you prayed that prayer sincerely from your heart, God forgives you*

## ***JUST FOR TODAY***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **RELATIONSHIPS THAT BUILD UP**

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>CONTENTS</b>	
4	Encouragement
7	Barnabas – A Man of Encouragement
9	Love Goes Beyond Words
10	Some Acts of Encouragement
11	Short Notes On Encouragement
12	Bringing Out The Best In One Another
15	More Notes On Encouragement
16	Experience Strength and Hope
19	Ways To Encourage
20	The Bible Speaks About Encouragement
21	Some Areas of Addiction and Dependency
22	Just For Today
23	How to Enjoy New Life With God In Recovery

## ENCOURAGEMENT

***Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, "How can I help?"*** (Romans 15:1-2 MSG)

When we love and care for a person our desire is for them to have the very best in life. When our friends or loved ones are struggling with a problem we need to take the time to talk with them and try to understand what is happening in their lives. Sometimes just discussing a problem may help the person find a solution and possibly resolve the issue. Sometimes the problem is not easy to resolve quickly and we can encourage the person by following up on our discussion with a phone call, a note, another meeting or whatever it takes to help the person get through the troublesome time.

Showing others that we truly care about them is encouragement to them whether the problem is resolved or not. Life will always have ups and downs. That is part of living and each of us needs to come to terms with that fact. We, our friends, and our family are not unique in having problems.

Jesus said, ***"In this godless world you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart! I've conquered the world."*** (John 16:33 MSG)

As we mature in faith and overcome our own struggles we can then be part of a support team network for others. In the same way we have been supported through our ongoing recovery process we can encourage others attempting to walk the same journey. A person who is on a known road can help those who are trying to find their way. God invites us to love others as we have been loved. Love goes beyond mere words. Sometimes it is spoken in silence, particularly when we don't condemn those who are asking for our help.

***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. 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.*** (Galatians 6:1-3 NLT)

## SOME AREAS OF ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCY

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

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

## 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.

## THE BIBLE SPEAKS ABOUT ENCOURAGEMENT

1 Thessalonians 5:11

*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

Romans 12:3-8

*For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

Romans 15:4-6

*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Corinthians 13:11

*Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.*

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

*May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.*

Hebrews 3:13

*But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

God invites us to be people who make a difference. How do we do that? We start by being the unique person God created us to be. We affirm that God created us with a plan for our lives and that we are part of the overall plan of God in this world. Like a piece of a jig-saw puzzle, if we do not take our place, then the picture is not complete. Every believer has been given a gift by the Holy Spirit to build up the body of Christ. Can I cook? Can I clean? Can I encourage? Can I teach? Can I listen? Can I pray? Can I paint? Can I write? Can I organize? Can I smile? Can I hug? Can I play a musical instrument? Can I say "Thank you". Can I compliment? What can I do today, with what I have today, that will bless others and give me deep satisfaction?

***In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't. (Romans 12:4-6 MSG)***

While it is true that failure and disappointment and hurt in our lives may have removed some of our God given desire to serve others, God is always in the business of renewing us to "mint" condition. As we remember demeaning and discouraging words we may have been the object of, God can help us resolve in our heart to be a person whose words always build up and encourage others. Through the forgiveness and healing we have received, we can reach out and be an understanding comfort. As we do this, God's wonderful purpose and plan for our lives is restored.

***God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NLT)***

Do you remember a time when someone encouraged you to have hope, to keep going, to do the right thing? We who are living with God in recovery should consider how we might be that person to encourage someone else. Look around you; assess how you might be able to help someone, not in a co-dependent way, but for their good. If you live in community, let your light shine so that others may find you approachable. Just as seasoning brings out the best

flavor in food we should have a positive effect wherever we may be. A famous man, St. Francis of Assisi says it in a prayer this way:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy;  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

#### **Questions For Reflection and Discussion**

1. What have others done for you that encouraged you?
2. What's your experience of living as a person described in the Prayer of St. Francis?

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, We want to reflect Your heart of encouragement to others. We know relationships aren't perfect and we've all experienced failure, disappointment, and hurt in our lives so we ask first for healing for anything that keeps us down and forgiveness for resentments we've held against others. Help us to lift up with our words and bring hope. Help us to shine the light of positive truth into the hearts and thinking of others by speaking Your words of life to them. Keep us from anything judgmental or demeaning that would discourage. Help us to know when to speak and when to be silent but most of all, how to speak with kindness and blessing. Amen



**Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, "How can I help?"**

(Romans 15:1-2 MSG)



#### **WAYS TO ENCOURAGE**

1. Say "Thank you."
2. Write a letter
3. Pray for each other
4. Make a phone call
5. Visit
6. Help each other
7. Listen with interest
8. Work together
9. Do a kind act
10. Smile
11. Say, "I love you"
13. Write a greeting card
13. Laugh together
14. Give a hug or a handshake





***Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.*** (John 15:5-6 NLT)

Outside of God, we can't maintain the desire to do what is right, let alone find the strength to do what we know we ought to do. It is the experience of each person who obediently walks with God that He gives power when they feel weakest and this is what continually makes them strong. As we share with each other and learn from one another our desire for more of God's power in our daily life grows and we become increasingly hopeful in God's ability to bring about His good purposes in our lives.

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

#### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How am I seeking and experiencing God's strength in my recovery?
2. What is the challenge for me to acknowledge that I'm powerless in my own strength and need to daily rely on God's strength?
3. What does the parable of the vine and the branches that Jesus taught convey to me about God and my recovery?
4. Through my own practice and experience, am I both receiving encouragement and encouraging others in their recovery with God?

PRAYER: Loving God, When I was weary and burdened, thank You for pursuing me with Your love and giving me hope for the future. I confess that I cannot do life without You. Jesus, I welcome You into my life as my Saviour and Lord. I surrender to Your guidance. I trust in the mighty power of Your Holy Spirit to be active in me, giving me the desire and will to do what pleases You. I am thankful that your power works best in my weakness. Anoint me afresh with Your Holy Spirit each day. I am grateful for Your lavish love and faithfulness and for the strength and hope you give me each day to live according to Your word. Amen

## **BARNABAS – A MAN OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

Each month we write and print and distribute little meditation booklets, "Life With God In Recovery." They are mailed or delivered to prisons all across Canada, to drug and alcohol treatment centers, to drop-in centers and churches and other places of outreach. We send lots to individuals as well.

One of the handy things about having a home office where this work is done is that you can work whenever it is convenient. Well, copying the booklets sometimes gets done at odd hours of the day and night. So, it was Sunday evening when the photocopier broke down. We were just about ¼ of the way through the print run. I did everything I knew to do to fix the problem (which is more than I used to know but still not all that much) and then I had to just shut everything down until the morning when I could get in touch with the maintenance company we have a contract with.

The technician and I texted back and forth to see if there was a simple solution – there wasn't – so he came out and work on the machine. A part was definitely broken and it's not available for 3 -5 working days. So, this unsung hero worked some kind of "bypass" and the final few hundred copies are printing as I am preparing this video. He's a guy you'll never meet but someone so important to the work we do. He and his colleagues who come are intelligent. They fix problems. They are polite and thoughtful. They are decent human beings who care about their work and their clients.

In the Bible, Barnabas was such a man.

**Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. When he went to Antioch and saw how God had blessed the believers there, he was very happy. He encouraged them all, saying, "Always be faithful to the Lord. Serve him with all your heart." Many more people became followers of the Lord.** Acts 11:23-24

There are a number of stories about Barnabas that shows that being an encourager was his character – in fact his name even means "son of encouragement." Who are those in our life who encourage us? Some of them do it by what they notice and say; others by simply doing what they do with skill and grace. It's good to take opportunities to reflect and gather our own stories of uplift.

***So encourage each other and help each other grow stronger in faith, just as you are already doing.*** 1 Thessalonians 5:11

We all need encouragers because it's not always easy to continue to do the things that need to be done to sort out the various issues and pressures we face in our individual circumstances. There are people around us every day who are desperately in need of a bit of encouragement. If we ask, God will help us to recognize them and have the courage reach out with respect and helpfulness and just be good neighbours to one another.

The airwaves are full of bad news stories of angry people and unjust actions. Political rhetoric is so harsh and demeaning and is so hard to listen to sometimes. Today we have an opportunity to be examples of something different in the middle of this broken and hurting world during difficult times

As Paul told his young protégé Timothy so we want to follow this advice today:

***Tell everyone God's message. Be ready at all times to do whatever is needed. Tell people what they need to do, tell them when they are doing wrong, and encourage them. Do this with great patience and careful teaching.*** 2 Timothy 4:2

No one is too young or too old to have something encouraging to say or do that can lift the spirit of another. Young children just curious about this or that, learning to walk and talk, enjoying simple things can encourage us and bring a smile to our face. Older folks meeting challenges with patience and grace, sharing resilience under pressure, can encourage resolve in our own hearts to do better. Most of all, our loving God stands ready with both the example of history and the promise of His ongoing presence and power to encourage us, to give us strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

***The leaders of Judah will encourage the people and say, 'The Lord All-Powerful is your God. He makes us strong.'*** Zechariah 12:5

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your Holy Spirit who lives in us to encourage us and make us strong today. . We want to encourage others with the truth that You are the All powerful God and You make us strong. We face many things these days but we can face and overcome challenges as we seek Your help and follow Your heart. May what we say, how we say it, what we do and how we do it encourage others to be better and do better than they could on their own. Amen

The word of God speaks truth at this time, if we will listen. ***So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 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.*** (1 Corinthians 10:12, Romans 7:18 NIV)

As our physical energy is being renewed we need to be careful to correctly identify its source. The source is not ourselves. We are powerless on our own. We need a power greater than ourselves for the rebuilding journey ahead. We need to maintain the routine of turning our will and our life over to the care of God in each and every circumstance. Each day, throughout the day, for the rest of our lives, we will need to affirm our powerlessness and surrender to God who is the source of our strength. As we remind one another of these things in meetings and conversations we will find that God will empower us to be the person He created us to be.

***I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.*** (Ephesians 1:18-20 NIV)

No matter how strong we may feel, it's not enough to bring us through to sustained recovery. We will tire out and give up the struggle if we think our own physical or mental strength is enough for the long haul. Strength is a gift. Strength is the product of an ongoing relationship with God. Strength is the result of trusting God, waiting for God to act, and following God's plan for fullness of life. We need to support one another during the tough times and encourage each other to keep going as we learn the ways of God. This is what will give us joy, keep us safe, and help us respond well to the events of each day.

***The Lord is my strength and my song; he has given me victory. God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. Christ is the mighty power of God and the wisdom of God. This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.*** (Exodus 15:2, Psalm 46:1, 1 Corinthians 1:24b-25 NLT)

Jesus taught that real strength comes to us when we remain in His care and grow in His grace. He used a gardening picture to help us understand.



## EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH, AND HOPE

Many of us, when we come into recovery, are physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually weak. We're running on empty and are more likely picturing ourselves weary and limping along, rather than seeing ourselves running and not growing weary. We need the strength the Lord will provide to see us through.

***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. (Matt. 11:28-29 NLT)***

Our motivation for coming to support group meetings is to continue our journey with God in recovery and to share our experience, strength and hope with each other. We share what is working for us. We hear and observe what is working for others. We want to learn from practices which helped old-timers get strong and stay strong and which may also help us.

***[God] gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:29 NLT, 40:30-31NIV)***

In the beginning we comply with the recovery program guidelines because we believe that there has to be a better life than the one we have been living. We are willing to learn from the experience of others who have walked the path before us. We sleep, we eat, and we talk. We read, we pray, and we write. We exercise, we go to meetings, and we serve. We start to look better and feel stronger. As our strength increases, we begin to have hope for a better life.

At this point, because we have more energy, thoughts of our old way of handling life begin to surface and even seem manageable. The temptation to fix life as we've always fixed it begins to call. The desire to run rather than face the troubling events of our past will grow. The voice in our head will assure us that we, by ourselves, know what to do to get well. If we entertain these thoughts, we will drift towards relapse. This is the time to stay close to God and others who are doing well in recovery.

## LOVE THAT GOES BEYOND WORDS

As we begin to walk more and more in healthy lifestyles, we are given many opportunities to pass on helpful information and supportive companionship to others attempting the same journey. God invites us to love others as we have been loved.

Love goes beyond mere words. Love doesn't just tell someone what the problem is. Love helps them find and apply a solution. Love finds a way to support healthy change and healthy action. Sometimes it is spoken in silence, when we don't condemn someone who's looking for help.

When we love someone and want to encourage them we need to find out what is actually helpful to him or her in their journey. When we provide a helping hand it is good to check and see if help was actually experienced.

Encouragement can be offered in a variety of ways: a word, a note, a prayer, a phone call, a visit, a challenge, a random act of kindness, refraining from reacting, setting and holding to personal boundaries, providing meeting information, or even a challenge to look at some behaviour.

We can be a part of a support network for others in the same way that we have been supported in our recovery. We will experience encouragement ourselves as we offer it to others.

***Share each other's troubles and problems and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone in need, you are only fooling yourself. I am giving you a new commandment. Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. And here is how to measure love – the greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends. (Excerpts from Galatians 6, John 13, and John 15)***

### Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How does encouragement work?
2. What are some ways we encourage others by NOT doing certain things?
3. What are some things others have done for us that have encouraged us?
4. When is the last time this week we did something to encourage someone?
5. Who looks like they might need encouragement today? How might I respond?

## SOME ACTS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

1. Find a solution together
2. Offer a word of appreciation
3. Name observed growth
4. Write a note
5. Pray a prayer
6. Make a phone call
7. Visit
8. Listen Listen Listen
9. Perform a random act of kindness
10. Share useful information
11. Provide helpful service (dishes, chores, laundry, etc)
12. Smile
13. Sincerely say, "I love you". "I care about you" "I'm thinking of you."
14. Give a token or gift or card
15. Counter doubt with a sincere, "Yes you can".
16. Laugh together
17. Challenge to new honesty and hope
18. Name & rename God's gift of a future & a hope
19. Practice silence instead of condemnation
20. Ask a question; listen to the answer with genuine interest
21. Give a hug or a handshake



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.



Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching. 2 Timothy 4:2 NLT



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



In our recovery, today, we would do well to watch for an opportunity to be a friend to someone, to carry a burden, to encourage and build someone up, to spur someone on to love and good deeds. As we respect their uniqueness, we can ask ourselves, "What would feel encouraging to this person? What would motivate this person to fulfill their calling? Is there anything this person needs? How can I be a supportive friend to this person?"

*Someone has said, "A simple friend thinks the problems you whine about are recent." A real friend says, "You've been whining about the same thing for years. Get off your duff and do something about it."*

#### Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How am I being a friend?
2. How am I reaching out to include the joy and wisdom of friends in my life?
3. What happens that moves me away from friends towards isolation and makes me vulnerable for relapse?
4. Comparing – why do I get caught up in it? What am I doing to change?
5. How deeply or how honestly am I letting myself be known by others?
6. What might I do to improve as a person who "brings out the best" in others?

Dear Jesus, I admit that I struggle with the notion of being a true friend. Please help me take my eyes off myself. Help me to look around at others and truly care about what is going on in their lives. Help me to be friendly towards others as I would be to a beloved brother or sister. Each person I meet could be a potential friend. Help me to be as salt and light to those around me. Help me to learn from You. I am forever grateful that You are a true friend who cares for me. AMEN



Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.  
Hebrews 10:24 NLT



The words of the godly encourage many, but fools are destroyed by their lack of common sense.

Proverbs 10:21 NLT



Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 NLT



When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.

Romans 1:12 NLT

You must warn each other every day, while it is still "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.  
Hebrews 3:13 NLT

## BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN ONE ANOTHER

One of the characteristics of life in addiction is isolation from others and doing things on our own. The life God created us to live, and which we seek to recover is one where we come close to God and others and allow relationships to grow that help all of us live better.

Can we remember a time when someone encouraged us to have hope, to keep going, to do the right thing? What did that person do that felt encouraging? True friends help us become the people we were born to be. Sometime it's as basic as encouraging each other to be our best in daily activities, daily decisions, and spiritual growth. At other times, it's helping us discover our gifts and moving forward to use them for good.

People loved to spend time with Jesus. Everywhere He went, Jesus told people that the kingdom of God was available to them. Jesus taught that anyone who was part of the kingdom of God was a citizen with dignity, a worthwhile servant of the King, the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Jesus called people forward to be the wonderful gift God created them to be. We will grow in our own recovery when we practice encouraging others in their journey.

***You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*** (Matthew 5:13-16 NIV)

Friendship is based on shared values and goals. At one level people can be friends just because they enjoy the same games or crafts. However, lasting friendship happens when people share their deepest and most important values with each other. A passion to see wrongs made right, for example, can bond friends together no matter what they have to face. If each friend sees the other and believes in the other as salt and light, that encourages and strengthens the person so they become more than they could have been on

their own. Knowing God is with us and with our friend is a cord that binds us together in His love.

A real friend helps us carry our burdens, encourages and builds us up, helps us move toward restoration from a challenging experience, and spurs us on to love and good deeds. A real friend doesn't climb into a dark and complaining place with us. A good friend stands with us as we face what comes our way and helps us find God's plan in it.

***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. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Encourage one another daily ... so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*** (From Galatians 6, Hebrews 3, and 10)

Many of us struggle with self-acceptance. Sometimes we compare ourselves with others – their looks, their gifts, their achievements. However, true friendship means seeing ourselves as peers, encouragers, and cheerleaders in each other's lives. We affirm one another for a job well done, and we open doors for each other to try new things and take healthy risk. We air our feelings out loud without fear of rejection and know that with God's help and our friend at our side, we will get better and better at sorting out the pieces in the puzzle of life.

***Friends come and friends go, but a true friend sticks by you like family.*** (Proverbs 18:24 MSG)

Here are some things friends do to bring out the best in us:

- Friends stimulate our faith walk with God. They pray for us.
- Friends ask questions. They laugh and cry with us.
- Friends encourage us to try new things
- Friends affirm our strengths and are not threatened by our successes.
- Friends remind us of hope when we feel discouraged.
- Friends challenge us to take a healthy risk.
- Friends stick with us when everyone else gives up on us.
- Friends notice and compliment us on a job well done.