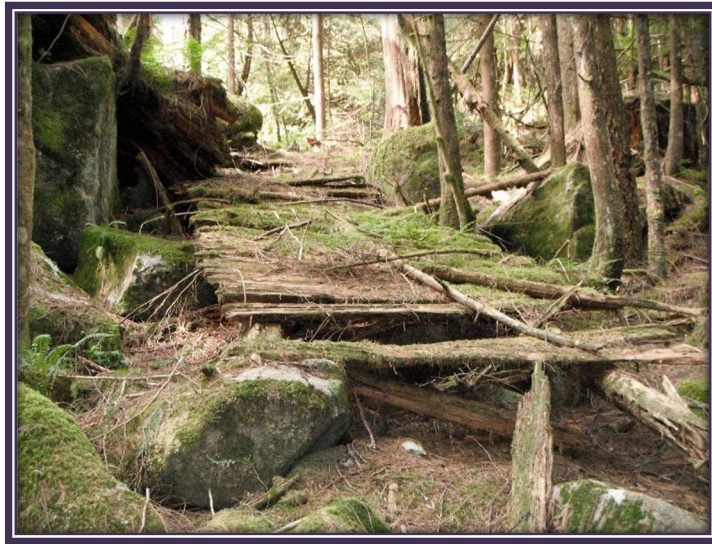


Life With God In Recovery

STEP EIGHT: MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED



Step Eight – Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

What prompted us to physically, mentally, or emotionally, hurt someone? Regardless of the excuses we may make for our behaviour, it is time to admit we caused harm to persons we had contact with on our life's journey. An important part of Step Eight is coming to an accurate view of what actually went wrong in our relationships.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.
(Ephesians 4:31-32 NLT)

There are some types of behaviour that quickly come to mind when we reflect on ways we have hurt other people. Perhaps we spoke in anger or we used distance and coldness to wound others deeply. A bad temper brings out anger in others. Lying, cheating, stealing not only takes from others but deprives them of peace of mind and emotional security. Our seemingly “victimless crimes” always have a victim. Many of us were domineering and controlling and always had to have our own way. Everyone around us had to “walk on egg shells” to protect their own peace and security. At other times we wallowed in self-pity and did nothing but complain and find fault. We were masters of playing the blame game and were unwilling to actually talk about our issues or take responsibility for the circumstances we created around us. As we seek God’s wisdom in making amends, He will show us how our attitude and behaviour hurt others. He will also help us identify and list all those who were harmed by our actions, either directly or indirectly, and help us become willing to make amends.

A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. Gently instruct

those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants. When people's lives please the Lord, even their enemies are at peace with them. (2 Timothy 2:24-26, Proverbs 16:7 NLT)

To identify those persons we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all, we need to look at our past actions and the root cause of why we behaved the way we did towards each person we have listed. With God's help, we will be able to sort out some of the contributing factors of what went wrong in our lives and break the cycle of injuring others. As we begin to understand God's way of treating others, we will develop a loving and caring attitude and begin to have healthy relationships in the future.

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS: Relationships often go wrong when we have unrealistic expectations of others. We carry within our being a deep need to be loved. We believe that God created this need in us because we are made in His image and the Bible tells us "God is Love". In His unfailing love for us God wants us to feel secure, accepted, cared for, and appreciated. Our core value and peace must come from God. However, many people in recovery bypass this primary relationship with God and end up demanding security, acceptance, love, and appreciation from others. In our neediness, we approach others expecting

them to meet our demands and end up building toxic relationships. God's intent is that we love each other as He loves us. His plan is that we approach each relationship with the qualities of giving and blessing rather than needing and getting.

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:1-3 NLT)

BREACHES OF TRUST: Broken promises, lying, cheating, stealing, betraying, etc. are breaches of trust. Before we go to the other person, we need to establish if resentment or a sense of entitlement fueled our past behaviour. We need to deal with any underlying issues before God. We need to be honest about our part in the breakdown. Our purpose must always be to seek restoration, and not to establish blame.

And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with

the speck in your friend's eye. (Matthew 7:3-5 NLT)

FAILURE TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY: If our needs were not met during childhood, we may be unsure how to meet the needs of others – children, parents, spouses, or friends. We may have been so overwhelmed by our experience, or avoidance, of responsibility that we stayed in denial about how our lifestyle affected others. The truth is, when we fail to responsibly provide for the needs of loved ones, they experience the hurt of neglect and abandonment. We can become willing to make amends by simply admitting that we were wrong and we failed in our responsibility towards them. We can seek God's wisdom today to help us grow in His grace as we commit to love, support, and encourage our loved ones and friends. With God's help we can become one known for our lifestyle of integrity.

Once we've taken inventory with God and explored the underlying issues of our behaviour in relationships, we can then take the next step in preparing to make amends -- we choose to forgive those who have harmed us or let us down, and submit them and their actions into the care of God. As long as we refuse to forgive we will experience the pain of the event. While that pain is within us, we will be unable to accept responsibility for any part of what went wrong in our lives and relationships. Our responsibility will always be overshadowed by "blame." Forgiveness acknowledges that wrong was done to us. Forgiveness turns our attention to God

and away from the person who harmed us. Forgiveness establishes God as the source of our healing and restoration and He promises to work all things together for our good.

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. (James 5:16 NLT)

For too long we've focused on the wrong person in our desire for healing. No person can give it. Healing comes from God. Receiving healing from God, forgiving the offender, making amends for our part – this is the process of healing and restoration. Any other way is flawed.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What efforts am I making to come to an accurate view of what went wrong in my relationships? Does this view reflect what Jesus was teaching about dealing with the log in our own eye before dealing with the speck in someone else's?
2. As I make my list of people I have harmed, what rationalizations do I hear "the committee in my head" trying to offer me?
3. What core issues resulted in my hurtful ways of interacting with others?
4. As I make my list of all persons I've harmed, am I checking with my sponsor or another responsible person with regards to it? Am I

willing to adjust my perspective on the circumstances based on their input?

5. Where do I notice resistance in myself to “becoming willing to make amends”? Am I am still resentful about the other person's wrongs? Am I ashamed to make that admission to a person I respect? Are there real-world consequences I fear if I come clean (jail/unemployment/divorce)? What am I going to do about that?
6. Am I willing to pray and ask God to show me ALL persons I have harmed and to help me become willing to make amends to them ALL?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for bringing me out of darkness into your glorious light. Help me to stay on the path of loving you with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and of loving my neighbour as myself. I confess that I have allowed the problems in my own life to cloud my judgment and have believed the lie that others are to blame for my bad attitude and behaviour. Help me to see where my self-centered ways have impacted my relationships. Give me the courage to admit when I am wrong and help me to become willing to make amends to anyone I have hurt. My desire is to walk in your ways and live life to the full. Through the power of your Holy Spirit strengthen me to structure my daily life and relationships according to your word. I am forever grateful that You care. AMEN