

THE CHRISTIAN TWELVE STEPS

The foundation of the recovery process is his or her relationship with our loving heavenly father, as personalized in Jesus Christ.

A central theme and belief of this work is that healing is possible through faith in God's grace. To some degree or another, everyone can experience freedom from the damaging effects of a less-than-nurturing environment. As our wounds heal, we become functional members of the Body of Christ.

Working the Twelve-Steps helps us reclaim our birthright as children of a compassionate God. We were created in His image and have gifts. These steps are intended to awaken us to God's grace and give us an opportunity to experience peaceful and productive living. Feelings of unworthiness, anxiety and inferiority diminish and are replaced by spiritual strengths and virtues. Focusing on our new relationship with God transforms our obsessive need for other people's approval. Our attention is, instead, captivated by the promise of new life in Christ.

PEACE WITH GOD

STEP 1. WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER THE EFFECT OF OUR SEPARATION FROM GOD--THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE.

"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).

To admit that we are "powerless" and that our lives have become "unmanageable" is a particularly distasteful chore for most of us. It's not macho, but first we must acknowledge that we have a problem--our own self-centered, egocentric, omnipotent human natures.

Powerlessness is the inability to control the use of substances that threaten to destroy our lives, compulsive behavior, one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding another person. We are powerless to control our lives that have become unmanageable.

The admission of powerlessness and unmanageability is neither a sign of weakness nor a source of shame; it is a recognition of reality - a conviction of need for healing and restoration.

STEP 2. CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY.

"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose" (Philippians 2:13).

Jesus Christ is the only legitimate Higher Power; only He and He alone can restore us to sanity. Coming to believe in His ability and willingness to heal us is the central issue of Step Two.

The powerlessness and unmanageability we finally admit in Step One can only be overcome with the aid of One who is greater than ourselves, and that One is Jesus Christ. He is our Savior, Lord and Righteousness, because of His precious blood. Step Two is sometimes referred to as "the step of faith." Just as faith is an essential component in the steps of salvation, so, too, it is an essential aspect of recovery from addiction. The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:16,17).

We have come to believe that there must be a change of mind, from a state of unbelief to a state of belief. We have come to believe that Jesus Christ will restore us to sanity--spiritually, mentality and emotionally. Now we come to the step where we must act on our faith and demonstrate our trust.

STEP 3. MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, 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).

An understanding of God is ultimately possible only because God Himself made it possible--and He did it for us by revealing Himself to us in the flesh-and-blood personage of Jesus Christ. There is no doorway to salvation other than Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

It is essential that we make a decision to act on what we believe. We make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God. Recovery is an active process, literally a change in the direction of one's life. This is the point at

which faith becomes action. We allow God to stand at the helm of our lives as Captain of our fate. We embrace the heart of Christian living - our Creator-Redeemer

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born-again" (John 3:3). The spiritual rebirth described by Jesus is precisely the dethroning of the egocentric, omnipotent nature, followed by the enthronement of Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives. The old selfish nature is put to death, and the new man or woman in Jesus rises from the grave, born again.

We acknowledge Jesus as Lord of our lives and begin the lifelong process of surrender to God. The entire matter boils down to knowing God's love and loving others as He first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19).

PEACE WITH OURSELVES

STEP 4. MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40).

God begins within us a lifelong process of transformation. Like clay in the hands of a skillful potter, we are gradually molded and shaped by God into vessels suitable for His purposes. This process is called sanctification. The inventory required in Step Four can be used by God to chip away at our character defects and shape us as He would have us to be.

The primary difficulty in making "a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves" is denial that has helped imprison us in addiction. Denial is an attempt to escape the pain, brokenness, and human limitation that are inherent in the human condition.

While denial is darkness, God has always been in the business of turning darkness into light. Light is illuminating; it brings objects into view, showing them as they are, and exposing the dirt and crud (Galatians 5:19-21).

Our responsibility is to make an inventory of all that is revealed by the "Son-light" as He shines into the depths of our being. An inventory is a list of items, both the good and bad, as the light reveals both the fine and the foul in the chambers of our hearts. This moral inventory relates to principles of right and wrong behavior, in accordance with God's law of love, exemplified by the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

A useful framework for identifying our liabilities is the traditional Seven Deadly Sins. These sins are: 1) Pride, 2) Greed, 3) Lust, 4) Envy, 5) Anger, 6) Gluttony, and 7) Slothfulness.

Also, it is necessary to identify those feelings and behaviors most commonly found in Adult Children from homes where addiction-related or other damage-inducing behavior was prevalent. These are listed in the book, "The Twelve Steps — A Spiritual Journey" distributed by RPI Publishing, Inc. These character traits are 1) Resentment, 2) Fear 3) Repressed or inappropriately expressed anger, 4) Approval seeking 5) Caretaking, 6) Control, 7) Fear of abandonment, 8) Fear of authority figures, 9) Frozen feelings, 10) Isolation, 11) Insecurity, 12) Overdeveloped sense of responsibility, 13) Irresponsibility, and 14) Inappropriately expressed sexuality.

In making a Step Four inventory, it is important to identify assets as well as liabilities, leading us out of a sense of low self-esteem and shame. We are to identify ourselves in Christ as new creations, made in the image of God, royal and righteous, holy, blameless, and unique, a child of God, with spiritual gifts, because of the blood of Jesus Christ. We overcome our sins by grace through faith.

STEP 5. ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONG.

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16a).

Confession of sin to God is the essence of true repentance. Our sins create a barrier of our own making between ourselves and God, but when confessed, the walls come tumbling down. Confession to God as well as to another human being goes hand in hand. It is an inherently healing act to unload, in the presence of another human being, the burden of guilt that has been part of the lifestyle of addiction. A cleansing process takes place, as a level of openness and honesty is experienced.

Lastly, we must admit to ourselves the character defects, faults, and shortcomings; in this step, we own them, we must accept what is found, and not get away with lying to ourselves. We must admit the exact nature of our wrong (Pse. chapter 51).

STEP 6. WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER.

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:10).

The process of surrender continues. Surrender means that we cease trying to re-create ourselves in the image of God and become willing to be molded and shaped by God into fit vessels for His use.

The task of removing all of these defects of character is much too great for mere human endeavor. While society may sternly admonish us to "pull ourselves up by our bootstraps", Step Six encourages us to let go and let God (Col. 3:8-10).

STEP 7. HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS.

"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).

God is able to remove our shortcomings. As humble servants, through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross and the crediting of His righteousness to our accounts, we no longer come up short (Rom. 3:23-26).

This transforming process is a cooperative effort between us and God. We have attained the high standard of righteousness exacted by God; we are fully pleasing and acceptable in His sight. It is because Jesus walked there first that we may humbly take this step.

The apostle Peter wrote, "So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you" (1 Pet. 5:6,7, NLT).

PEACE WITH OTHERS

STEP 8. MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED, AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL.

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

Whereas Steps Six and Seven dealt with our vertical relationship with God, Steps Eight and Nine deal with our horizontal relationships, that is, our relationships with our fellow human beings. So here, we make a list of all persons we have harmed, and become willing to make amends, allowing God to rid us of all resentments (Lk. 6:35-38).

This step suggests that we merely be willing to commit to do something. In this case, the task at hand will probably be difficult and unpleasant, for we are asked to come face to face in the next step, where possible, with those who have suffered as a result of our additive lifestyle.

STEP 9. MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE WHEREVER POSSIBLE, EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS.

"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).

Making amends does not mean merely saying "I'm sorry" for wrongs done or injuries inflicted. This is an action step, one in which we demonstrate our changed behavior toward others.

A sincere, heartfelt apology, evidenced by continued sobriety and changed behavior, maybe all that one can offer in restitution for the painful emotional injuries that have occurred. Remember that the penalty for our sins has been paid by Jesus Christ.

STEP 10. CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND, WHEN WE WERE WRONG, PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT.

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

There is an ongoing search-and-destroy mission whose goal is to root out and put to death every manifestation (thoughts, feelings, and actions) of the sinful, egocentric nature that was at the heart of our addiction (2 Cor. 10:4-6).

We must constantly monitor our actions or behaviors to see that they are neither offensive to God, to ourselves or to those around us. If we reflect upon our thoughts and emotions, we may prevent the occurrence of harmful actions on our part. When we are wrong, we promptly admit it without delay, making amends.

STEP 11. SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD, PRAYING ONLY FOR KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT.

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

For those of us who truly thirst for the presence of God, who desire to draw closer to Him, prayer and meditation will become important parts of our lives. As we draw near to God, through Jesus Christ, our High Priest, He will lead us into all truth, and give us the power to live for Him. His presence is wonderful (Psa. 16:11).

Prayer is simply talking to God. The line between prayer and meditation is a blurred one. As we focus our thoughts on spiritual matters, we will naturally pray about them as well. Often, these prayers will be informal conversations with God. This will improve our conscious contact with Him for knowing His will and experiencing His power to live.

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.

"Brothers, 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).

Not only must we practice these principles in all our affairs, but we must carry the message to others. As Christians in recovery, we carry one message to those still trapped in addiction. That is, the message of healing and salvation through Jesus Christ. We have a unique opportunity in obeying the command of our Lord to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).