C.A.R.E.

*Character – Accountability –*

*Recovery – Encouragement*

*A Christ-centered 12-Step Support Group*



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WHY “TWELVE STEPS” FOR EMOTIONAL & SPIRITUAL HEALING?

Hi! My name is Tom and I am a recovering addict who has struggled with alcoholism, control problems, compulsiveness and codependent characteristics that often contribute to depression. I became a Christian May 5th, 1965. With the help of God, I was able to quit drinking by August of the same year. However, I “fell off the wagon” in 1969 and again in 1974. The main reason I slipped was because I never dealt with the character defects that all addictive, compulsive sinners possess, thus I was unable to surrender them to God. Although I have been dry since 1974, it has only been within the last few years that I began to deal with my denial concerning many of my character defects. This happened as a result of starting a 12-step group at the insistence of others with problems that had them enslaved. Praise God for these people. I experience emotional healing one day at a time as long as I work my program of recovery and pray regularly Psalm 139:23-24: *God, see what is in my heart. Know what is there. Put me to the test. Know what I'm thinking. See if there's anything in my life you don't like. Help me live in the way that is always right*.

As I began to read devotionally from my Recovery and Life Recovery Devotional Bibles, develop weekly support group lessons, and take an honest evaluation of myself, I found I had more character defects than I wanted to admit. With the help of God and my support groups, I have been able to over-come many of these character defects. Some of them, however, have a tendency to creep back. That is why I continue to need the 12 steps, my support group, and most importantly a daily, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

Guess what? Many Christians I have been acquainted with over the past nearly 40 years are filled with emotional distress as a result of enslavement to someone or something destructive. These addictions are basically behaviors that help those who are emotionally insecure alter reality. Many Christians live in constant denial of the problems of codependency and an obsessive-compulsive lifestyle that has led to generations of dysfunction and inter-personal conflict. A Bible-based, Christ-centered twelve-step program can help us admit our denial and get the help necessary to become a functional, well-adjusted Christian.

There are many 12 step lists. The list we use is revised from the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and identifies the Higher Power. These, along with weekly support groups, have be instrumental in healing sin-sick people from problems that have ranged from alcohol/drug addiction, sexual perversion, control issues, codependency, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, religious legalism, unhealthy emphasis on work, success or achievement, food addictions, compulsive spending or unhealthy hoarding, constant physical illness, internet addiction, approval dependency, perfectionism, over-emphasis on structure and organization, etc., etc.

To be honest, most of us could find ourselves somewhere on the earlier list of unhealthy, hurtful behaviors. The problem is that many of us are in denial. We have lived so long in our dysfunctions that we have become comfortable in them. We've learned to deny, excuse, and/or justify our problem behaviors. And, of course, we have become very vocal in our opposition to such words as co-dependency and dysfunction. This comes from a lack of knowledge concerning the true meaning of these behavioral problems and a denial of our own character defects.

It is my observation that 12-step members are more in tune with such Scriptures as Galatians 6:1-10; James 5:13-20 and Hebrews 3:13 than most Christians, including many church leaders. (**Take a moment to read these Scriptures**). The understanding and compassion of those in recovery far exceed those who live in daily denial of their own sins and resulting character defects. Let us commit ourselves to living daily according to what the Bible says: *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 2:3-5).

THE DEVIL'S LIE:

“Self-worth = Performance + Others' Opinions”

Psalm 139:23-24 (NIRV): *God, see what is in my heart. Know what is there. Put me to the test. Know what I'm thinking. See if there's anything in my life you don't like. Help me live in the way that is always right*.

**Some Recommended Resources**

We recommend that you purchase one or more of these Recovery Bibles. I have listed them in order of my own personal preference.

*NIV Recovery Devotional Bible* – Zondervan

*Life Recovery Bible-NLT* – Tyndale House

*Serenity NKJV New Testament, Psalms & Proverbs—A Companion for Twelve-Step Recovery* – Thomas Nelson Publishers

*NIV Celebrate Recovery Bible* – Zondervan

OTHER RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

*The Christian Codependence Recovery Workbook: From Surviving to Significance*

*A Christian Perspective on Codependency* by Pat Springle – LifeWay Press

*The Search for Significance* by Robert McGee

Also, for daily devotionals and other helpful recovery resources we recommend that you get familiar with this website: [www.nacronline.com/](http://www.nacronline.com/)

MEETING ORDER

WELCOME TO C.A.R.E. (Character – Accountability – Recovery – Encouragement). We are happy you are here. Please remember the confidential nature of this meeting.

OPENING UNISON PRAYER: Father God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. In Jesus name, amen.

INTRODUCING OURSELVES (First name only and reason for being here).

“Hi, I’m \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I’m a recovering \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

NOTES OF INTEREST

* Special Note: It is very important that no one particular person controls the meeting. No cross-talking. This is a sharing time, not an advice time.

READING OF THE TWELVE STEPS (Feel free to pass when it comes your turn).

LESSON TIME

BREAK INTO SHARING GROUPS IF NECESSARY

PRAYER TIME (Pray for individual needs – 3-5 minutes total)

CLOSING PRAYER (In unison): God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.

Taking, as he did, this sinful world as it is, not as we would have it.

Trusting that he will make all things right if we surrender to his will;

That we may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with him forever in the next.

Lord, bless us and keep us; make your face shine upon us and be gracious to us; turn your face toward us and give us peace. In Jesus precious name, amen.

The Devil’s lie: Self-worth = performance + other’s opinions.

12 STEPS TO HEALING

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and dependencies – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that only Almighty God could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral and ethical inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our harmful, sinful behaviors.
6. Were entirely ready to have the Holy Spirit remove all these sinful behaviors and resulting defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our sins and shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had sinned against, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer, study of the Scriptures, and meditation to improve our conscious contact with Almighty God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of the Holy Spirit and these steps, we tried to carry this message to others with character defects, and to practice these principles in all our relationships.

THE SERENITY PRAYER

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

courage to change the things I can,

Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time;

accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.

Taking, as he did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it.

Trusting that he will make all things right if I surrender to his will;

That I may be reasonably happy in this life,

and supremely happy with him forever in the next. Amen

THE FIRST STEP YOU TAKE

IS ALWAYS THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE

The first few steps you take on any journey won’t get you where you want to go. But without those first steps and the many more that follow, you would always be standing right where you are, looking towards the future and wondering what it would really be like to see your world the way you always dreamed it could be.

One of the greatest lessons in life is the one you learn about moving forward and taking steps to reach your goals. Life rewards those who are willing to be involved in it and take chances. Take your chance and take those first few steps, because a better life is just waiting for you. –Nick Santana

Hope is not the closing of your eyes

to the difficulty, the risk, or the failure.

It is a trust that ―

if I fail now ―

I shall not fail forever;

and if I am hurt, I shall be healed.

It is a trust that

life is good,

love is powerful,

and the future is full of promise. –Anonymous

IT WORKS – IF YOU DO

* I CAN MAKE THE PROGRAM WORK.
  + Work toward the Goals every day.
  + Obtain medical help if needed.
  + Regularly attend meetings.
  + Keep in touch with a group member (sponsor).
  + Lean on the Lord for strength.
* I CAN WORK TOWARD A GOAL.
  + Get into my Notebook studies.
  + Often think about its meaning.
  + Act on what I learn.
* I CAN HELP A GROUP.
  + Get busy working on my own recovery.
  + Reach out to others.
  + Offer to help carry the load.
  + Use the telephone to keep in touch.
  + Pray regularly for members’ needs.

*“I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength.”* (Philippians 4:13)

REMEMBER THE DEVIL’S LIE

Self-worth = Performance + Others’ Opinions

⬂ HOW GOD VIEWS YOU ⬃

Titus 3:4-7(NIRV): *But the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared. He saved us. It wasn't because of the good things we had done. It was because of his mercy. He saved us by washing away our sins. We were born again. The Holy Spirit gave us new life. God poured out the Spirit on us freely because of what Jesus Christ our Savior has done. His grace made us right with God. So now we have received the hope of eternal life as God's children*.

TWELVE STEP PRAYERS

Serenity Prayer: God, Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the ability to know the difference.

First Step Prayer: Dear Lord, I admit that I am powerless over my addiction I admit that my life is unmanageable when I try to control it. Help me this day to understand the true meaning of powerlessness. Remove from me all denial of my addiction.

Alternate Prayer: Today, I ask for help with my addiction. Denial has kept me from seeing how powerless I am and how my life is unmanageable. I need to learn and remember that I have an incurable illness and that abstinence is the only way to deal with it.

Second Step Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know in my heart that only you can restore me to sanity. I humbly ask that you remove all twisted thought and addictive behavior from me this day. Heal my spirit and restore in me a clear mind.

Alternate Prayer: I pray for an open mind so I may come to believe in a Power greater than myself. I pray for humility and the continued opportunity to increase my faith. I don't want to be crazy any more.

Third Step Prayer: Father God, I offer myself to You to build with me and to do with me according to Your will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your Power, Your love and Your way of life. May I do Your will always!

Alternate Prayer: Take my will and my life, Guide me in my recovery, Show me how to live.

Fourth Step Prayer

Loving Father, it is I who has made my life a mess. I have done it, but I cannot undo it. My mistakes are mine and I will begin a searching and fearless moral inventory. I will write down my wrongs, but I will also include that which is good. I pray for the strength to complete the task.

Fifth Step Prayer

Almighty God, My inventory has shown me who I am, yet I ask for your help in admitting my wrongs to another person and to you. Assure me, and be with me, in this Step, for without this Step I cannot progress in my recovery. With your help, I can do this and I will do it.

Sixth Step Prayer

Dear God, I am ready for Your help in removing from me the defects of character which I now realize are an obstacle to my recovery Help me to continue being honest with myself & guide me toward spiritual and mental health.

Seventh Step Prayer

Almighty God, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here to do Your bidding.

Eighth Step Prayer

Almighty Father, I ask Your help in making my list of all those I have harmed. I will take responsibility for my mistakes and be forgiving to others as You are forgiving to me. Grant me the willingness to begin my restitution. This I pray in Jesus name.

Ninth Step Prayer

Loving Father, I pray for the right attitude to make my amends, being ever mindful not to harm others in the process. I ask for Your guidance in making indirect amends. Most important, I will continue to make amends by staying abstinent, helping others and growing in spiritual progress.

Tenth Step Prayer

I pray I may continue: To grow in understanding & effectiveness; To take daily spot check inventories of myself; To correct mistakes when I make them; To take responsibility for my actions; To be ever aware of my negative and self-defeating attitudes and behaviors; To keep my willfulness in check; To always remember I need Your help; To keep love and tolerance of others as my code; and To continue in daily prayer how I can best serve You, Almighty God.

Eleventh Step Prayer

Heavenly Father, as I understand You, I pray to keep my connection with You open and clear from the confusion of daily life. Through my prayers and meditation I ask especially for freedom from self-will, rationalization and wishful thinking. I pray for the guidance of correct thought and positive action. Your will, Father, not mine, be done.

Twelfth Step Prayer

Father God, my spiritual awakening continues to unfold. The help I have received I will pass on and give to others, both in and out of the Fellowship. For this opportunity I am grateful. I pray most humbly to continue walking day by day on the road of spiritual progress. I pray for the inner strength & wisdom to practice the principles of this way of life in all I do and say. I need You, my friends and the program every hour of every day. This is a better way to live.**STEP 1**

We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and dependencies - that our lives had become unmanageable.

*“I know that 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)

***Devotion:*** *Read Psalm 6:2-4*

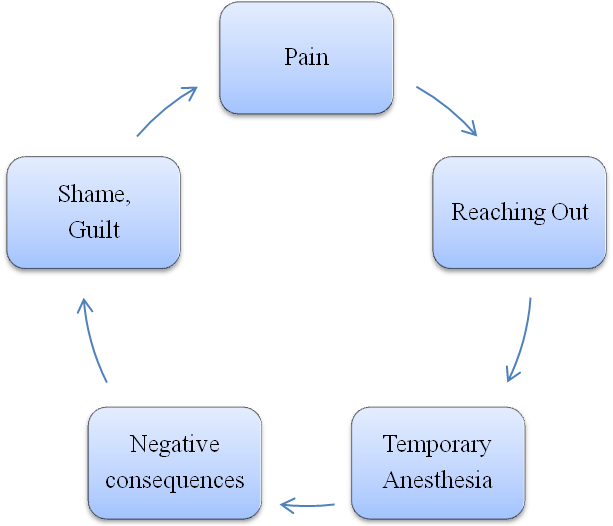
It is human nature to want to be (and to believe that we are) in complete control of our circumstances and our lives. But truly fortunate people come to a point in their lives when they realize this is definitely not possible or even desirable. These people are the fortunate ones because they have come to the end of themselves just as the psalmist David has come to the end of his physical and emotional resources.

*“My bones are troubled” is* a Hebrew way of saying “*I am* *wracked with pain.”* David, the valiant warrior, admits his weakness, his emotional collapse. But instead of being defeated by this admission, David has actually placed himself in the strongest position possible. Now he is free to transcend the emptiness of his own resources, free to surrender trying to manage things on his own strength, and free to partake of God's unlimited resources!

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Admitting that we are powerless runs contrary to cultural messages that say, “Be strong! Be the master of your own destiny!” The admission of powerlessness also conflicts with the addictive message, because the addiction itself will tell us, “You have a high tolerance! Use more or me! You can handle it!”

Nevertheless, the central paradox of Step 1 is that the admission of complete defeat permits a life-transforming victory through recovery. The admission of powerlessness over an addiction actually becomes the foundation for the strength to eventually overcome the dependency. Admitting powerlessness is absolutely essential to breaking the addiction cycle, which is made up of five points:



(See explanation next page)

⏩1) **Pain** ⏩2) **Reaching out** to an addictive agent, such as work, food, sex, alcohol, or dependent relationships to salve our pain ⏩3) **Temporary anesthesia** ⏩4) Negative **consequences** ⏩5) **Shame**, **guilt**, which result in more pain or low self-esteem ⏩1) **Pain** ⏩

For example, the workaholic who has low self-esteem (pain) begins to overwork (addictive agent), which results in praise, success, and achievement (relief). However, as a rule, family relationships and his personal relationship with God suffer terribly because of inadequacies, both real and imagined, which brings him back to point 1 in the addiction cycle. Now the workaholic feels compelled to work even harder to overcome his guilt.

Understanding the addiction cycle is important because it helps explain that the admission of powerlessness is the first step to recovery. Otherwise, we remain caught. If we rely on willpower alone, then the only thing we know to do is to escalate our addiction to get out of the pain. Step 1 calls us to do less - to yield, to surrender, and to let go.

Two factors that keep the addiction cycle spinning are 1) the fear of **withdrawal** and 2) **denial**.

Again, admitting powerlessness is absolutely necessary to breaking the addiction cycle.

First, in order to take Step 1, we have to move beyond the fear of stepping off the addiction cycle. We may fear withdrawal and the pain that goes with it. Doctors historically thought that withdrawal in drug addiction was mainly biochemical and physical. It is true that when the heroin addict stops taking heroin, for example, the mind and body literally rebel as they struggle to restore balance. However, addictionologists now believe that the emotional and spiritual components of withdrawal from any addiction are of far greater significance than the physiological dimensions. The workaholic, for example, goes through withdrawal when he tries to scale back work activities. The real fear in this case is probably the emotional fear of losing control. The paradox of Step 1 is that the act of surrendering addictive control will actually bring us back into a state of healthy control.

Second, we have to break out of denial about our addictions. Denial is a cloak of self-deception that blinds us and shields us from an honest assessment of our own dependencies. Some of the common denial messages with which we may delude ourselves are: “I can stop anytime I want to.” “Things aren’t that bad.” “I only practice my addiction because I want to.” “When things get better (or worse)!), I’ll stop my addiction.” We may even project blame onto someone else, saying, “You make me do what I do!” All of these messages deny the force the addictions impose on our lives.

Breaking out of denial often requires a painful encounter with the consequences of our addictions, called “*hitting bottom.” Hitting bottom* forces us to admit our powerlessness over our addictive lifestyles. The three major *“bottoms”* we hit are:

1. A physical bottom 2) An emotional bottom 3) A spiritual bottom.

Common specific examples of “bottoms” that precipitate recovery include:

1) A marital crisis 2) A physical health crisis (as in the case of the workaholic who suffers a heart attack) 3) Confrontation by a family member or loved one 4) Vocational or life-purpose crisis (a pink slip that forces one to look at one’s addiction) 5) A financial crisis 6) A spiritual crisis, a feeling of alienation from God.

The addiction cycle, as a rule, cannot be broken without yielding to Almighty God, a Power outside us. We may have to surrender again and again, as we admit our powerlessness over, not only the primary addiction, but over various other aspects of our lives. We must recognize when we are powerless over people, places, and situations and learn to let those things go. For example, when we are caught in freeway traffic, instead of allowing anxiety and anger to build, we need to admit that we cannot alter our situation. In even the most trivial issues we face, we must learn to become flexible. We may also find ourselves switching addictions or transferring obsessions, and we will need to apply the first step to these new dependencies as well.

For codependents, control or the lack of it, is central to every aspect of life. As we admit our powerlessness, we embark upon the antidote for our control addiction, an addiction characterized by extremes of both over control and under control. For example, the workaholic may over control efforts to achieve and accomplish. What tend to be under-controlled are the quality of spiritual life and the investment of time and emotional intimacy with family members. By admitting powerlessness, he opens the door to allow God to create a healthy, new balance in which he can lessen the compulsive control exercised in the work arena. He can then begin to experience greater positive control over his contribution to family relationships and his creation of quality private time.

We should not be fearful that powerlessness would result in passivity. On the contrary, to admit powerlessness is to subordinate our human wills to God’s will so that we can become the most effective and potent instruments we were created to be.

Consider these Step 1 Prayers

*Dear God, I know I am powerless to break this demonic cycle of addiction. I’ve tried many times before and have failed miserably. I now humbly accept the fact that only You can break this destructive circle of horror. Please help me recognize where I am on this cycle, and then have the wisdom to ask You to break it for me. May I learn daily to rely on Your strength. Thank You for Your grace and mercy. In Jesus name, amen.*

*Dear Lord, I admit that I am powerless over my addiction I admit that my life is unmanageable when I try to control it. Help me this day to understand the true meaning of powerlessness. Remove from me all denial of my addiction. In Jesus name I pray.*

*Alternate Prayer: Today, I ask for help with my addiction. Denial has kept me from seeing how powerless I am and how my life is unmanageable. I need to learn and remember that I have an incurable illness and that abstinence is the only way to deal with it*.

*Devotion*: *Read Romans 7:18-20*

Two indicators of addiction are the gradual loss of identity and the progressive violation of one’s own values in the practice of the addiction. The gospel describes these addiction symptoms in the following terms: *“It is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me”* (v. 20).

In assessing the presence of addictions and codependency’s, we frequently ask the following simple diagnostic question: Is the dog wagging the tail, or is the tail wagging the dog? For example, the conscientious workaholic may have strong values concerning the primacy of home and family life. However, as the workaholism progresses, the workaholic does violence to those values by diverting increasing amounts of time and energy into work pursuits. The tail is now wagging the dog.

A universal warning sign of all addictions is the frightening recognition that I have begun to “do what I will not to do.” This recognition is the beginning of the awareness of powerlessness and can be used by God as the beginning of the end of the addiction.

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**Step 1:** *We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and dependencies – that our lives had become unmanageable.*

1. What are the keys to working this step?

2. What can we do daily to be successful in this step?

**STEP 2**

“Came to believe that only Almighty God could restore us to sanity.”

*“My grace is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak.”* (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIrV)

*“God is working in you. He wants your plans and your acts to be in keeping with his good purpose.”* (Philippians 2:13 NIrV)

***Devotion:*** *Read Luke 13:10-13.*

The New Testament is filled with accounts of God’s healing as transmitted by Jesus’ touch upon the sick and infirm. For those of us seeking recovery, we bring the emotional infirmities of anxiety and depression to the altar of a restoring God.

The history of recovery movements in our modern culture is built upon innumerable stories of persons who have been delivered miraculously from obsessions, chemical and otherwise. The style of these healings from God varies. Some have experienced instantaneous and dramatic deliverance from old compulsions or dependencies. For others, recovery has been a gradual process of transformation. Whatever the style, when God’s help was earnestly sought, the resultant healing impact was unmistakable.

While healings are significant in their own right, they are even more important as stepping-stones toward a higher purpose. That purpose is the discovery of a deeper and more meaningful relationship with God.

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The Step 2 phrase “came to believe” suggests a process and a progression of faith that evolves over time. A portion of A.A.'s oral tradition defines this as a three-part unfolding: First, we came, that is, we showed up and stumbled in the door. Second, we came to, that is, we sobered up, came to our senses, and began to experience emotional sobriety. Third, we came to believe. We began our real recovery process and our spiritual growth. This style of spiritual growth closely parallels the strong Christian tradition that each person must come to an individual knowledge of God.

Step 2 is a logical outgrowth of Step 1 because, if in Step 1, we have admitted our own powerlessness, then the next step is to seek a new source of strength or power to take charge for us and to make us sane (well and whole). For some people, spiritual conversion is dramatic as it was for the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). For most, however, it is very gradual. As one grows and matures emotionally, one also grows spiritually. (Or vice-versa).

Before we can welcome in a new Power to restore us to wellness, we will probably have to engage in some emotional and spiritual “housecleaning”:

1. We must bring into abstinence or balance all the addictive agents through which we have sought to meet our deepest needs. Money, sex, career, chemicals, anything and everything about which we have become excessive, must be put into proper perspective- not lifted onto a pedestal to be worshipped.
2. We must transcend the god of reason if we have been worshipping God through an exclusively intellectual approach.
3. We must renounce the tendency to play God ourselves. We must grow beyond selfishness, narcissism, and grandiosity.

♦***Narcissism:*** Excessive pre-occupation with self. Unhealthy self-love; excessive interest in one's own appearance, comfort, importance, abilities, etc., etc. Self becomes object of pleasure.

***♦Grandiosity:*** Seeming or trying to seem very grand or important; pompous and showy.

4. We must also renounce putting other people or human institutions in the roles of gods.

Not only must we be rid of false gods, if we are looking to the Judeo-Christian God as our higher Power, but we may also need to overcome old sources of bitterness toward Him:

1. We may have identified God with an abusive parent.
2. We may have had negative experiences with the church (hypocrisy, bigotry, condemnation).
3. We may be struggling with a sense that God has failed us - that He has allowed us to become codependent.

**Codependency:** Bondage to pleasing somebody; being controlled by someone and trying to control him or her; being dependent on making someone else happy; the responsibility to make others happy, successful, and good; a hurting child in an adult's body; feeling guilty when you don't do everything just right- and that’s all the time; trying to make sick person well, but ending up sick yourself. (Adapted from CODEPENDENCY by Pat Springle).

1. We may be angry that God has not instantaneously healed us of our addictive illnesses.

As we commit ourselves to a lifetime of recovery, our starting point may be our recovery literature. And that literature makes a valuable contribution toward the opening of spiritual doors. But if we really want to fill the void, if we really want to break down the barriers hindering our progress, we need to turn to the ultimate source of God’s Word and discover what the Scriptures have to tell us. By exploring the Bible, we will learn more about God, we will draw closer to Him, and we will discover more about His will for us.

***STEP 2:*** *"Came to believe that only Almighty God could restore us to sanity."*

***Devotion****: Matthew 12:18-21.*

What a beautiful picture of God’s gentleness and power are these verses quoted from Isaiah!

Jesus, the Beloved Servant, was God in the flesh. His actions and life while He was on earth show us clearly God’s character and concerns. He was so compassionate toward the downtrodden that Isaiah describes Him as careful not to break a battered reed. He would not extinguish a wick struggling to stay lit. He proved again and again His compassion for saint and sinner alike. But that gentleness was underscored by His great and awesome power. The very Savior who could speak kind and encouraging words to a woman caught in adultery could as easily raise the dead, drive out demons, and control the very sources of nature.

The power that resurrected Jesus from the dead is the same power that He offers to resurrect us from the living death of our dependencies and to alter the course of our lives.

***STEP 2:*** *"Came to believe that only Almighty God could restore us*

*to sanity."*

Second Step Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know in my heart that only you can restore me to sanity. I humbly ask that you remove all twisted thought and addictive behavior from me this day. Heal my spirit and restore in me a clear mind.

Alternate Prayer: I pray for an open mind so I may come to believe in a Power greater than myself. I pray for humility and the continued opportunity to increase my faith. I don't want to be crazy any more.

⏩ What can we do to experience this step?

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**STEP 3**

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

*“... If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”* (Luke 9:23)

***Devotion -*** *1 Corinthians 1:26-31*

Our imaginations seem capable of creating an endless array of religious organizations. Yet there are only two religions. One is followed by those who expect salvation by doing. The other is made up of those who have been saved by something done. The first thanks human beings; the second thanks God. The first is false; the second is true.

Before we turned our entire lives over to God, we belonged to the first group. We tried over and over again to accomplish our salvation by our own efforts. When we gave up and surrendered our valiant efforts at self-salvation, we found it had already been taken care of by Jesus Christ. We cannot save ourselves. No one can be his or her savior.

Our choice is clear - we can keep on in futility, trying to accomplish the impossible, or we can give up, “*let go and let God,"* and accept the salvation accomplished on Calvary.

Our recovery works in exactly the same way. We cannot do it on our own. Only by letting God do his work in our lives can we truly get healthy.

***PRAYER:*** *Lord, help me always to look to and cling to your mercy and love. Keep me from trying to do the work that only you can do in my life.*

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Step 3 culminates a process begun in Steps 1 and 2. In Step 1, we admitted our lives were out of control and that we were powerless to change things through our own power. In Step 2, we renounced every old god we had been worshipping as powerless to save us and looked to Almighty God to restore us to wholeness. In Step 3, we once again recognize God as that higher Power and ask Him to assume control over and care of every aspect of our lives.

A common recovery phrase used in Twelve Step groups is “Turn it over.” For the recovering person, that means turning over to God’s care not only the major, conspicuous addictions like alcoholism. It means turning over every aspect of life, even the small frustrations involved in handling children or trying to make a faulty appliance work or dealing with congested freeway traffic. In the face of these irritations, the recovering person will say time and again, “**Turn it over**; **turn it over**; **turn it over.**”

A Step 3 recovery paradox is that codependent or addictive personalities are often quite willful and egocentric, and yet that egocentricity often camouflages a deep sense of insecurity. In A.A.’s oral tradition, an alcoholic or codependent is defined as being “an egomaniac with an inferiority complex.” Step 3 invites us to get out of the center of our universe and hand that place back to God. As we move into any addiction or dependency, we tend to become more self-centered, self-absorbed, and self-preoccupied in trying to address the pain driving the addiction. Paradoxically, this self-preoccupation only draws us more deeply into the addiction. We become more self-centered and self-preoccupied as we seek to address the pain, yet self-preoccupation itself creates more pain, loneliness, and isolation. The addiction pulls us more deeply into its pain cycle. In order to surmount the pain cycle, ultimately we must step out of ourselves and look beyond ourselves.

Breaking out of this bondage of self does not mean we ignore or deny our needs. In fact, quite the reverse is true. If we can discover healthy, God-directed ways to meet our emotional and physical needs, then we become less needy, less selfish, less self-preoccupied individuals. This is another recovery paradox. Discovering what our needs are and asking to have those needs met may be one of the most unselfish things we do. All of us have needs, and all of us have choices as to how those needs are to be met. Addictions, compulsions, and codependency’s are counterfeit means of trying to meet our most basic physical, emotional, and spiritual hungers. With God’s help we can find genuine ways of satisfying them.

We want to turn ourselves over to God, but how? How do we get out of the driver’s seat? The key is willingness. If we crack the door just a little bit, then God will direct us in the process. Revelation 3:20 says: *"Hear I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."*

A.A.’s Third Step Prayer is an excellent way to formalize our Commitment to this new willingness:

*“God, I offer myself to You— to build with me and to do with me as You will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your power, Your love, and Your way of life. May I do Your will always!”*

***STEP 3:*** *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.*

***DEVOTION:*** *Read Romans 8:22-25*

Sometimes, to get from where we are to where we are going, we have to be willing to be in-between.

One of the hardest parts of recovery is the concept of letting go of what is old and familiar, but unhealthy, and being willing to stand with our hands empty while we wait for God to fill them.

This may apply to feelings. We may have been full of hurt and anger. In some ways, these feelings may have become comfortably familiar. When we finally face and relinquish our grief, we may feel empty for a time. We are in between pain and the joy of serenity and acceptance.

Being in-between can also apply to relationships. To prepare ourselves for the new, we need to first let go of the old. This can be frightening. Being in-between can apply to many areas of life and recovery. We can be in between jobs, careers, homes, or goals. We can be in between behaviors as we let go of familiar patterns and are not certain what to replace them with. This can apply to behaviors that have protected and served us well all of our life, such as caretaking and controlling.

Being in-between can stir up many feelings: grief over what we have lost, or anxiety, fear, and apprehension over what’s ahead. These are normal feelings for the place we’re in. Accept them. Feel them. Release them.

Being in-between isn’t fun, but it’s necessary. It will not last forever. It may feel like we’re standing still, but we’re not. We're standing at the in-between place. It’s how we get from here to there. It's not the destination. Even when we're in-between, we are moving forward.

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*PRAYER: God, help me to believe that this in-between place I’m in is not without purpose, that it is moving me toward something good.*

Third Step Prayer: Father God, I offer myself to You to build with me and to do with me according to Your will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your Power, Your love and Your way of life. May I do Your will always!

Alternate Prayer: Take my will and my life, Guide me in my recovery, Show me how to live.

1. What does it mean to you to “turn your will and your life over to the care of God through Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior?

2. What can you do to more consistently live step 3?

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**STEP 4**

“Made a searching and fearless moral and ethical inventory of ourselves.”

*God, see what is in my heart. Know what is there. Put me to the test. Know what I'm thinking. See if there's anything in my life you don't like. Help me live in the way that is always right.”* (Psalm 139:23-24 NIrV)

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

***Devotion -*** *"Out in the Open" - James 5:16*

After having written out an inventory of the negative and positive aspects of my life, I still didn’t feel rid of the bad things or able to concentrate on the good ones. I saw that I had more work to do before I could be freed from the powerful patterns I was uncovering.

When you are at this point, I was advised, seek out another surrendering person whom you trust and share that list. It’s not that God needs to know our self-centered character traits and harmful behaviors: he already does. But we need to clear out the basement of our lives from the past by bringing these things out in the open. We need the humility that the experience brings in order to clear our vision so we can see God’s light in the denied corners of our lives.

For years as a committed Christian I had tried to clean up my life without this step. I was like a man who kept fumigating his house but had a basement full of dead dogs. Things sometimes looked clean to me- but they never “smelled” quite right. For me it was necessary to humble myself by reading my inventory before God and another person. As I told my secrets, they lost some of their power over me, and I wasn’t so afraid to be known. It was only then, through the sense of God’s forgiveness that followed, that I became able to make amends, where feasible, and to find the serenity and joy of living in the light, as the biblical writers speak of it. The relief was enormous. J. Keith Miller

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*PRAYER: God, give me the humility- and the healing- that comes with confessing my wrongdoings in the presence of another human being. In Jesus name, amen.*

A personal inventory is crucial to understanding the new direction of our spiritual growth. What aspects of our character do we need to retain and emphasize, and what should be modified or discarded? Six components that might go into such an inventory are described in the following paragraphs.

First, we may need to “tell our stories." This can be accomplished by journaling, that is, by writing out our stories, and by sharing them with others in recovery meetings or private dialogue. In John 4, there is a beautiful passage on “The Woman at the Well.” When the Samaritan woman encountered Jesus, she was amazed, first of all, that He had anything to do with her. Jews generally had no dealings with Samaritans. Second, He told her that He knew everything about her- the full story of her life- that she had had five husbands and that she was then living with a man who was not her husband. The fact that Jesus, with full knowledge of her life story, accepted her and loved her unconditionally was a life-transforming experience.

Preparing our stories allows us to assess the major events of our lives. Knowing the steps of our past journey helps us to evaluate honestly our present situations. Sharing our stories may enable others to better understand us and may open new avenues thorough which they can touch and heal our lives.

A second component in our inventory is discovering the roots of our addictions and codependency’s. In most cases, this means we have to examine our childhoods. What needs were not met there? What negative experiences or messages about ourselves did we absorb in the dysfunctional family of origin? There are six types of family of origin dysfunction that can generate or create a later adult addiction or codependency:

1. *Active abuse*. A parent's pain or frustration is discharged against or projected onto the child. Any form of direct physical, verbal, or sexual abuse can be classified as active abuse.
2. *Passive abuse*. Passive abuse occurs when key elements are missing within the family. A child growing up needs fifteen to twenty years of steady, consistent loving from two sane, sober, relatively happy parents. A child requires time, attention, and affection. Anything, such as workaholism, that hinders or limits the parents’ ability to give these things can result in passive abuse.
3. *Emotional incest*. Typically, in families where one or both parents are in some way emotionally or physically disabled, a young child will begin to assume parental or spousal responsibilities toward the parent. For example, if seven-year-old Suzie’s mother is alcoholic, Suzie may begin getting herself up for school, fixing her own break-fast, and urging her mother out of bed in the afternoon to keep peace with Daddy. Suzie is becoming a mother to her own mother.
4. *Unfinished business*. If parents have not made peace with the disillusionments’, defects, or limitations in their own lives, the child may pick up their unfinished business. A father who is frustrated and unsuccessful in his work may push his sons and daughters to be compulsive, perfectionistic, and workaholic in order to compensate for his own limitations.
5. *Negative message about who and what the child is*. These are un-spoken and experienced messages that destroy feelings of self-worth and become part of the child's personality. Examples of spoken messages are: "You'll never amount to anything." "Can’t you do anything right?" "Don’t you realize how unhappy you’ve made me?" An experienced message is felt by the child whose father spends an excessive amount of time with his work and little or no time with the child.
6. *Split-off feelings or needs*. In dysfunctional families, members deny their feelings and bury their needs. These needs will later try to assert themselves, but may do so in very damaging ways. For example, a wife who assumes a passive role and buries her needs to be assertive in marriage may eventually become passive-aggressive and take out her anger by abusing credit cards and overspending.

*Passive-aggressive* unconscious behavior: *"Actions used by dependent individuals who have repressed hostility toward an individual or institution on which they are dependent to get unconscious revenge on that authority figure in non-verbal ways.”*

-Introduction to Psychology and Counseling - Meier, Minirth, Wichern

Learning what was damaged or missing in our childhoods is not an attempt to blame the previous generation. Rather, it is a genuine effort to understand the deepest root causes that underlie our compulsive adult behaviors.

Third, we must confront and assess the full extent of our dependencies. Doing so, we will learn more about the severity of our primary addictions, and we may uncover other peripheral addictions we had not previously recognized. We should inventory and identify all of these codependent symptoms and addictions, which have manifested themselves in our adolescent and adult lives. As we perform our fourth step inventory, we must be certain to identify all of the possible addictions affecting our lives.

Fourth, we need to look back at our relationship history with the people who have been significant in our lives- parents, teachers, mentors, friends, romantic interests. We need to inventory all the ways we have hurt them and hurt ourselves by practicing our adult addictions and codependency’s. This is a step toward ridding our lives of resentments and guilt.

Resentments, which arise out of fear and insecurity, may lie behind much of the hurt we have inflicted on others and on ourselves. As part of this fourth inventory component, we must first acknowledge our resentments and then identify the fears and insecurities that underlie them. Only in this manner can we deal effectively with these resentments that will otherwise fester like emotional cancers.

Fifth, we must address our guilt feelings. We realize that most addictions are shame-based and shame-propelled. To move beyond this shame-base, we need to distinguish between two major forms of guilt:

1. *False shame, or carried shame*. This is undeserved blame that we have taken upon ourselves for people or situations over which we may have had no control. Adult children of dysfunctional families often carry an enormous residue of false guilt for their parents' dysfunctions.

2. *Authentic guilt*. As adults and sinners, we have probably hurt many people in many ways. We have caused this hurt through things we have said, through things we have done, and through things we have left undone.

We need to distinguish between these two types of guilt, handing back the false shame and recognizing those areas of authentic guilt for which we do need to ask forgiveness.

Sixth, we must “look for the good.” An important counter-balancing dimension is that a Step 4 inventory should include the positive, as well as the negative, things about us. 1) What positive legacies have we derived from our childhood and adolescence? 2) What positive survival mechanisms have emerged from our struggles to cope? For example, the compulsive, overachieving student may possess the positive legacies of being a good academician with strong job skills. 3) What are our skills, talents, gifts, and attributes? 4) What positive permissions have we granted ourselves (permission to live, permission to be healthy, permission to recover, permission to experience relative happiness in adult life)? 5) What positive recovery steps and changes are currently being implemented in our lives?

NOTE: Perhaps, in taking our inventories, we have now uncovered certain addiction or dependencies we did not previously recognize. If so, we may need to return to Step 1 to address these.

**STEP 4:** *Made a searching and fearless moral and ethical inventory of ourselves*.

***Devotion***: *Letting God of Denial - Titus 1:1-3*

Most of us in recovery have engaged in denial from time to time. We may have denied events or feelings from our past. We may have denied other people’s problems; we may have denied our own problems, feelings, thoughts, wants, or needs.

We denied the truth. Denial mans we didn’t let ourselves face reality, usually because facing that particular reality would hurt. It would be a loss of something: trust, love, family, perhaps a marriage, a friendship, or a dream. And it hurts to lose something, or someone. Denial is a protective device, a shock absorber for the soul. It prevents us from acknowledging reality until we feel prepared to cope with that particular reality. People can shout and scream the truth at us, but we will not see or hear it until we are ready.

We are sturdy yet fragile beings. Sometimes we need time to get prepared, time to ready ourselves to cope. We do not let go of our need to deny by beating ourselves into acceptance; we let go of our need to deny by allowing ourselves to become safe and strong enough to cope with the truth. We will do this, when the time is right.

We do not need to punish ourselves for having denied reality. We will face and deal with reality- on our own time schedule, when we are ready, and in God’s timing. We will know what we need to know, when it's time to know it. -Melody Beattie

Fourth Step Prayer

Loving Father, It is I who has made my life a mess. I have done it, but I cannot undo it. My mistakes are mine and I will begin a searching and fearless moral inventory. I will write down my wrongs, but I will also include that which is good. I pray for the strength to complete the task.

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**STEP 5**

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being

the exact nature or our wrongs.

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

***Devotion:*** *Luke 15:11-32*

The story of the prodigal son reminds us that confession can be a stepping-stone toward renewed fellowship with God.

The embodiment of so many of our addictive tendencies, the prodigal son has dissipated his own resources and those of his father in a mistaken effort to establish his youthful identity. He returned home filled with shame and confessing in his heart, *“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son...”* (Vv. 18-19).

The father's response to his errant son is a mirror of God's response to our authentic confession. Although the prodigal son expected rejection and chastisement, he found compassion, acceptance, and renewed kinship. As we seek new relationship to God through the acknowledgment of our wrongs, can we envision a Heavenly Father who greets us as warmly as the father greeted his wayward son? As we confess our brokenness, can we feel a God who reaches out, not to chastise us, but to embrace us and welcome us home to His everlasting family?

*PRAYER: Gracious Father, help me to acknowledge my harmful, sinful behaviors. Then help me to ask Your forgiveness. As I seek Your forgiveness may I be ever aware of Your love that embraces me just as I am. Thank You for loving me so much! In Jesus name, amen. ☼*

Step 5 may be one of the most challenging steps we face in our recovery process, but it can also be one of the most fulfilling in terms of removing us from our isolation. In order to accomplish this step, the three-part sharing it endorses must take place. That is, all of what we discovered about ourselves in our Step 4 inventory is to be freely admitted to God, to our-selves, and to another human being.

There are basically five types of wrongs we should share:

1. We need to acknowledge all of our dependencies, compulsions and addictions.
2. We need to acknowledge what went wrong in our families of origin to initiate our codependent love hungers.
3. We need to acknowledge the multi-generational wrongs that have led to our family or origin situations. We need to understand and be compassionate toward the families our parents emerged from.
4. We need to acknowledge the wrongs that have occurred in all mayor relationships in our lives.
5. We need to acknowledge the specific ways in which we have wronged others by the practice of our addictions and erratic behaviors.

Because these areas are so sensitive and so very personal, it is important to exercise care in choosing the person or persons with whom we formally share our fifth step. Such individuals should be trustworthy and somewhat detached from the situations about which we will share. For example, one would not usually call on a spouse or immediate family member to hear his/her confession. In fact, it is quite common to choose a therapist or pastoral counselor for this purpose. Also, such individuals should be compassionate, not condemning or judgmental.

Four very positive things happen in Step 5 sharing:

1. Our shame is reduced through confession. We know that confession is an ancient tradition in Christianity and that it is an indispensable ingredient in the healing and renewal process.
2. Step 5 sharing allows us to express our grief – to expel the resentments, the anger, the fears that eat away at us and keep us from living life to the fullest.
3. We take a major step toward honesty. Perhaps the single greatest barrier to recovery is the inability to be honest. In Step 5 sharing, maybe for the first time in our lives, we open our deepest, darkest secrets and most private hurts to another human being.
4. Dependencies, compulsions and addictions, by their very nature, isolate us from other people and from God. Step 5 sharing breaks down the barriers we have erected through our addictions.

Step 5 sharing is the beginning of the end of our isolation. Are you ready for that?

*Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our harmful, sinful behaviors.*

Fifth Step Prayer

Almighty God, My inventory has shown me who I am, yet I ask for Your help in admitting my wrongs to another person and to You. Assure me, and be with me, in this Step, for without this Step I cannot progress in my recovery. With Your help, I can do this and I will do it.

***Devotion*** - *Mark 7:6-8 “Removing the Masks”*

One thing is certain: We cannot stay free of our addictions, dependencies and compulsions by paying lip service to God or our program for recovery. While this should be obvious to anyone involved in Twelve-Step recovery, it still eludes us.

Nothing is more destructive to our emotional and spiritual growth than hypocrisy, the wearing of masks – particularly masks of false piety. Masks keep us from being straight about who we are, prevent others from seeing us, set up barriers and make true fellowship impossible.

In working our program we come to understand how necessary and vital it is to be absolutely honest with ourselves, with others and with God if we are to develop and maintain a healthy way of life. Absolute honesty is the best way we can be our own real selves and truly honor God. -*Paul F. Keller*

PRAYER*: Gracious Father, help me to humbly lay aside my masks and honor you.*

1. What is it that hinders our being willing to work step 5?

2. What can we do to overcome these hindrances?

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**STEP 6**

Were entirely ready to have the Holy Spirit remove all these sinful

behaviors and resulting defects of character.

*“If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land.”* (Isaiah 1:19)

***Devotion*** - *Romans 6:11-14*

The recovery process is a series of deaths and rebirths. We die time and again to the old reliance on our carnal dependencies. We continually give birth to new life that is spiritually oriented and filled with the love of God.

In Step 6, we ask God to remove defects of character, and this removal requires that we died to old ways of being and acting. We must die to a false reliance on possessive and jealous human relationships. We must die to a narrow pre-occupation with material wealth, power, or authority. We must die to our depen-dency on mood-altering chemicals, food, or toxic relationships as a means of satisfying spiritual needs.

The expression of the Holy Spirit within us can only be alive to the extent that we have died to our old ways. We seek to be thorough in this invocation of God’s help, for “half measures availed us nothing" (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 59). ☼

*PRAYER: Gracious Father, help me to realize that recovery is a life-long process. Give me the wisdom and the strength to sacrifice all my dependencies on those things that feed my self-worth in an unhealthy way, and thus reinforce my many character defects. Lord, I surrender to You my all. I am ready to have you remove my defects of character. In Jesus name, amen.*

A major question that arises at this point is, are we genuinely willing to ask God to remove all of our addictions, dependencies and compulsive behaviors? We may be forced into recovery by the sheer pain of a primary addiction, such as alcoholism, and we may genuinely desire freedom from that addiction. However, we more than likely have other more subtle dependencies that, in a way, we still enjoy and want to cling to. For example, an alcoholic may ask God to remove his addiction to alcohol, but remain in denial about other compulsive behaviors. Perhaps other compulsive behaviors have not yet cast him into much trouble, and so he is reluctant to surrender those compulsions. In fact, he may lean on them even more heavily in the absence of the alcohol. So this is the real struggle in Step 6: Are we entirely ready to ask God to remove all of our defects, even the ones to which we cling tenaciously?

It is important to realize that we may be blind to some of our flaws. The ones that have forced us into recovery are probably obvious, but we may have to search to recognize others. Therefore, we must be sensitive to God’s guidance and to feedback from significant people around us. Are they seeing certain patterns in our lives that we cannot see?

Looking back at the relationship inventory we conducted in Step 4 for re-current patterns may be helpful in identifying these character defects. For example, when we review our relationship history, do we realize that in every important, intimate relationship, we “had to” be the passive, subservient partner? A pattern that surfaces over and over again hints at a character defect. This defect may be either or both of the relationship extremes of passivity or aggression. We should also examine the boundaries we set between ourselves and other persons. Are the boundaries too fragile? Can people spill into our lives in destructive ways? Or are our boundaries too thick? Are we too well defended? Do we keep people too far away? Finally, do we see and respect the boundaries of others?

We must be specific in our identification of individual defects of character, and we must be specific about the changes required to recover from them. One cure does not fit all! The approach for addressing one addiction may not work at all for another. For instance, the rageaholic may need to reduce anger expression. Con-versely, the anger phobic person, who has no permission to feel or experience anger, may need to mobilize anger expression and assertiveness. The treatment has to be very specifically tailored to the defect and to the person.

As a rule, most defects of character involve some imbalance in the expression of and the experience of our most basic human needs. For example, sexuality and ambition are not bad unless our experience of those drives are imbalanced or co-dependent. If we are addicted to sex or driven by ambition to the point of workaholism, these expressions have become defects we must address. Our sixth step prayer would not be “Make me asexual” or “Take away my ambition." Rather, we might pray, “Grant me a healthy expression of my sexuality within biblical boundaries” or “Channel my ambition into enhancing my private life as well as my work life."

As we hold known defects of character up to God, we must avoid self-shaming and self-condemnation. The goal here is spiritual release, not spiritual self-punishment. For most of us, this process is ongoing. We will not be healed and sent forward immediately; rather, recovery will be a daily effort to evaluate, balance, and adjust the healthy expression of all of our God-given needs. ☼

*Step 6: Were entirely ready to have the Holy Spirit remove all these sinful behaviors and resulting defects of character.*

Sixth Step Prayer

Dear God, I am ready for Your help in removing from me the defects of character which I now realize are an obstacle to my recovery. Help me to continue being honest with myself & guide me toward spiritual and mental health.

***Devotion*** - *Colossians 3:5-17*

One of the greatest challenges of our human experience is to find a proper balance in the expression and the fulfillment of our God-given needs for love, security, and acceptance. Our addictive personalities may propel us toward radical distortions of these needs.

In the search for this balance, we want to avoid two extremes: 1) the tendency to deny or suppress the existence of our God-ordained needs and 2) the tendency to over express or over fulfill these same needs.

Our improper fulfillment of these human appetites brings only greater frustration. In the heart of our dependency, we discover that there is never enough of the addictive agent to satisfy our codependent hungers. Lacking a true sense of God’s ability to fill our needs, we establish such things as sexuality, money, and power as false gods or idols in our lives. Scripture warns us to “put to death” these false gods. We ask God to remove these defects of character in order that we may more fully embrace Him. ☼

*PRAYER: Gracious Father, thank you that your forgiveness is always available to me on a conscious level when I admit my defects of character to you in true humility. In the name of Jesus, my Lord and Savior I pray, amen.*

1. Review definition of Codependency in Step 2.

2. Review the relationship inventory in Step 4.

3. How can you best work Step 6 in you life?

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**STEP 7**

Humbly asked God to remove our sins and shortcomings.

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

***Devotion*** *- 1 John 1:5-2:2 - Forgiveness and Humility*

Humility is a recurring theme in a Twelve-Step program, and the central idea of Step Seven. We recognize now, more than ever before, that a major portion of our lives has been devoted to fulfilling our self-centered desires. We must set aside these prideful, selfish behavior patterns, come to terms with our inadequacies and realize that confession with humility brings God’s forgiveness and frees our spirit. Step Seven requires giving over our will to God so that we may receive the serenity to achieve happiness.

As we begin to see our defects being removed and our lives becoming less complicated, we must proceed with caution and guard against the temptation to be prideful. Sudden changes in our behavior can and do happen, but we cannot anticipate them or direct them. God initiates change when we are ready, and we cannot claim that we removed our character defects. Forgiveness comes from God. When we learn to ask humbly for God’s help in our lives, change becomes God's responsibility, and we cannot accept the credit. King David in Psalm 51:1-2 utters a powerful biblical parallel to Step Seven: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great com-passion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." ☼ *-Ron Ross*

Steps 6 and 7 overlap in emphasizing the significance of God's intervention in addressing our character defects. While Step 6 focuses on our willingness to yield these flaws to God, Step 7 centers on the humility with which we should approach Him. It is very important that we not confuse humility with humiliation. God does not want to mortify us. He does want us to submit to Him.

We need humility for three reasons:

1. *So that we can recognize the severity of our character defects.* One aspect of our addictions is that we tend to deny and minimize the pain they inflict. Therefore, as we try to assess our character defects, we may, unless we take a very humble approach, underestimate their severity.
2. *So that we can acknowledge the limits of human power in addressing these character defects.* We cannot do it on our own. We cannot do it by sheer willpower. We cannot do it by our own intellect and reasoning.
3. *So that we can appreciate the enormity of God's power to transform lives*.

The invitation to humility is not an invitation to low self-esteem or a negative self-image. In fact, quite the reverse is true. Poor self-esteem may be camouflaged by a superficial sense of false pride and by a resistance to God’s intervention. In contrast, if we have healthy self-esteem, we are freed to come out from behind our haughty masks and to receive and appreciate God's greatness. When our self-esteem has been restored to a proper state of balance, we are able to comfortably humble ourselves before Him.

In order for us to experience life-changing humility, however, we must be aware that 1) what we accomplish, amass, or achieve materially will never bring us true contentment or the satisfaction of our innermost spiritual hunger; and 2) surrender to God's leadership cannot occur until we acknowledge our own limitations and need for His guidance. We must surrender the leadership role to God.

Although Step 7 is the shortest step in terms of wording and is perhaps the least discussed in recovery groups, it is probably the most potent of the twelve. It embodies the miracle of transformation as we turn over to God our broken, defective personalities in order that He might mold them into healthy, effective instruments of His will. A.A.'s Seventh Step Prayer words this commitment as follows:

*Father in heaven, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character, every sin that stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my family and friends. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. In Jesus precious name, amen.*

*Step 7: Humbly asked God to remove our sins and shortcomings.*

***Devotion*** *- Acts 3:19*

Step 7 embodies God’s mysterious power to rebuild our very character and leads us toward the miracle of transformation and conversion.

The Step 7 prayer (take a moment to re-read it) is for seventh step con-version. What is entailed in this conversion? We admit and yield every character distortion to God's transformation touch. We open our every relationship to His guidance. We surrender to His care and discipline all addictive and compulsive behavior patterns. We ask without restraint that He be the God of our lives.

If we approach this act of repentance with a sincere heart, we emerge with a refreshed spirit that comes *"from the presence of the Lord."* ☼

***Devotion*** *- Psalm 51 - The Cleansing of Confession - Steps 4,5,6,7*

One way of admitting that we are powerless is to ask God to have mercy on us. To be able to say, *"Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin"* shows that we believe that God can restore us. Asking him to forgive and help us begins the process of turning our lives and wills over to God.

David certainly made a fearless, searching, moral inventory of his life as he realized his transgressions and was quick to admit to God and to himself what a mess he was in. We have to get there, too. We are ready to have God remove these defects when we say along with David, *“Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.”* After our spiritual awakening, we want to tell fellow strugglers that it is possible to be free. What a beautiful summation of the Twelve Steps David gives in this Psalm. ☼ -*Barbara Stephens*

*PRAYER: Thank you, God, that you are eager to forgive and cleanse me from all my wrongdoings. In Jesus name, amen.*

Seventh Step Prayer

Almighty God, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here to do Your bidding.

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**STEP 8**

Made a list of all persons we had sinned against, and became willing to make amends to them all.

*“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)

*Devotion – 1 Corinthians 13*

In the first two verses of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul tells the worldly-wise Corinthians that no matter how talented, smart, and determined they are, if they do not have real love – God’s kind of love for others (and themselves) – they are nothing. This message is relevant for our society as well.

Then in verse 3 we find that Paul addresses the issue of co-dependency long before twentieth-century psychiatrists had given it a name. He identifies the personality type that sacrifices itself completely and unsparingly for others and yet has misplaced motivation and focus for those seemingly altruistic (selfless) deeds.

In Step 8, as we work to replace the codependent feelings we have had about others and ourselves with feelings of true love and compassion, each verse of this powerful chapter can speak to us and move us toward the willing heart God wants us to have. ☼

Step 8 is the more specific person-to-person application of the shame-reduction that was begun in Steps 4 and 5. The making of amends was a very strong tradition among the members of the Oxford Group, which is the parent of all modern Twelve Step organizations.

A question we might ask is, “Who should be on the list of persons to whom we make amends?” Here are four suggestions:

1. We need to include all persons who may have been victims of our addictions.

2. We need to review all of the persons included in our Step 4 relationship history. As a rule, we probably owe some amends to most of the people on that list.

3. We need to include members of the next generation (especially our own children) who have been impacted by our addictions and compulsions.

1. We need to consider whether we need to make amends to the following general "family" groups:

1. Our families of procreation, that is, the families we make by marriage.
2. Our work families.
3. Our community families.
4. Our church family.
5. The family of humankind. (Have we been prejudiced against and intolerant toward other political, religious, or racial groups?)

Implicit in both Steps 8 and 9 is the assumption that we carry a toxic residue of shame from virtually every incident in which we have hurt, rejected, or ignored others. Steps 8 and 9 provide us with the opportunity to reduce this guilt by setting things right again. We should be cautioned, though, that we need to work through and grieve out our underlying resentment, hurt, anger, and pain before trying to make amends with those who have also offended us. Otherwise, we are putting a bandage on a festering, cancerous sore, because the toxicity is still there. Only after it has been excised can we release our resentments with a high degree of emotional integrity.

*Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had sinned against, and became willing to make amends to them all.*

***Devotion*** *- James 4:7-12*

Both Step 8 and James 4:11-12 ask us to suspend judgment, bitterness, and resentments toward others. It may be tempting to tell ourselves that we will make amends to others if and when we know that they can reciprocate. The spirit of Step 8, however, requires that we be willing to make such amends unconditionally.

How can we forgive and make amends to those whom we feel have offended us in the past? How can we forgive when the stings of wounds are still fresh and alive in our hearts?

The willingness to forgive can be attained only when we have passed through a series of God-given steps for grieving over these offenses. If others have violated us, we must experience the stages of shock, denial, anger, depression, and sadness in order to purify our hearts. Only then will we be ready to approach the final step of the grieving process – forgiveness – without resentment and with emotional integrity. ☼

*Prayer: Gracious Father in heaven, I ask you to change my heart if hard-heartedness, defensiveness, guilt, or bitterness is present. In Jesus name, amen.*

Eighth Step Prayer

Almighty Father, I ask Your help in making my list of all those I have harmed. I will take responsibility for my mistakes and be forgiving to others as You are forgiving to me. Grant me the willingness to begin my restitution. This I pray in Jesus name.

**STEP 9**

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would hinder them or others.

*“Give and it shall be given you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”* (Luke 6:38)

***Devotion*** *- Proverbs 12:13,18 - Hurting words, healing words*

So many of the Proverbs remind us that the “real” person is exposed by his or her words. Wisdom in recovery teaches us that we don’t have to say everything we think, or even everything we think others need to hear. Wisdom is teaching us to listen more than we speak and then to weigh what we do speak.

We would often draw people's disapproval or rebukes before recovery because our speech was unguarded. We learned to rationalize, excuse, or blame in short order. It wasn't unusual for our codependent speech to include sermons and lectures about the dependent person's ways.

As we begin to get healthy, we realize that all our talking hasn’t helped, healed, or fixed the other person; instead it has built higher walls. Much of our recovery is based on working on our individual issues, and as the contents of our hearts gradually begin to change, the change is reflected in our speech. Rather than being a weapon, our speech can become an instrument of healing, health, wholeness and hope. ☼ *-Barbara Stephens*

*Prayer: God, help me to correct the contents of my heart so that my speech is helpful rather than hurtful. In Jesus name, amen.*

*Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would hinder them or others.*

The making of amends needs to be approached cautiously by codependent people. There are three things amends are or can be. There is one thing they definitely should not be.

Amends can be these things:

1. Sincere efforts to offer apology for past harm.
2. Wonderful bridge-builders for more positive future relationships
3. Effective agents for removing the tremendous weight of guilt, shame, and remorse.

The one thing amends should never be, though, are installment payments on false guilt or false shame. To treat them in that way is to drift into a kind of legalism and perfectionism that believes if we can do enough or apologize enough, we can somehow earn our own redemption and salvation. This is a particular danger for codependent persons who already tend to assume guilt for people and situations over which they have no real control.

The second half of this step is very important in that it identifies a group to which we should not offer amends, that is, to those who would be more hurt than helped by our action.

There are four categories of persons to whom we may consider making amends. Notice how this contrasts with what we did in Step 8. There we included everyone to whom we were willing to make amends. In Step 9, however, as we prepare to execute the step, we use a high degree of discretion regarding to whom we will make amends and when this should happen. The four categories to consider as we think about making amends are these:

1. Those to whom we may turn immediately, such as spouses or close family members.
2. Those to whom only partial disclosure can be made, because to do more would cause harm to others. For example, if we have taken part in unethical business dealings, we may want to make limited disclosure concerning our involvement, because full disclosure may jeopardize other persons who were in conspiracy with us. We need always to consider the risks to other individuals' security, privacy, and confidentiality.
3. Those to whom amends should be deferred until a later date. Perhaps the hurts are so fresh that our presence would only trigger rage on their part. Maybe we also need to work through some anger and resentments on our own.
4. Those whom we should never contact, because doing so would only open up old relationship doors that need to stay closed. This may be true, for example, in the case of a sex addict who wants to make amends to former partners.

By its very nature, the amends process of Step 9 is one-sided. The people to whom we extend amends may not reciprocate by forgiving us for hurts we have done to them or by asking our forgiveness if they have hurt us. Nevertheless, from the spiritual perspective, casting off old bitterness’s and tendering amends can be both freeing and healing.

*Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

Ninth Step Prayer

Loving Father, I pray for the right attitude to make my amends, being ever mindful not to harm others in the process. I ask for Your guidance in making indirect amends. Most important, I will continue to make amends by staying abstinent, helping others and growing in spiritual progress.

***Devotion*** *- 1 John 2:9-11 - Forgiving those close to us*

Few things can make us feel crazier than expecting something from someone who has nothing to give. Few things can frustrate us more than trying to make a person someone he or she isn’t. We may have spent years trying to get someone to love us in a certain way, when that person cannot or will not.

It is time to let it go. It is time to let him or her go. That doesn’t mean we can't love that person anymore. It means that we will feel the immense relief that comes when we stop denying reality and begin accepting. We release that person to be who he or she actually is. We deal with our feelings and walk away from the destructive system.

We learn to love and care differently in a way that takes reality into account. We enter into a relationship with that person on new terms –taking our-selves and our needs into account. We let go of his or her addiction. We give his or her life back. And we, in the process, are given our life and freedom in return.

We stop letting what we are not getting from that person control us. We take responsibility for our life. We go ahead with the process of loving and taking care of ourselves.

We get angry, we feel hurt, but we land in a place of forgiveness. We set him or her free, and we become set free from bondage.

This is the heart of detaching in love. *-Melody Beattie*

*Prayer: God, help me to see that holding on to anger and grudges hurts my own growth. Show me how to let go so I can experience your freedom and serenity. In Jesus name, amen.*

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**STEP 10**

Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong

promptly admitted it.

*“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 measure of faith GOD has given you.”* (Romans 12:3)

***Devotion*** *- 1 Peter 2:9-10 - Seeing ourselves in new ways*

When we were children, our parents and other important adults served as mirrors for us. They taught us who we were by the ways they “mirrored” reality. We then internalized these perspectives and carried them with us into our adult lives.

If we experienced neglect, abuse, criticism, or smothering as children, then we are likely to see ourselves in negative ways as adults. Neglect teaches children that they are uninteresting and unimportant. Criticism teaches them that they are never good enough or that they are valuable only if they achieve perfection. Smothering teaches them they are incompetent and valuable only as an extension of the parent. Abuse teaches them that they are powerless and that something must be terribly wrong with them.

In order to heal from distorted images of ourselves, we need a positive frame of reference outside of ourselves. Healing begins when we allow ourselves to see ourselves as God sees us. God's point of view is independent of our own. He can “mirror” reality for us. The good news is that God does not neglect or criticize or smother or abuse. He loves, respects and values us as no parent has ever been able to do. He can provide a new and very different kind of mirror for us. As we gradually internalize the attitudes God has toward us, we’ll begin to view ourselves in new and healthy ways. ☼ -*Dale & Juanita Ryan*

***Prayer****: Lord, may I see myself as you see me- lovable, valuable, and competent to serve you and others.*

Steps 10, 11, and 12 are sometimes called the maintenance steps. They repeat many of the points outlined in previous steps, but they emphasize the value of continuing to “work the steps” on a day-to-day basis.

Step 10 encourages the taking of a personal inventory, which, for recovering persons, should be a daily process. Here are five components of this ongoing inventory:

1. What are our needs? These include basic needs, such as the need for love, acceptance, and security. Do we recognize those needs? Are they being met in some reasonable fashion?
2. What are our feelings? Especially we need to allow grief feelings to surface and be expressed. We also need to watch out for deep feelings of resentment, because resentment covers anger, anger covers hurt, hurt usually covers fear, and again, the deepest fear is that our basic human needs are not going to be met. In relationships we fear being rejected or abandoned.
3. What counterfeit, codependent, and addictive means are we using in trying to meet our needs? Are we manipulating others? Are we over controlling others? Are we being perfectionistic or compulsive with others and ourselves? Are we attempting to win acceptance by playing the martyr or the victim role in relationships? Are we compulsively res-cuing or enabling others? All of these are trigger questions to help us assess whether we are using bogus means to meet our needs.
4. What is our relationship with our own boundaries and with the boundaries of others? It is very important to know we can set appropriate interpersonal boundaries that are neither too rigid nor too fragile. Can we keep people out as we need to? Can we allow people in as we need to? Are we capable of saying yes to other persons, and are we capable of saying no as necessary?

Also, do we respect the boundaries of others? Do we hear and honor the yeses and no’s they give us regarding their boundaries?

1. If we are aware of violating our own boundaries or the boundaries of others, are we able to reestablish new, proper boundaries? Are we able to make amends to those who have been harmed by our violation of their boundaries?
2. Do we admit our wrongs promptly? Unless we admit them promptly, we will store these wrongs, which can be rationalized into "wrongs against us." They may then become resentments, which sabotage our recovery.

Our daily inventory certainly also needs to assess the status of our relationship with God. Are we still yielding our wills to Him? Bill Wilson emphasized how crucial this evaluation is, especially for addictive personalities, which tend to be willful. Our need to surrender ourselves to God on a daily basis will go on throughout our lives, and we shall explore the means of that continuing spiritual surrender in Step 11.

*Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*

Tenth Step Prayer

I pray I may continue: To grow in understanding & effectiveness; To take daily spot check inventories of myself; To correct mistakes when I make them; To take responsibility for my actions; To be ever aware of my negative and self-defeating attitudes and behaviors; To keep my willfulness in check; To always remember I need Your help; To keep love and tolerance of others as my code; and To continue in daily prayer how I can best serve You, Almighty God.

***Devotion*** *- 1 Peter 2:11 - The need for the continued infilling of the Holy Spirit*

Our old dependencies and character defects hold a strangely seductive spell over us. Even though countless harsh experiences warn us that the practice of our addictions only brings new pain, we may find ourselves lured back to the false promise these addictions hold out to us. Speaking through the mask of denial, our codependencies may cry out for the misuse of food, sexuality, money, relation-ships, authority, or chemicals as means to satiate the spiritual hungers that gnaw inside us.

What is the antidote against this temptation to slip into the *“fleshy lusts which war against the soul”?* The central message of recovery is that these codependent hungers can never be satisfied by human means or on human terms alone. Instead, we turn repeatedly toward the infilling of God’s Spirit that we *may “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 3:18). ☼

***Prayer****: Lord, when I am tempted to fall please fill me with a new hungering and thirsting for You and Your righteousness. In Jesus name I pray, amen.*

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**STEP 11**

Sought through prayer, study of the Scriptures, and meditation to improve our conscious contact with Almighty God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

*“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”* (Psalm 19:14)

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...”* (Colossians 3:16)

***Devotion*** *- John 4:13-14*

For most of us, life has been a thirsty experience. We have thirsted for love, security, self-worth, and peace. Many of us have tried to quench that thirst through excessive, control, addictions, and other inappropriate behavior patterns. But finally we have come to know the One who can satisfy the deepest thirst of every human spirit. We have put our trust in Jesus Christ who gives to us, as He did to the woman at the well, the fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.

How do we participate in the joy and peace of everlasting life right now? The Lord speaking through Paul in Ephesians 5:26 connects water with the Word of God. Just as water is essential to our physical lives for quenching our thirst and cleansing us, so the Word of God satisfies and purifies our spiritual lives. Through it, we come to a better knowledge of God and his will for us, and our relationship with Him is nourished and enriched.

***Prayer****: Father, help me to develop a true hungering and thirsting for Your righteousness that is found in Your Word. May my desire to be in Your presence increase daily. In Jesus name, amen.*

Step 11 provides daily spiritual maintenance. As recovering persons, we may use our support groups and recovery literature as springboards toward spiritual and emotional growth. We will probably reach a level, though, at which we hunger for an even deeper contact and communication with God. This is where the organized church, the Bible, other Christian literature, and prayer and meditation become indispensable tools for lasting spiritual growth. Bill Wilson, for example, found great peace and encouragement through Christian literature and the Bible. In fact, one of the books he came back to again and again was Oswald Chambers’ My Utmost for His Highest. In Step 11, we slow down, take ourselves out of the driver’s seat, and set a specific time to seek God’s will through prayer and meditating on His Word.

Studying the Bible helps us to know God better and to find out what He wants for our lives. *Serenity: A Companion for Twelve Step Recovery* gives specific examples of how God’s Word relates to the recovery issues we are facing. We see this in the meditations on the Twelve Steps and in the related recovery scriptures highlighted throughout the text. As we practice Step 11, we may want to use *Serenity* as a part of the special time we spend with God. Two other tools for continued spiritual and emotional growth are *The Recovery Devotional Bible* and the *Life Recovery Bible*. Both are available through Christian bookstores. Three other books that are especially helpful are: *Search for Significance, Search for Peace, and Search for Freedom,* all by Robert S. McGee and available from Search Resources, 1-800/460-4673. Also, the Celebrate Recovery program would be a great follow-up to this program.

If we have had little or no experience with prayer, we should probably begin in a simple fashion. That means putting aside perfectionist concerns about praying “the right way.” We should pray simply and forthrightly to God as a loving Father, not worrying about what we should and should not say.

Over time, as we become comfortable with God, we will talk with Him as with a trusted friend. He will be the Person with whom we can conduct our daily inventories of grief and confession issues. And we will begin to sense His answers to our prayers. These may not be cast in stone or echoed from a burning bush; but as we talk with God, we will comprehend His direction coming back to us.

As we examine Step 12, we will explore how this growing spiritual wisdom is to be carried to others and practiced in our own lives.

*Step 11: Sought through prayer, study of the Scriptures, and meditation to improve our conscious contact with Almighty God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*

Eleventh Step Prayer

Heavenly Father, as I understand You, I pray to keep my connection with You open and clear from the confusion of daily life. Through my prayers and meditation I ask especially for freedom from self-will, rationalization and wishful thinking. I pray for the guidance of correct thought and positive action. Your will, Father, not mine, be done.

***Devotion*** *- Romans 8:26-28*

Step 11 reminds us that just as the quality of our emotional recovery is dependent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition, so is the quality of our spiritual condition dependent upon the maintenance of close communication with God. Prayer is to be the channel of our contact with Him, but we may doubt our own capacity to approach God in this way.

However, Romans 8:26-27 assures us that we have divine assistance from and through the Holy Spirit as we seek to commune with God. Indeed, He intercedes on our behalf to express prayer needs that escape our own awareness or that exceed the language of our human vocabulary (v. 26). Furthermore, we may be confident that the Holy Spirit’s prayers on our behalf are *“according to the will of God”* (v. 27). Therefore, as we pray with His aid, we are indeed “*praying only for knowledge of [God's] will for us.”* ☼

***Prayer****: Lord God, stay with me as I struggle to give up my control problems, addictions and compulsions. Help me to desire to become free of these character defects that are controlling me. In the name of the One who set me free, Amen.*

1. What are some things that we might want to turn over to the Holy Spirit in order to help in our emotional and spiritual growth?
2. What are some things we can do to become better in our devotional and prayer time?

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**STEP 12**

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of the Holy Spirit and these steps, we tried to carry this message to others with character defects, 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. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”* (Galatians 6:1-2)

***Devotion*** *- 1 Corinthians 9:22-27 – “Free to Share”*

One of the seeming paradoxes of Christianity is that believers are free people who are servants of Christ. Because we belong to God, we are free from other people’s control and power over our lives. Now we can freely choose to do whatever it takes to share the message of God’s love, hope and re-generation with them. This is the Apostle Paul’s mind-set in verses 22 and 23. As we continually commit ourselves to recovery and spiritual growth, we will be asking God to keep us ever alert for ways in which to share our experiences with others.

The last part of this Scripture can be summed up in one word - vigilance. The need for spiritual self-discipline never ceases. This is why Step 12 urges us to “practice these principles in all our affairs.” Doing this will minimize our slips and hold us close to the presence of God, covered with the peace and serenity of His grace.

***Prayer****: Lord of freedom, free me from my fears of other people so that I might share the message of your grace and hope with those who need freed from bondage. In the name of the one who set us free, amen.*

Although we enter recovery to heal a particular affliction, we find that, in the end, we have received far more than a specific healing of an addiction; we have received the gift of a profound spiritual awakening. In a sense, the addiction, the pain, the healing of the addiction, have only been stepping-stones to spiritual transformation and renewal. There is a phrase from the oral tradition of A.A. and other Twelve Step groups, by which people in meetings introduce themselves:

“Hi, I’m \_ , and I’m a recovering \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” What they mean is that there is an element of gratitude for their addiction or dependency since it has served as the key to a spiritual awakening.

The second phrase of Step 12 reads: “we tried to carry this message to others.” Twelve Step programs place great emphasis on outreach to those who still suffer. Another oral tradition says, “You can’t keep it unless you give it away." Having received healing and spiritual renewal, we can retain them only as we offer them to others. This evangelism aspect of Twelve Step recovery provides a bridge between recovery programs and the Christian church, which has a two thousand-year history of evangelism.

On a practical level, psychologists have long believed that there is a special capacity for empathy between persons who have shared the same addictions. That is why Bill Wilson encouraged alcoholics to help other alcoholics, and it is also why we now have such a proliferation of recovery support groups for different dependencies. Again, the premise is that people who have suffered from an addiction and have found spiritual healing from it are in better positions to understand and help others with similar problems.

The final phase in Step 12 emphasizes practicing the Twelve Step principles “in all our affairs." This means that if we have been spiritually transformed, people will begin to observe it in our financial lives, in our relationships, in our community lives, in our sexual conduct, and the list goes on and on. Our transformation will be apparent in all arenas of our lives.

Healing our addictions or codependencies is not the only goal of recovery. Rather, it is the starting place. Certainly, we have to cap our addictions and put them in a state of balance or abstinence. But then begins the real journey of spiritual growth. Can our lives be remade?

We must remember that this growth is a process with one of the growth directions being toward God. Bill Wilson left the door open, saying, "It’s God as I understand Him,” but he was very explicit about who God was. He was the God of our fathers and of the Lord Jesus Christ. We may start as agnostics. We may then come to view the group or recovery process as our higher power, looking to other people for strength. Gradually we accept a vague notion of god, which grows to a more specific monotheistic god. We may even begin to pray to and dialogue with the god. Eventually, we come to know the one true God.

If you are growing and searching for the true God, may we suggest the God of the Scriptures. Spending time reading *Serenity*, *The* *Recovery Devotional Bible*, or the *Life Recovery Bible* and meditating on it can help you come to know this caring, loving, and merciful Father.

*Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of the Holy Spirit and these steps, we tried to carry this message to others with character defects, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

Twelfth Step Prayer

Father God, my spiritual awakening continues to unfold. The help I have received I will pass on and give to others, both in and out of the Fellowship. For this opportunity I am grateful. I pray most humbly to continue walking day by day on the road of spiritual progress. I pray for the inner strength and wisdom to practice the principles of this way of life in all I do and say. I need You, my friends, and the program every hour of every day. This is a better way to live.

***Devotion*** *- Isaiah 61:1-3* – *“Our Mission”*

A life set free from all addictions by the Lord is a beautiful sight to behold. When we practice these principles and share our experiences, people will see the glory of God in our life and gain hope. We know from experience the depths of suffering, affliction, and brokenness. We know the pain of being enslaved to our passions and blinded by our denial. We have endured our seasons of grieving. We can relate to those who struggle to be free. We also know that there is more to life than bondage. In Christ are healing and freedom, clarity and mercy, beauty and joy.

When Jesus came to the earth he had a mission, which was expressed in these words: *"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, because the LORD has appointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to announce 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.... To all who mourn...he will give beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning, praise instead of despair"* (Isaiah 61:3 NLT).

This mission has been passed on to us. Some people talk about “preaching the gospel” but may alienate those who need the Good News the most. We are in a unique position to share our experiences, our strengths, and our hope in a way that broken people can understand and receive it. ø

*Prayer:* Almighty God, help us to remember how far you have brought us. Give us the desire to share our victories, and even defeats, with others who need to be freed from their bondage of sin. In the name of the only true Freedom Maker, Jesus the Christ, amen.

THE SPIRITUAL ROOTS OF THE TWELVE STEPS

Author M. Scott Peck calls it the greatest event of the twentieth century: The “founding” of Alcoholics Anonymous in Akron, Ohio, on June 10, 1935. Two apparently hopeless alcoholics, one jobless for years, the other a surgeon who had needed a drink that day to steady his scalpel, had found each other.

In the years since, AA membership has grown from two to nearly two million. AA’s Twelve Steps, which owe virtually nothing to modern psychology or medicine, are unreservedly embraced by courts, hospitals, and a large number of counselors and psychologists. Beyond AA, the Twelve Steps have become the treatment of choice for a large catalogue of disorders, from sexual addiction to overeating. The Twelve Steps have definite spiritual roots.

Clearly, the Twelve Steps originated in Christian traditions, transmitted directly through an evangelical movement. Conviction of sin, conversion, yielding to God, self-assessment, confession, restitution, prayer, witness; these are all classic elements of Christian piety.

The Twelve Steps are Christian, but AA is not. AA makes the steps have a wider appeal to the pluralistic religious coloration of our culture. (We, however, deal with them as Christian). The Twelve Steps are a package of essentially Christian practices, and nothing is compromised in using them. We recognize Jesus as the Higher Power.

For those of us who have already made a commitment to Christ but still struggle with addiction and unhealthy dependencies, the Twelve Steps provide a recovery program that is consistent with our faith. As a result, we can experience our salvation in a deeper, real-life situation as we allow Christ to free us from our addictions and dependencies.

Meetings vary, yet all have similarities. The secrecy of what is said at these meetings is to be guarded with all diligence. We begin by identifying ourselves: “Hi, I’m Tom.” For many that is the beginning of opening up. We may wish to add, “...I am powerless over....” Some of our slogans may seem simplistic. But they work when understood and practiced. “Let go and let God!” – So easy to say, so difficult to live. Learning to let go of the dark, which I wrap myself in like a straitjacket, and letting in the light is tough. It is difficult to stop trying to protect, to rescue, to judge, to manage the lives around me.

We open our meetings with the Twelve Steps and the Serenity Prayer. In meeting together we are admitting that we cannot go our way alone. We need God and we need each other. It is my experience that Twelve Step groups fulfill such Scriptures as Galatians 6:1-5 and James 5:13-16 better than any other church group. (Read). Twelve Step people are always available.

STEPS TO EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALING

Reading this means you have probably been involved in a 12-Step group or are considering joining a program of recovery. Recovery programs are a means of finding freedom from any one or more addictions. Addictive agents are those persons or things on which we form an excessive dependency. The list of addictive agents would include (but not limited to):

* Alcohol or other drugs – legal or illegal
* Work, achievement, and success
* Money addictions, such as overspending, gambling, or an unhealthy hoarding of funds.
* Control addictions, especially if they show themselves in personal, sexual, family, and/or business relationships
* Eating disorders
* Sexual addictions and perversions (pornography)
* Approval dependency (the need to please people in order to feel worthy)
* Continually feeling the need to rescue others
* Depending on toxic relationships (relationships that are physically, emotionally and spiritually destructive)
* Chronic physical illness (hypochondria)
* Over emphasis on cosmetics, clothes, cosmetic surgery, trying to look good on the outside to cover character defects on the inside
* Over emphasis on academic pursuits and excessive intellectualizing
* Unhealthy dependence on exercise and physical conditioning
* Religious legalism (preoccupation with the form and the rules and regulations of religion, rather than internalizing the real message of Jesus Christ).
* General perfectionism
* Obsessive-compulsive symptoms such as excessive cleaning and avoiding contamination
* An over emphasis on organizing, structuring (the need to always have everything in its place).
* Materialism (always wanting the best of everything – not only for self but for organizations involved in)
* Internet addiction
* Other things we do to control inner feelings by manipulating people, things, and events.

To be honest, nearly everyone can find themselves somewhere in the preceding list. Therefore, all of us can benefit from the truths that will emerge as we begin this 12-Step recovery program. We are all codependent to some degree.

* Codependency is an effort to control inferior feelings by manipulating people, things, and events on the outside. This often happens as a result of our own childhood experiences, especially within our own families. Many times our most basic needs for love and nurturing were not met in those early family experiences. Or overzealous caretakers who did not allow us to mature emotionally, spiritually, and mentally may have smothered us. Such dysfunctional families, whether they involved open or veiled abuse, may be the original source of our codependent pain. This early codependent vacuum becomes the root of our later adult addictions.

Our lack of healthy intimacy within our own families may extend to a feeling of alienation from a second important family- our Christian family. In fact, our experiences with our earthy father may cause us not to feel comfortable with God as Father. In turn this may affect our ability to feel acceptance from those who should be our brothers and sisters in God’s family. Let’s face it, if we cannot experience healthy, loving relationships within our own families, why should God or people on the outside love and care for us?

With all this in mind, our emotional and spiritual healing must progress across several dimensions:

We have to heal our human relationships, and that means healing both the past painful memories from the dysfunctional family of origin and our contemporary relationships as well.

We must choose a recovery family. This can be a support group such as C.A.R.E., Celebrate Recovery, or a loving, non-judgmental, encouraging church community. Whatever we choose, it must be a new, healthy, confidential family.

We need to develop a spiritual intimacy with God within a spiritual family. Both the church and such groups as C.A.R.E. and other Anonymous programs can support us in our growth. What is Codependence? Based on "The Christian Codependence Recovery Workbook: From Surviving to Significance."

What does it mean to be codependent? At its most basic level, codependence is an addiction to people, places and things. It's finding something from the outside to fill the "inner void" on the inside. Since that inner void can only be filled by God, a codependent unknowingly attempts to put a person, situation or thing in God's place. Before you get overwhelmed by that definition, recognize that by default all human beings do this. Therefore, it would be technically correct to say all people are at one point "codependent".

As we take a deeper look at codependence, it's important to understand upfront that it can be entirely overcome through a Christ-centered recovery process. However, while God ultimately restores a codependent, it doesn't happen instantaneously. There must be a process (such as a 12-step program) where the codependent is able to fully recognize, understand and properly address the roots issues that have driven the codependent behaviors in the first place.