

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

CELEBRATE  
RECOVERY

— 30<sup>TH</sup> —

ANNIVERSARY

NIV  
**Celebrate**  
**Recovery**<sup>®</sup>  
Study Bible

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FOREWORD BY  
RICK WARREN

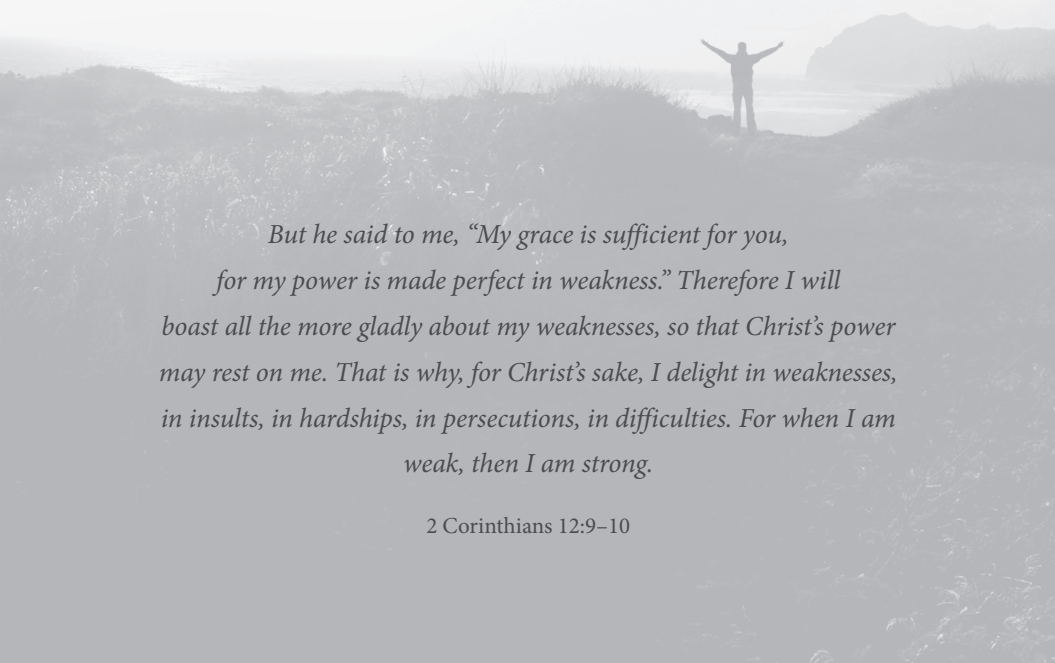
OVER 5 MILLION LIVES

IMPACTED THROUGH **CELEBRATE RECOVERY**

To \_\_\_\_\_

FROM \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_



*But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you,  
for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will  
boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power  
may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses,  
in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am  
weak, then I am strong.*

2 Corinthians 12:9–10



# Celebrate Recovery Study Bible

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

ZONDERVAN®

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## OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis . . . . .	1	2 Chronicles . . . . .	508	Daniel . . . . .	1030
Exodus . . . . .	74	Ezra . . . . .	547	Hosea . . . . .	1051
Leviticus . . . . .	122	Nehemiah . . . . .	560	Joel . . . . .	1063
Numbers . . . . .	155	Esther . . . . .	578	Amos . . . . .	1069
Deuteronomy . . . . .	205	Job . . . . .	590	Obadiah . . . . .	1079
Joshua . . . . .	244	Psalms . . . . .	632	Jonah . . . . .	1082
Judges . . . . .	275	Proverbs . . . . .	740	Micah . . . . .	1088
Ruth . . . . .	314	Ecclesiastes . . . . .	784	Nahum . . . . .	1096
1 Samuel . . . . .	319	Song of Songs . . . . .	798	Habakkuk . . . . .	1100
2 Samuel . . . . .	360	Isaiah . . . . .	806	Zephaniah . . . . .	1104
1 Kings . . . . .	398	Jeremiah . . . . .	889	Haggai . . . . .	1109
2 Kings . . . . .	436	Lamentations . . . . .	961	Zechariah . . . . .	1112
1 Chronicles . . . . .	470	Ezekiel . . . . .	971	Malachi . . . . .	1123

## NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew . . . . .	1129	Ephesians . . . . .	1466	Hebrews . . . . .	1528
Mark . . . . .	1184	Philippians . . . . .	1481	James . . . . .	1544
Luke . . . . .	1225	Colossians . . . . .	1490	1 Peter . . . . .	1551
John . . . . .	1292	1 Thessalonians . . . . .	1497	2 Peter . . . . .	1557
Acts . . . . .	1345	2 Thessalonians . . . . .	1503	1 John . . . . .	1562
Romans . . . . .	1392	1 Timothy . . . . .	1507	2 John . . . . .	1569
1 Corinthians . . . . .	1424	2 Timothy . . . . .	1513	3 John . . . . .	1570
2 Corinthians . . . . .	1442	Titus . . . . .	1520	Jude . . . . .	1572
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# BOOKS OF THE BIBLE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Books of the New Testament are in *italics*.

<i>Acts</i> . . . . .	1345	Judges . . . . .	275
Amos . . . . .	1069	1 Kings . . . . .	398
1 Chronicles . . . . .	470	2 Kings . . . . .	436
2 Chronicles . . . . .	508	Lamentations . . . . .	961
<i>Colossians</i> . . . . .	1490	Leviticus . . . . .	122
<i>1 Corinthians</i> . . . . .	1424	<i>Luke</i> . . . . .	1225
<i>2 Corinthians</i> . . . . .	1442	Malachi . . . . .	1123
Daniel . . . . .	1030	<i>Mark</i> . . . . .	1184
Deuteronomy . . . . .	205	<i>Matthew</i> . . . . .	1129
Ecclesiastes . . . . .	784	Micah . . . . .	1088
<i>Ephesians</i> . . . . .	1466	Nahum . . . . .	1096
Esther . . . . .	578	Nehemiah . . . . .	560
Exodus . . . . .	74	Numbers . . . . .	155
Ezekiel . . . . .	971	Obadiah . . . . .	1079
Ezra . . . . .	547	<i>1 Peter</i> . . . . .	1551
<i>Galatians</i> . . . . .	1459	<i>2 Peter</i> . . . . .	1557
Genesis . . . . .	1	<i>Philemon</i> . . . . .	1523
Habakkuk . . . . .	1100	<i>Philippians</i> . . . . .	1481
Haggai . . . . .	1109	Proverbs . . . . .	740
<i>Hebrews</i> . . . . .	1528	Psalms . . . . .	632
Hosea . . . . .	1051	<i>Revelation</i> . . . . .	1575
Isaiah . . . . .	806	<i>Romans</i> . . . . .	1392
<i>James</i> . . . . .	1544	Ruth . . . . .	314
Jeremiah . . . . .	889	1 Samuel . . . . .	319
Job . . . . .	590	2 Samuel . . . . .	360
Joel . . . . .	1063	Song of Songs . . . . .	798
<i>John</i> . . . . .	1292	<i>1 Thessalonians</i> . . . . .	1497
<i>1 John</i> . . . . .	1562	<i>2 Thessalonians</i> . . . . .	1503
<i>2 John</i> . . . . .	1569	<i>1 Timothy</i> . . . . .	1507
<i>3 John</i> . . . . .	1570	<i>2 Timothy</i> . . . . .	1513
Jonah . . . . .	1082	<i>Titus</i> . . . . .	1520
Joshua . . . . .	244	Zechariah . . . . .	1112
<i>Jude</i> . . . . .	1572	Zephaniah . . . . .	1104

# FOREWORD

You may think recovery is only for drug addicts and alcoholics — people whose lives seem out of control. But that's just not true. The Bible teaches that all of us have addictions in our lives. Sin is addicting, and the Bible says, "all have sinned." Not one of us is perfect. We've all blown it; we've all made mistakes. We've hurt ourselves, we've hurt other people, and others have hurt us.

Because of sin, each of us needs repentance and recovery in order to live the way God intended. That's why, years ago, we at Saddleback developed a Biblical recovery program based on the Beatitudes of Jesus. We named the program Celebrate Recovery.

The goal of the Celebrate Recovery program is not simply to recover from past sins and hurts. The goal is to become Christlike in our character. To date, over 9,000 hurting people have participated in Celebrate Recovery at Saddleback Church, and have experienced a Biblically balanced approach to repentance and recovery.

So no matter what situation you find yourself in, here's good news: regardless of whether your problem is emotional, financial, relational, spiritual, sexual or whatever, regardless of what you need help with, *God wants to help you.*

In Isaiah 57:18–19 God says of his people that he has seen how they acted but he will heal them, he will lead them and help them and will comfort those who mourn. So God knows us. He knows where we came from, where we stand today, and where we're going to be tomorrow. And he says:

- If you've been hurt, "I want to heal you."
- If you're confused, "I want to lead you."
- If you've ever felt you were helpless to change anything, "I want to help you."
- If you've ever felt no one understands your problem, "I want to comfort you."
- If you feel worried or afraid, "I want to offer peace to you."

The reality is that you're not going to get well on your own. Persistent temptations must be team-tackled through community. We need each other. Trying to fix your problems on your own only makes them worse than they were when you started. But there's hope. God is ready and waiting to help you if you let him.

I'm excited that you're beginning the journey to recovery. Your life will change. You'll experience freedom from your sinful hurts, hang-ups and habits as you give up control and allow Jesus to be Lord in every area of your life.

Dr. Rick Warren  
Senior Pastor



# CELEBRATE RECOVERY: A BRIEF HISTORY

The purpose of Saddleback Church's Celebrate Recovery ministry is to fellowship with others and to celebrate God's healing power in our lives through the program's Eight Recovery Principles. This experience allows those who work through the program to experience profound life change and freedom from their hurts, hang-ups and habits. By working and applying these Biblical principles, we begin to grow spiritually. We become free from our addictive, compulsive and dysfunctional behaviors. This freedom creates peace, serenity, joy and — most importantly — a stronger personal relationship with God and with others. As we progress through the program we discover our personal, loving and forgiving Higher Power — Jesus Christ, the one and only true Higher Power.

Pastor John Baker  
Founder, Celebrate Recovery

Hi, I'm John Baker, a believer who struggles with alcohol. I have had the honor to lead a program and movement called Celebrate Recovery. In these next few paragraphs, I'd like to give you a brief history of the origins of this program, on which this Bible is based. In order to do this, I have to start with my own testimony.

As I said above, I am in recovery from abuse of alcohol. This sin-addiction had its roots in my own struggle with self-esteem issues in my earliest years — this despite being a good student and athlete. But even though I was a popular young man on the high school campus and ball field, I still had this overwhelming sense of inadequacy. Even though I had been raised in a Christian home and had early on felt the call to the ministry, I never felt that I would be good enough to be used in God's service.

As a young man I enrolled in the University of Missouri. It was there that I made

a new discovery: Using alcohol gave me the self-confidence I had been lacking. As my college career progressed, my use of alcohol increased. My life was now complete: the party never started until I arrived, and it ended when I left. Alcohol gave me a new sense of power and confidence — one I had been looking for for most of my life.

I met and married my wife Cheryl while we were still in college. She was attracted to my outgoing personality that I had manufactured. As we made a new life together, my use of alcohol continued. It followed me into the Air Force. Into the business world. It worked its way into all aspects of my daily life, became an integral part of who I was and what I did. But I never thought it was a problem — I thought it was a tool that I was using to get me to where I wanted to go.

Through all of these years I looked like the model of a successful man. I had a beautiful wife, two great kids — Laura and John Jr. — and a nice house in the suburbs. I was a leader in my church's youth group. And I was climbing the corporate ladder as well. I was promoted eight times in the first eleven years of my business career. By the age of 30 I had reached all of my life's career and financial goals.

But all the while I kept replaying the words of a song in my mind — "Is That All There Is?"

With all the business success came several relocations, and attending church became less and less important to me as my drinking increased. I knew that if I died I was saved; however, I also was beginning to be uncomfortable with my lifestyle, business practices and priorities. To the outside world everything with our family seemed normal, but in my heart I knew something was very wrong. I had to face a major decision: I could do it my way — continue drinking and living by the world's standards — or surrender and repent and do it God's way.

I wish I could tell you that I saw the light and did it God's way. But the truth is, I chose

my way. My drinking increased, and I turned my back completely on God.

I was what is known as a functioning alcoholic. I knew I had a problem, but I had never lost a job or been arrested for drunk driving. Up to this point my secret was still safe. Cheryl was in denial, or so I thought. She never labeled me as an “alcoholic” until one day she noticed my new breakfast drink of choice: beer. Over time tensions rose, and one evening over a seemingly minor argument, she asked me to go to counseling with her or to just leave. Much to her surprise, I left, and our 13 month separation began.

You see, the only things my hurts, hang-ups and habits cost me were my closest and most important relationships: with my Lord and my family. What I had considered the solution for my life’s problem — alcohol — had become the problem of my life. Eventually my drinking cost me all purpose and reason for living. I was dying physically, emotionally, mentally and, most importantly, spiritually.

Finally convinced my life had to change, I began to attend AA meetings without Cheryl’s knowledge. On February 14, 1991, she and I met for lunch. At that meal I told her that I had begun to work on my recovery. I made my amends and she forgave me. After that meeting our relationship began to improve. We were still separated, but we began to see each other more often, and my relationship with my kids improved as well.

Cheryl and the kids had begun attending a church that met in a high school gym: A church called Saddleback. One Saturday night I was visiting the kids and they asked me to go to church with them on Sunday morning. Much to their surprise, I said yes. I hadn’t been in a church for five years!

That Sunday morning, I heard the music and Pastor Rick Warren’s message and I knew I was home. Cheryl and I began in earnest to work on our issues that had torn our relationship apart. Five months later, God opened our hearts and we renewed our marriage vows. As a family, we were baptized and became a part of the church community.

All I can say is that this is evidence of the power and grace of God in my life. It was in the context of this community that I found one of my life’s verses — 1 Peter 2:9–10.

You know, God never wastes a hurt. All the pain and heartache of my sin — my

addiction — finally made sense. However, at my AA meetings I was mocked when I talked about my Higher Power — the only true Higher Power, Jesus Christ. And at church I couldn’t find a place where individuals would openly relate to my struggle with alcoholism. The men’s small groups I tried just didn’t want to go that deep with their issues.

But I knew they were there. In a church of thousands of people, I couldn’t be the only one struggling with a hurt, hang-up or addictive habit. I wrote Pastor Rick a concise, 13-page, single-spaced letter outlining the vision that God gave me — the vision of Celebrate Recovery, a Christ-centered recovery program. His response? “Great — do it!” Cheryl and I accepted that challenge, and after much prayer and hard work, the Celebrate Recovery program was born.

Over the past years, through the grace and oversight of God, the ministry of Celebrate Recovery has expanded. The program has been worked by tens of thousands of individuals in thousands of churches around the world. The Celebrate Recovery team has developed a youth edition of the curriculum. We have launched Celebrate Recovery-Inside, a program that works with prison inmates — a segment of the population where addiction also runs high.

God has blessed this program, and through it has brought profound life-change to thousands of people who have struggled for years with their particular hurts, hang-ups and habits. Make no mistake about it, God is in the business of changing the lives of those who admit their powerlessness to control their hurts, hang-ups and habits and turn their lives and will over to him.

If you want more information on Celebrate Recovery or need to find a group near you contact [www.celebraterecovery.com](http://www.celebraterecovery.com).

This Bible has been designed to accompany the Celebrate Recovery curriculum and program in the church setting. But it also has been designed to be used by individuals who are not yet a part of the Celebrate Recovery program.

As you begin or continue your process of working the principles and steps on the road to recovery, may you find blessing, comfort and assurance in the pages of this Bible.

John Baker  
June 2007

# ABOUT THE *CELEBRATE RECOVERY STUDY BIBLE*

God's Word offers a way out for those of us who struggle with life's circumstances or with addictive, dysfunctional or compulsive behaviors. The *Celebrate Recovery Study Bible* provides special features highlighting aspects of Scripture that speak directly to our need to break free from life's hurts, hang-ups and habits. This makes the *Celebrate Recovery Study Bible* a powerful, positive ally to which you'll turn again and again.

Contrary to a common misperception, God's Good News is positive, not negative. It's all about redemption, not condemnation. This Bible will lift you up and show you how to walk, step by attainable step, on a path of healing and liberty from the hurts, hang-ups and habits that have been holding you back.

The *Celebrate Recovery Study Bible* is based on the eight principles and the underlying twelve Christ-centered recovery steps of the proven Celebrate Recovery program (see pages 15–44). While this Bible has been designed as a perfect companion to the program (which is now offered in thousands of churches worldwide), it has also been intentionally designed to help anyone who is struggling with their hurts, hang-ups and habits.

## Features

### *The Eight Principles and Twelve Christ-Centered Steps of the Celebrate Recovery Program*

Accustomed to a traditional twelve-step program and hesitant to make a switch? The good news is that the familiar twelve steps remain intact under the Celebrate Recovery model, except that the vague language about a Higher Power gets specific, focusing in on the *one* and *only true* Higher Power, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Celebrate Recovery is built on eight proven Biblical principles based on the well-loved Beatitudes from Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount (see page xiii). The Christ-centered twelve steps fit neatly and naturally underneath the umbrella of the eight principles, as outlined on pages xiv–xxxvi. Once you become familiar with this framework, you'll grow to love and appreciate your new perspective on the recovery process.

### *Book Introductions*

Before launching into each of the Bible's books, you will have a bird's-eye view of its theme, author and date. These brief introductions include key verses related to recovery, as well as a brief overview of recovery themes in the book. That's right: All 66 books touch on recovery issues. And each one reflects a God who cares deeply about each person struggling to make sense of a fallen world.

### *Character Studies*

Get to know more than 50 Bible characters, each of whom illustrates a particular recovery issue. You'll be amazed at how these ancient personalities jump into focus when you view them simply as people who were in many ways very much like us.

### *Recovery Stories*

One of the most engaging features of this Bible, these real-life, two-page stories document the backgrounds, struggles and ultimate victories of over 50 men and women whose lives have been permanently changed through working the principles and steps of Celebrate Recovery. Each testimony relates to one of the above character studies. They show that the struggles we face today have been common for thousands of years.

### *Lesson Studies*

Each of the eight principles is tied to one or more key words that serve as memory aids. For example, a key word in Principle One is DENIAL; in Principle Four, CONFESS; and in Principle Eight, GIVE. Each letter in these acrostics begins a sentence or phrase that is discussed at the point of an applicable verse in the Bible. The “path” is clearly marked, making your journey through each principle clear-cut and uncomplicated.

### *Recovery-Related Scripture Ties*

Recovery themes are addressed frequently throughout Scripture. Just look for the line in the margin running alongside the passage, as well as for the number or numbers indicating which principles the verses relate to. The numbered principles can be found on page xiii.

### *Daily Devotionals*

The 30 days of devotions are designed to be read and reread for reinforcement and encouragement. Celebrate Recovery is not just a program but a means toward real life change, and the key to recovery is to keep the principles alive. These thirty devotions begin on page 1627. As you read through them, then read them again, they will assist you in reviewing the principles as often as you'd like. “Take a Look” questions at the end of each devotion offer you an opportunity to evaluate your situation each time you return to the devotion and its related principle.

### *Subject Index*

The Subject Index begins on page 1612, and will lead you to key texts on a variety of subjects covered in God's Word. A sampling from the beginning of the list includes *abandonment, abuse, addiction, adultery, alcohol use, ambition, anger* and *anxiety*.

### *Features Topical Index*

This second subject index, beginning on page 1604, refers you to particular features in this Bible that touch on recovery themes. For example, if your concern is anorexia, you'll find the page numbers of all features that touch on this issue.

### *Character Study and Recovery Stories Index*

Would you like to work your way through all of the Biblical character sketches or the recovery stories? Find the details on pages 1602 and 1603.

Wherever people long for a way out ... wherever broken hearts need hope ... this Bible's features offer help and encouragement through every stage of the recovery process.

Celebrate Recovery is a spiritual maturity program. If everybody daily lived Principles Seven and Eight to the best of their ability, this world would be a much better place to live.

John Baker  
Founder and Pastor of Celebrate Recovery  
Saddleback Church



# THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

BASED ON JESUS'S BEATITUDES  
PASTOR RICK WARREN

**Principle One:** Realize I'm not God; I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable (Step One).

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit." (Matthew 5:3)*

**Principle Two:** Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to him and that he has the power to help me recover (Step Two).

*"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)*

**Principle Three:** Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control (Step Three).

*"Blessed are the meek." (Matthew 5:5)*

**Principle Four:** Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God and to someone I trust (Steps Four and Five).

*"Blessed are the pure in heart." (Matthew 5:8)*

**Principle Five:** Voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask him to remove my character defects (Steps Six and Seven).

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." (Matthew 5:6)*

**Principle Six:** Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others (Steps Eight and Nine).

*"Blessed are the merciful." (Matthew 5:7)*

*"Blessed are the peacemakers." (Matthew 5:9)*

**Principle Seven:** Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading and prayer in order to know God and his will for my life and to gain the power to follow his will (Steps Ten and Eleven).

**Principle Eight:** Yield myself to God to be used to bring this good news to others, both by my example and by my words (Step Twelve).

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness." (Matthew 5:10)*

# PRINCIPLE ONE

REALIZE I'M NOT GOD; I ADMIT THAT I AM POWERLESS  
TO CONTROL MY TENDENCY TO DO THE WRONG THING  
AND THAT MY LIFE IS UNMANAGEABLE.

---

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

MATTHEW 5:3

Our amazing recovery journey starts with Principle One, where we admit that we are powerless to control our hurts, hang-ups and habits and that our lives have become unmanageable, out of control. But before we begin this exciting journey, we need to ask ourselves the following two questions:

ARE WE WEARING A MASK OF DENIAL?  
OVER WHAT DO WE REALLY HAVE CONTROL?

Let's look at the first question: Are we wearing a mask of denial? Before we can make any progress in our recovery, we need to face our denial. As soon as we remove our mask, our recovery begins — or begins again! It doesn't matter whether we're new in recovery or we've been in the process and working the principles and steps for years. Denial can rear its ugly head and return at any time. We may trade addictions or get into a new relationship that's unhealthy for us in a different way than a previous one.

God says in Jeremiah 6:14:

*They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious.  
'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace.*

Denial is serious. We can't heal our wounds, hurts, hang-ups and habits by pretending they're not there. Following are six negative effects DENIAL has had on our lives:

- D**isables our feelings — 2 Peter 2:19
- E**nergy drain — Psalm 146:7–8
- N**egates our growth — Psalm 107:13–14
- I**solates us from God — Genesis 3:7–8
- A**lienates us from other human relationships — Ephesians 4:25
- L**engthens our pain — Jeremiah 30:17

As soon as we start working on this principle and admit that we're powerless, we begin to change. We see that our old ways of trying to control our hurts, hang-ups and habits didn't work. Our attempts were buried by our denial, and our problems were held close by our false sense of power. This leads us to the second question we need to answer:

Over what do we really have control? In Principle One we recognize our need to admit our powerlessness. Our lust for the power to control is rooted in our weaknesses, not in our strengths. We need to realize our human weaknesses and turn our lives over to God. Jesus knew this would be difficult. How difficult? He said this about a related issue, but it applies here as well: “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

The following acrostic demonstrates what happens when we admit we’re POWERLESS. We begin to let go of the following “serenity robbers”:

**P**ride — Proverbs 29:23  
**O**nly ifs — Luke 12:2 – 3  
**W**orrying — Matthew 6:34  
**E**scape — Ephesians 5:13 – 14  
**R**esentment — Ephesians 4:26 – 27  
**L**oneliness — Hebrews 13:1 – 2  
**E**mpiness — John 10:10  
**S**elfishness — Luke 17:33  
**S**eparation — Romans 8:38 – 39

The power to change comes only from God’s grace. In Principle One we start working and living this program in earnest. When we admit we’re powerless, we go on to recognize that we need a power greater than ourselves to restore us. That power is the one and only true Higher Power, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 12:1 invites us, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

This verse spells out two important insights as we begin our recovery journey. First, God has a particular race, a unique plan, for each of us — a plan for good, not a life consumed with dependencies, addictions and obsessions. The second thing is that we need to be willing to get rid of all the unnecessary baggage — our hurts, hang-ups and habits — in our lives that keep us stuck (“let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles”). Working through the eight principles will allow us to discover God’s plan and purpose for our lives. The journey begins by taking the first step.

The first step of the Christ-centered twelve steps relates to Principle One.

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.

*I know that good itself does not dwell 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

## PRINCIPLE ONE PRAYER

Dear God, your Word tells me that I can’t heal my hurts, hang-ups and habits just by saying they’re not there. Help me! Parts of my life — or all of my life — are out of control. I now



know that I can't "fix" myself. It seems that the harder I try to do the right thing, the more I struggle. Lord, I want to step out of my denial into the truth. I pray for you to show me the way. In your Son's name, Amen.

### PRINCIPLE ONE LESSONS:

DENIAL: Go to 2 Peter 2:19 (p. 1560).

POWERLESS: Go to Proverbs 29:23 (p. 780).

## PRINCIPLE TWO

EARNESTLY BELIEVE THAT GOD EXISTS,  
THAT I MATTER TO HIM AND THAT HE HAS  
THE POWER TO HELP ME RECOVER.

---

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

MATTHEW 5:4

In Principle Two we find the power for our recoveries as we earnestly believe that God exists, that we matter to him and that he has the power to help us recover.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us:

*Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

And Psalm 62:5 invites:

*Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.*

In the first principle we admitted that we're powerless. It's through this admission that we're able to *believe* and *receive* God's power to help us recover. We do need to be careful, though, not to cover up the pit of our hurts, hang-ups and habits with layers of denial or to try some quick "fix." Instead, we need to expose our hurts, hang-ups and habits to the light so that through God's power we can truly find healing.

In the second principle we come to believe that God exists, that we're important to him and that we're able to find the one true Higher Power, Jesus Christ. We've come to understand that God wants to fill our lives with his love, joy and presence.

In Luke 15:11 – 32 we find the parable of the lost son. This story about a father's love for his wayward son is really a picture of the love of God the Father for all of us. God's love is looking for us, no matter how lost we may feel. God's searching love can find us, no matter how many times we may have fallen into sin. God's hands of mercy are reaching out to pick us up, to love us and to forgive us.

This is the only place where we'll find hope. For that reason Principle Two is called the hope principle.

This is what the word HOPE means in Principle Two:

**H** igher Power — Romans 11:36  
**O** penness to change — Ephesians 4:22–23  
**P** ower to change — Psalm 25:5  
**E** xpectation to change — Philippians 1:6

The second step of the Christ-centered 12 steps relates to Principle Two.

Step Two: We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

*It is God who works in you to will and to act  
in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:13

In this principle we come to believe that a power greater than ourselves can help us recover — can restore us to sanity. This isn't to say we're crazy. The word sanity in this context means that, as a result of admitting our powerlessness in Principle One, we can move from chaos into hope in Principle Two. Hope comes when we believe that a power greater than ourselves, our Higher Power, Jesus Christ, can and will restore us. Jesus alone can provide that power, since we on our own are powerless over our hurts, hang-ups and habits. He alone can restore order and meaning to our lives. He alone can restore us to sanity.

A working definition of *insanity* in this context might be doing the same thing over and over again but expecting a different result each time.

*Sanity*, using this model, may, on the other hand, be defined as “wholeness of mind; making decisions based on the truth.”

Jesus is the only Higher Power who offers the truth, as well as the power, the way and the life.

The following are just some of the gifts we receive when we come to believe that our true Higher Power, Jesus Christ, has both the power and the will to restore us to SANITY:

**S** trength — Psalm 46:1  
**A** cceptance — Romans 15:7  
**N** ew life — 2 Corinthians 1:8–9  
**I** ntegrity — 3 John 4  
**T** rust — Proverbs 29:25  
**Y** our Higher Power — Romans 5:8

We can't follow through with anything unless and until we get started. But just how much faith do we need to start working this principle? Jesus provides the answer in Matthew 17:20: “Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

It's reassuring to know that we don't need large doses of faith as we begin the recovery process. We need only a little faith, as small as the tiniest of seeds, to effect change, to begin to move away our mountains of hurts, hang-ups and habits.

Eternal life doesn't begin with death; it begins with faith. Hebrews 11:1 explains what faith is: "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." We can't find salvation through intellectual understanding, monetary gifts, good works or church attendance. The way — the only way — to find salvation is described in Romans 10:9: "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

We'll find our true hope in the only Higher Power, Jesus Christ. As we take this step of hope, his Spirit will come with supernatural power to reside in our hearts. The Holy Spirit will give us the courage to reach out and take hold of Christ's hand, to face the present with confidence and the future with realistic expectancy.

Simply put, life without Christ is a hopeless end; with him life is an endless hope.

## PRINCIPLE TWO PRAYER

Dear God, I've tried hard to fix and control my life's hurts, hang-ups and habits. I admit that, by myself, I'm powerless to change. I need to begin to believe and receive your power to help me recover. You loved me enough to send your Son to the cross to die for my sins. Help me to open myself up to the hope I can find only in Jesus. Please help me to start living my life in reliance upon this hope, one day at a time. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## PRINCIPLE TWO LESSONS:

HOPE: Go to Romans 11:36 (p. 1412).

SANITY: Go to Psalm 46:1 (p. 664).

## PRINCIPLE THREE

### CONSCIOUSLY CHOOSE TO COMMIT ALL MY LIFE AND WILL TO CHRIST'S CARE AND CONTROL.

*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

MATTHEW 5:5

In Principle Three we make the one-time, permanent decision to turn over our lives to the care of God — the most important decision we'll ever make. Our choice, not chance, determines our destiny. And that decision requires only putting our faith into action.

But what is faith? It isn't a sense, sight or reason. Faith is simply taking God at his word. God's Word tells us in Romans 10:9 that "if you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." For some people that seems just too simple. But it isn't. Our salvation depends much more on God's love for us than on our love for him.

How do we TURN over our lives and wills to our Higher Power, Jesus Christ? This principle ends with new life, but we must take three actions before that new life can be ours:

**T**rust — Romans 10:9  
**U**nderstand — Proverbs 3:5–6  
**R**epent — Ezekiel 18:30–32  
**N**ew life — 2 Corinthians 5:17

Many people don't understand that putting off the decision to accept Jesus Christ as their Higher Power, as their Lord and Savior, is really deciding not to accept him. Principle Three is like opening the door: All you need is the willingness to make the decision. Christ will do the rest. He calls out to us, "Here 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 that person, and they with me" (Revelation 3:20).

If we're going to successfully work Principle Three, we need to get past our old, familiar, negative barriers of pride, fear, guilt, worry and doubt. But how do we break this cycle? The answer is that we need to be proactive, to take the initiative. In fact, Principle Three is all about action. Listen again to the opening words: "Consciously choose to commit ..." Making that choice requires ACTION:

**A** ccept — Romans 10:9  
**C** ommit — Psalm 143:10  
**T** urn it over — Proverbs 3:6  
**I** t's only the beginning — Philippians 1:6  
**O** ne day at a time — Matthew 6:34  
**N** ext step — 1 Corinthians 15:2–4

Turning over our lives to Christ is a one-time, yet permanent, commitment. Once we accept Christ as Lord of our life, it's a done deal. We can't lose our salvation. It comes with a lifetime (in this case, eternal) guarantee from the Holy Spirit: "You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 1:13).

The rest of the principle, though — the part about turning over our wills to Christ — requires a daily recommitment. We can begin by going to our Bible regularly, opening it prayerfully, reading it expectantly and living it joyfully.

The third step of the Christ-centered 12 steps relates to Principle Three.

Step Three: We made a decision to turn our lives and our wills over to the care of God.

*I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy,  
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God —  
this is your true and proper worship.*

ROMANS 12:1

Principle Three states that we choose to commit our lives and wills to Christ's care. In the secular 12 steps, Step Three gets the sequence confused, telling us to "turn our wills and our lives over ..." The fact is that we must first commit and surrender our lives to the one and only true Higher Power, Jesus Christ. Then and only then are we empowered to turn over our wills to him.

Principle Three constitutes the core difference between a secular 12-step program and Celebrate Recovery. True and lasting recovery can be achieved only through a personal, committed relationship with Christ.

In the secular 12 steps, Step Three is: "We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand him."

We need a God much, much greater than anything that stems from our own imagination or understanding. We need the one true God, the Almighty, the Creator of the universe. First Corinthians 13:12 tells us, "Now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." Someday we'll see Jesus face-to-face. The fog of interpretation will be lifted, and our understanding will be perfected.

Praise God that we don't need a complete understanding of Jesus in order to ask him into our lives as Lord and Savior. Why? Because God does more than lead us day by day and year by year. He directs our way moment by moment, one step after another.

If you haven't asked Jesus Christ to be your Higher Power, the Lord and Savior of your life, what are you waiting for? All it takes is praying this prayer with a sincere heart:

### PRINCIPLE THREE PRAYER

Dear God, I've tried — and failed — to do it all by myself in my own power. Today I want to turn my life over to you. I ask you to be my Lord and Savior. You're the one and only Higher Power. I ask you to help me think less about myself and my own will. I want to turn over my will, moment by moment, to you, to continuously seek your direction and wisdom for my life. Please continue to help me overcome my hurts, hang-ups and habits, so that victory over them may help others as they see your power at work in my already changed, and still changing, life. Help me to do your will always. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

### PRINCIPLE THREE LESSONS:

TURN: Go to Romans 10:9 (p. 1410).

ACTION: Go also to Romans 10:9 (p. 1411).

## PRINCIPLE FOUR

OPENLY EXAMINE AND CONFESS MY FAULTS TO MYSELF,  
TO GOD AND TO SOMEONE I TRUST.

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*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

MATTHEW 5:8

Principle Four begins the process of “coming clean.” It’s here that we openly examine and confess our faults to ourselves, to God and to another person we trust. We begin to chip away at the “truth decay” of our past. The negative effects of our hurts, hang-ups and habits have built up, like a layer of tartar, over the years and have kept us from really seeing the truth about our past and present situations.

In the first part of this principle, we need to “openly examine” our faults. We need to list, or inventory, all of the significant events — both good and bad — in our lives. We need to be as honest as we can in order to allow God to show us our part in each event and how that has affected both ourselves and others. We need to do a searching and fearless inventory, to step out of our denial, because we can’t put our faults behind us until we’ve faced them. We need to see through our denial of the past into the truth of the present — to identify our true feelings, motives and thoughts.

Our inventory brings us to a black-and-white discovery of who we really are at our core. But if we look only at the bad parts of our past, we distort our inventory and open ourselves up to unnecessary pain. Lamentations 3:40 invites us, “Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.” Notice that the verse doesn’t say, “Examine your bad, negative ways.” We need to honestly focus on both the positives and the negatives of our past.

We accomplish that by taking a MORAL inventory. That word *moral* scares some people. But at its root, it simply means “honest.” To make a MORAL inventory, we need to do the following five things:

- M**ake time — Job 33:33
- O**pen ourselves up — Job 7:11
- R**ely on God — Isaiah 40:29
- A**nalyze our past honestly — Proverbs 20:27
- L**ist — Lamentations 3:40

In this principle, we list the people we resent or fear, the specific actions others have taken to hurt us, the ways in which those hurtful actions have affected our lives and the wrongs or injuries we’ve inflicted on others.



This is done by taking a Spiritual Inventory. Through this process, we examine eight key areas of our lives:

Our relationships with others — Matthew 6:12 – 14

Our priorities in life — Matthew 6:33

Our attitude — Ephesians 4:31

Our integrity — Colossians 3:9

Our mind — Romans 12:2

Our body — 1 Corinthians 6:19 – 20

Our family — Joshua 24:15

Our church — Hebrews 10:25

The fourth step of the Christ-centered 12 steps relates to the first part of Principle Four.

Step Four: We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

*Let us examine our ways and test them,  
and let us return to the LORD.*

LAMENTATIONS 3:40

As soon as we complete our inventories in the first part of Principle Four, we need to confess our faults to ourselves, to God and to someone else we trust. After we share our inventories — the good and bad things of our past and present — we'll find the peace and freedom for which we may have been searching our entire lives. We need to confess our shortcomings, resentments and sins. God wants us to come clean, to admit that wrong is wrong, that we're "guilty as charged." We need to CONFESS the specific sins we've discovered in our inventory:

**C**onfess our shortcomings, resentments and sins — Proverbs 28:13

**O**bey God's direction — Romans 14:11 – 12

**N**o more guilt — Romans 8:1

**F**ace the truth — John 8:12

**E**ase the pain — Psalm 32:3 – 5

**S**top the blame — Matthew 7:3

**S**tart accepting God's forgiveness — 2 Corinthians 5:19

In confession we agree with God regarding our sins, and our fellowship with him is restored. Principle Four sums up how we go about obeying God's direction in confessing our sins: First, we confessed our sins to God so we could be forgiven. Then we confessed them to another person we trust so we could start the healing process.

The fifth step of the Christ-centered 12 steps relates to this part of Principle Four.

Step Five: We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray  
for each other so that you may be healed.*

JAMES 5:16

Some people feel that if they ADMIT their sins to another they have everything to lose and nothing to gain. Following is the truth about four things we have to lose and three things we have to gain by sharing our inventories with someone we trust:

We lose:

1. Our sense of isolation. Our feeling of aloneness will begin to vanish.
2. Our unwillingness to forgive. When people accept and forgive us, we start to see that we, in turn, can forgive others.
3. Our inflated, false pride. As we realistically see and accept ourselves, we begin to gain true humility, which involves seeing ourselves as we really are and God as he really is.
4. Our sense of denial. Being truthful with another person begins to tear away at our denial. We begin to feel clean and honest.

We gain:

1. Healing that the Bible promises. Look again at James 5:16. The key word here is “healed.” Notice that the verse doesn’t say, “Confess your sins to one another and you will be forgiven,” although we hope this will be so, at least in terms of the other person. God already forgave us when we confessed our sins to him. Now he promises that we’ll begin the healing process when we confess our sins to someone else.
2. Freedom. Our secrets have kept us in chains — bound, frozen, unable to move forward in any of our relationships, either with God or with others. Admitting our sins snaps the chains so God’s healing power can be released.
3. Support. When we share our inventory with another person, we gain support. Our partner can help us stay focused and provide valuable feedback.

An important part of Celebrate Recovery is for each of us to have accountability relationships. Don’t attempt to work through this fourth principle alone. We need sponsors and/or accountability partners for the following three reasons:

1. Having someone fill this role for us is a key part of our recovery program.

By walking alongside us on the road to recovery, a sponsor and/or an accountability partner keeps us on track as we complete the eight principles.

Proverbs 20:5 says:

*The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters,  
but one who has insight draws them out.*

We need a man or woman who understands both us as an individual and what we’re going through in order to help us in our recovery.

2. Having a sponsor and/or an accountability partner is Biblical.

Ecclesiastes 4:9 – 10 tells us:

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return  
for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.  
But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.*

And Proverbs 27:17 points out that, “as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” The phrase “one another” is used in the New Testament over 50 times.

3. Having a sponsor and/or an accountability partner is the best guard against relapse.

By providing feedback to keep us on track, a sponsor and/or an accountability partner can see our old dysfunctional, self-defeating patterns beginning to resurface and quickly point them out to us. This person can confront us in a spirit of truth and love without piling on shame or guilt.

Ecclesiastes 7:5 states:

*It is better to heed the rebuke of a wise person  
than to listen to the song of fools.*

The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism.

As we complete Principle Four, we need to remember that no matter how bad our past actions may have been, we can hold on to the assurance offered by Romans 8:1: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Principle Four can be summed up in one verse, Isaiah 1:18:

*“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the LORD.  
“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;  
though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”*

## PRINCIPLE FOUR PRAYER

Dear God, you know my past; you’re familiar with all the good and bad things I’ve done. In this principle, I ask you to give me the strength and courage to list them so I can “come clean” and face both my past and the truth about my present and future. Please help me reach out to those special persons you’ve placed along my road to recovery. Thank you for providing them to help me maintain balance as I work on my inventory. In Christ’s name I pray, Amen.

## PRINCIPLE FOUR LESSONS:

MORAL: Go to Job 33:33 (p. 622).

SPONSOR: Go to Proverbs 20:5 (p. 766).

INVENTORY: Go to Ephesians 4:31 (p. 1477).

SPIRITUAL INVENTORY: Go to Matthew 6:12 – 13 (p. 1137).

CONFESS: Go to Proverbs 28:13 (p. 778).

ADMIT: Go to James 5:16 (p. 1550).

## PRINCIPLE FIVE

VOLUNTARILY SUBMIT TO EVERY CHANGE GOD  
WANTS TO MAKE IN MY LIFE AND HUMBLY ASK HIM  
TO REMOVE MY CHARACTER DEFECTS.

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*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.*

MATTHEW 5:6

By the time we get to Principle Five, we've already taken some major steps on the road to recovery. We admitted we had a problem we were powerless within ourselves to overcome. We came to believe that God could and would help us. We sought him and turned our lives and wills over to his care and direction. We took a spiritual inventory and shared it both with God and with another person. That was a lot of work — hard work, great work! Now we're going to ask God to remove our character defects.

Principle Five states that each of us is ready to voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in our lives.

The sixth and seventh steps of the Christ-centered 12 steps relate to Principle Five.

Step Six: We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

JAMES 4:10

Step Seven: We humbly asked him to remove all our shortcomings.

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us  
our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

1 JOHN 1:9

Most, if not all, of us would be more than willing to have *certain* character defects go away. The sooner the better, we think. Good riddance! But the truth is that some defects are hard to give up. Like weeds in a garden, they've developed deep roots. We've developed our defects of character, our hang-ups and our destructive habits over periods of five, ten, twenty or more years. In this principle we and God — together — are going after these defects. *All* of them.

What does it mean to be entirely READY?

**R**elease control — Psalm 143:10

**E**asy does it — Psalm 37:5–6

**A**ccept the change — 1 Peter 1:13–14

**D**o replace our character defects — Matthew 12:43–45

**Y**ield to the growth — 1 John 3:9

To make these positive changes in our lives, we need to be entirely ready to let God be our life-changer. We're not the how-and-when committee. We're the preparation committee. All we have to be is ready.

Once we start the life-changing journey found in Principle Five, we'll find VICTORY over our character defects. We find that victory by doing the following:

- V**oluntarily submit — Romans 12:1–2
- I**dentify our character defects — Proverbs 16:9
- C**hange our mind — 2 Corinthians 5:17
- T**urn over our character defects to God — James 4:10
- O**ne day at a time — Matthew 6:34
- R**ecovery is a process — Philippians 1:6
- Y**ou must choose to change — James 4:6–8

Sometimes we discover in ourselves so many character defects that it's hard to know where to start. We need to go back to the wrongs, shortcomings and sins we identified in our Principle Four inventories. Remember, falling down doesn't make us a failure; staying down does. God doesn't just want us to admit our wrongs; he wants to make us right. He wants to give us "hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11). God doesn't just want to forgive us; he wants to change us. We need to ask him first to remove those character defects that are causing us the most pain. Ask him today, and be specific.

At first, our old self-doubts and low self-image may tell us we're not worthy of the growth and progress we're already making in the program. We need to turn off those old, negative thoughts and yield to the growth. It's the Holy Spirit's work within us. Through his transforming power we'll find the victory that keeps us from reverting back to our hang-ups and harmful habits.

Once we ask God to remove our character defects, we begin a journey that will lead us to new freedom from our past. We need to be careful not to look for perfection but instead to rejoice in steady progress. We need to seek, and be satisfied with, steady improvement.

The victory we receive in Principle Five is summed up in Romans 12:2:

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed  
by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve  
what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

## PRINCIPLE FIVE PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for taking me this far on my recovery journey. Now I pray for your help in making me entirely ready to change my destructive patterns. Give me the strength to deal with the character defects I've turned over to you. Allow me to accept all the changes you want to make in me. Help me to be the person you want me to be. In your Son's name I pray, Amen.

## PRINCIPLE FIVE LESSONS:

READY: Go to Psalm 143:10 (p. 734).

VICTORY: Go to Romans 12:1–2 (p. 1413).

## PRINCIPLE SIX

EVALUATE ALL MY RELATIONSHIPS. OFFER FORGIVENESS  
TO THOSE WHO HAVE HURT ME AND MAKE AMENDS  
FOR HARM I'VE DONE TO OTHERS, EXCEPT WHEN  
TO DO SO WOULD HARM THEM OR OTHERS.

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*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

MATTHEW 5:7

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

MATTHEW 5:9

In the first five principles, we worked on repairing the personal side of our lives by admitting our powerlessness, turning our lives and wills over to God's care, doing our moral inventories, sharing our sins with someone else, admitting our shortcomings and asking God to remove them. Now we're ready to begin some repair work on the relational side of our lives. Making our amends and offering our forgiveness mark the beginning of the end of our isolation from God and others.

Principle Six is all about making amends and offering forgiveness. "Forgive me as I learn to forgive" sums up Principle Six. This is right in line with Jesus' words in the prayer he taught his disciples: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). But some of us balk at making amends. If God has forgiven me, we think, isn't that enough? Why should I dredge up the past? After all, making amends doesn't sound natural. The answer to that objection is simple: Making amends isn't about our past so much as it is about our future. Before we can enjoy the healthy relationships we desire, we need to clean out the guilt, shame and pain that have caused many of our past relationships to fail.

Luke 6:31 instructs each of us to "do to others as you would have them do to you." This verse reminds us to treat others the way we want to be treated. For some of us, that may be difficult. We've been badly hurt and/or abused. Many of us had nothing to do with the wrongs committed against us.

The first part of Principle Six, "Evaluate all my relationships," deals with our willingness to consider making amends and offering our forgiveness. The second part, "Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others," calls us to action. We need to pull out the dead weeds in our past broken relationships so that we can clear a place where new relationships can be successfully planted or old ones nurtured. That's why this principle is so important.

How do we make AMENDS?

- A** dmit the hurt and the harm — Luke 6:37
- M** ake a list — Luke 6:31
- E** ncourage one another — Hebrews 10:24
- N** ot just for them — Luke 6:35
- D** o it at the right time — Ecclesiastes 3:1
- S** tart living the promises of recovery — Joel 2:25

It's so important to make AMENDS because we can become addicted to our bitterness, hatred and revenge, just as we may have become addicted to alcohol, drugs or unhealthy relationships. A life characterized by bitterness, resentment and anger will kill us emotionally and shrivel our souls. Such a life will produce the three Ds:

- D** epression
- D** espair
- D** iscouragement

An unforgiving heart will cause us more pain and destruction than it will ever cause the person who has hurt us.

The inability to accept and offer forgiveness can stall, block or even destroy our recovery. Forgiveness breaks that negative cycle. It doesn't settle all the questions of blame, justice or fairness, but it does allow relationships to heal.

Principle Six addresses three types of forgiveness.

The first and most important kind of forgiveness is extended by God to us. Have we accepted God's forgiveness? Have we accepted Jesus' work on the cross? By his willingness to take our punishment, all our sins were canceled. Our debt was paid in full — a free gift for those who are willing to put their faith in him as the true and only Higher Power, Savior and Lord. Jesus himself exclaimed from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30) — possibly the most significant three words ever uttered. No matter how grievously we may have injured others or ourselves, the grace of God is always sufficient. His forgiveness is always complete, with no strings attached.

The second kind of forgiveness is the kind we extend from ourselves to others. This type of forgiveness is a process. We first need to be willing to forgive. But in order to become truly free, we have to let go of the pain of the past harm and abuse caused by others.

The third kind of forgiveness may well be the most difficult for us to extend: We need to forgive ourselves. We may find the grace within ourselves to forgive others, and we may accept God's forgiveness, but we may feel as though the guilt and shame of our own pasts are just too horrendous to forgive. But this is what God wants to do with the darkness of our past: "Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18). No matter how unloved or worthless we may feel, God loves us and values us highly. Our feelings about ourselves don't change God's assessment of us and our potential one bit.

As we grow as Christians and move through our recovery process, we want to follow the guidance and direction of Jesus Christ. As we get to know him better, we want to model

his teachings and his ways. We want to become more like him. If we're going to implement Principle Six to the best of our ability, we need to learn to model God's grace.

But how do we model his GRACE?

- G**od's gift — Romans 3:23 – 24
- R**eceived by our faith — Ephesians 2:8 – 9
- A**ccepted by God's love — Colossians 3:13
- C**hrist paid the price — Ephesians 1:7
- E**verlasting gift — 2 Thessalonians 2:16 – 17

As we learn to model God's grace, we'll be able to complete Principle Six and discover healing in our lost and broken relationships — at least as far as that healing depends upon our action. As Romans 12:18 directs us, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

The eighth and ninth steps of the Christ-centered 12 steps relate to Principle Six.

Step Eight: We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

*Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill  
is found among the upright.*

PROVERBS 14:9

Step Nine: We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

*Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and  
there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,  
leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled  
to them; then come and offer your gift.*

MATTHEW 5:23 – 24

Forgiveness is all about letting go. Remember playing tug-of-war as a child? As long as the people on each end of the rope are tugging, you have a war. You let go of your end of the rope when you forgive others. No matter how hard they may tug on their end, if you've released yours, the war is over. But until you release that rope, you're a prisoner of war.

## PRINCIPLE SIX PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for your love, for the grace you freely offer. Help me model your ways when I make my amends to those I've hurt and offer my forgiveness to those who've injured me. Help me set aside my selfishness and speak the truth in love. Help me focus on my own responsibility in the issue, so my actions won't be conditional. I know I can forgive others because you first forgave me. Thank you for loving me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## PRINCIPLE SIX LESSONS:

AMENDS: Go to Luke 6:37 (p. 1246).

FORGIVENESS: Go to Romans 3:22 – 26 (p. 1396).

GRACE: Go to Romans 3:23 – 24 (p. 1397).



## PRINCIPLE SEVEN

RESERVE A DAILY TIME WITH GOD FOR  
SELF-EXAMINATION, BIBLE READING AND PRAYER  
IN ORDER TO KNOW GOD AND HIS WILL FOR MY LIFE  
AND TO GAIN THE POWER TO FOLLOW HIS WILL.

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When we get to Principle Seven, we've arrived at an important junction. We've already traveled a long way on our road to recovery. Our journey so far has required facing our denial; surrendering our lives to Jesus Christ; taking an honest look at our lives; listing, confessing and sharing our wrongdoings; being humble enough to allow God to make major changes in us; becoming willing to forgive or make amends; offering our forgiveness to those who've hurt us; and making amends for the harm we've caused others.

We've come to understand that we could never have made it this far on our own steam. In fact, the only reason we've reached this point is that we made a decision way back in Principle Three to turn over our lives and wills to God's care.

Jesus explains it this way in John 8:31–32: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Then in John 14:6 he defines truth by identifying it with himself: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." We've been set free from our habits because of the Truth (Jesus Christ) we've invited into our hearts.

Step Ten: We continued to take personal inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

We've arrived at the CROSSROADS of our recoveries. This isn't a place to stop and rest on our past accomplishments. We need to thank God for getting us this far on our road to recovery; to praise him for the many victories over our hurts, hang-ups and habits that we've already seen in working the first six principles; and to continue working the last two principles with the same devotion and enthusiasm that got us to this point in our recoveries. First Corinthians 10:12 puts it this way: "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"

Most recovery material refers to Steps Ten through Twelve (Principles Seven and Eight) as the maintenance steps. It's certainly true that in these principles we'll live out our recoveries for the remainder of our time here on Earth — one day at a time! But we need to do much more than just maintain our recoveries; we need to continue to *grow* them.

In Principle Seven we desire to grow daily in our new relationships with Jesus Christ and others. Instead of attempting to be in control of every situation and every person with

whom we come into contact, or instead of spinning out of control ourselves, we're starting to exhibit self-control, living the way God wants us to. Remember that "self under control" is what we're initially seeking but that self under *God's* control is what we're ultimately striving for.

As we begin to work Principle Seven and Step Ten, we'll see that this step involves three key actions:

- T**ake time to do a daily inventory — Lamentations 3:40
- E**valuate both the good and the bad — 1 John 1:8–10
- N**eed to admit our wrongs promptly — Matthew 5:23–24

One way to keep daily track of our good and bad behaviors is to keep a journal. Our journal isn't a place to jot down the calories we ingested for lunch today or our carpool schedule for school. It's a tool for us to review and record the good and bad things we did today. We can look for negative patterns, issues that we're repeatedly writing down and having to make amends for. We can share these pitfalls with our sponsors or accountability partners and set up an action plan to overcome them with God's help.

Journaling will help us live in daily humility — in reality, not in denial. Through God's guidance we can make choices about the emotions that affect our thinking and actions. When we take this step seriously, we can begin to take positive *action* — instead of getting caught up in a continuous spiral of *reaction*.

In Principle Seven, we actually do three different inventories:

1. *An ongoing inventory.* We can maintain an ongoing inventory throughout the day. The best time to admit we're wrong is at the exact time we're made aware of it. Why wait?
2. *A daily inventory.* At the end of each day we can look back over our daily activities, both the good and the bad, paying special attention to points at which we might have harmed someone else or reacted out of anger or fear. But once again, we need to remember to keep our daily inventory balanced. We should be sure to include the things we did right throughout the day, no matter how easy they may be to overlook or discount.
3. *A periodic inventory.* We should take a periodic inventory every 90 days or so. We may want to get away on a mini-retreat. We should bring our daily journal with us, and pray as we read through the entries for the last 90 days. We should ask God to show us areas in our life in which we can improve during the next 90 days. But we should also remember to identify and celebrate the victories we've already experienced.

Principle Seven is so important. It also includes Step Eleven of the Christ-centered 12 steps.

Step Eleven: We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and power to carry that out.

Principle Seven is our best defense against reverting back to our old ways. If we work this principle daily, relying on God's power, it will not only help us grow in him but will prevent our RELAPSE:

- R**eserve a daily quiet time — Mark 14:38
- E**valuate — Romans 12:3,9 – 10,12,16 – 17
- L**isten to Jesus — 1 Thessalonians 5:21
- A**lone with and quiet before God — Psalm 46:10
- P**lug in to God's power — Philippians 4:6
- S**low down — Philippians 4:7
- E**njoy your growth — 1 Thessalonians 5:16 – 18

By this point in our recoveries we've learned that when we start our day working Principle Seven and having a quiet time with God, and when we end it by doing our daily inventory, we have a pretty good day — a reasonably happy day. Not only will this help to prevent relapse, but it will cultivate in us an attitude of gratitude.

To help maintain this grateful attitude, we can focus our gratitude on at least four areas of our lives:

- Be thankful to God — Psalm 107:15
- Be thankful for others — Colossians 3:15 – 16
- Be thankful for our recovery — Hebrews 12:1
- Be thankful for our church — Psalm 100:4

## PRINCIPLE SEVEN PRAYER

Dear God, help me to set aside the hassles and racket of the world, so I can focus my mind and listen just to you for the next few minutes. Help me to get to know you better. Help me to better understand your plan and purpose for my life. Father, help me to live this day within the boundaries of today, seeking your will and living this one day as you would have me live it.

I pray that others may view me as yours — not just in response to my words but, more important, on account of my actions. Thank you for your love, your grace, your perfect forgiveness. Thank you for all those important individuals you've placed in my life — in my program, in my recovery and within my church family. Your will be done, not mine. In your Son's name I pray, Amen.

## PRINCIPLE SEVEN LESSONS:

CROSSROADS: Go to Lamentations 3:40 (p. 968).

SPIRITUAL INVENTORY: Go to Matthew 22:37 – 40 (p. 1172).

RELAPSE: Go to Mark 14:38 (p. 1220).

GRATITUDE: Go to Psalm 107:15 (p. 711).

## PRINCIPLE EIGHT

YIELD MYSELF TO GOD TO BE USED TO BRING  
THIS GOOD NEWS TO OTHERS, BOTH BY  
MY EXAMPLE AND BY MY WORDS.

*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

MATTHEW 5:10

Major, miraculous progress and growth have occurred in our lives since we started our recovery program, since we began working Principle One. We've stepped out of our denial into God's grace. We've taken an honest spiritual inventory. We've worked on getting right with God, ourselves and others. And we've grown in our relationship with Christ. We've discovered a new way to live life, and we're finding the serenity we've always sought. But the most exciting part is yet to come — in Principle Eight.

Principle Eight is the “giving back” principle. It's about giving back because we want to, not because we have to. We want to share with others who are still trapped in their hurts, hang-ups and habits the freedom and victory God has given us.

What is giving back all about? What does it truly mean to give? First of all, Principle Eight doesn't ask us to give in unhealthy ways, ways that might hurt us or cause us to relapse into our old, codependent behaviors. No, Principle Eight is all about healthy, non-codependent giving of ourselves — giving freely, without the slightest expectation that we will receive anything in return. No one has ever been honored, after all, for what they've received. Honor has always been a reward to those who gave.

Matthew 10:8 sums up the heart of Principle Eight:

*Freely you have received; freely give.*

In Principle Eight we learn what it truly means to GIVE.

**G**od, the first Giver — Romans 8:32  
**I** becomes we — Ecclesiastes 4:9 – 10,12  
**V**ictories shared — 2 Corinthians 1:3 – 4  
**E**xample of our actions — 1 John 3:18

Once we understand how to freely give of ourselves in healthy ways, we can start living the eighth principle, and in particular Step Twelve of the Christ-centered 12 steps.

Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and practice these principles in all our affairs.

Sometimes we get to Principle Eight and feel as though we really don't have anything to offer someone else. We feel as though we're not worthy of helping another person, that we're not eligible to be used by God in this way. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Here's an example. Take an old, beat-up soda can — dirty, dented, even squashed. A few years ago it would have been thrown into the garbage and deemed useless, of no continuing value. Modern technology has changed that. Today it can be recycled, melted down, purified and made into a new can — shiny and clean — that can be used again.

That's what Principle Eight does. It recycles our pain by allowing God's fire and light to shine on it — to melt down our old hurts, hang-ups and habits so we can be used again in a positive way. Our lives can be recycled to show others how we've worked the principles and steps, with Jesus' healing, and how we've come through the darkness of our pain into Christ's glorious freedom and light.

Society tells us that pain is useless. In fact, some people believe that *people* in pain are useless. At Celebrate Recovery, we know that pain has value, as do the people who experience it. So while the world says no, Principle Eight shouts a resounding YES:

**Y**ield myself to God — Galatians 6:1–2  
**E**xample is important — 1 Timothy 1:5  
**S**erve others as Jesus Christ did — John 13:14–15

The road to recovery leads to service. When we reach Principle Eight, the road splits. Some will choose to serve at Celebrate Recovery. Others will prefer to devote their skills to other areas in the church.

We need to share our experiences, victories and hopes with newcomers. We do that as leaders, sponsors and accountability partners. But the church also needs our service. As we lend a hand outside Celebrate Recovery, we can share with others and motivate them to get into recovery when they're ready to face their own hurts, hang-ups and habits.

The world is populated by two kinds of people — givers and takers. The takers eat well, but the givers sleep well. Be a giver. There are many, many areas in which to serve. Make suggestions. Get involved.

Principle Eight comes down to this: Do what you can with what you have, where you are.

Make your life a mission, not an intermission.

Live out Principles Seven and Eight on a daily basis for the remainder of your time on this earth, and your life will be full and rewarding as you follow God's purpose for you.

Every morning, before you get out of bed, pray this prayer:

## PRINCIPLE EIGHT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, as it would please you, bring me someone today whom I can serve. Amen.

## PRINCIPLE EIGHT LESSONS:

GIVE: Go to Romans 8:32 (p. 1406).

YES: Go to Galatians 6:1–2 (p. 1465).

# The Old Testament





# Genesis

**THEME:** God desires to relate to his creation on an intimate level.

**AUTHOR:** Genesis doesn't identify its author, but Scripture and church tradition ascribe authorship to Moses.

**DATE OF WRITING:** Genesis was probably written between 1446 and 1406 BC.

**ENCOURAGEMENT FROM GENESIS:** "Do not be afraid . . . I am your shield, your very great reward" (Genesis 15:1).

**CHALLENGE FROM GENESIS:** "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it" (Genesis 4:7).

**REFLECTION FROM GENESIS:** "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (Genesis 18:14).

At a Glance

Genesis is a book of beginnings that sets the stage for all of history. In Genesis we're invited to witness the creation of the world. We get to see the world that God created and pronounced "good." Adam and Eve were able to speak freely with God, to enjoy an intimate, open, honest relationship with him—until sin entered the picture. The book of Genesis sets the scene for the rest of the Bible, for the ongoing story of a loving God who wants to reinstate a relationship with the creatures he created in his image.

Part of our recovery is our acceptance of this world as it currently is: fallen, broken and sinful. Yet when we put our faith in Christ, things begin to get better. In Genesis we face the realities of this world and the origins of the hardships we endure. Even more importantly, in Genesis we discover God's plan to bring blessing to all humankind through the seed of Abraham.

Recovery Themes in Genesis

## The Beginning

**1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

<sup>3</sup>And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup>God saw that the light was good, and he separated the

light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." <sup>7</sup>So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>God called the vault "sky."

1  
2  
3

1  
2  
3



And there was evening, and there was morning — the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so.

<sup>10</sup>God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup>Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>And there was evening, and there was morning — the third day.

<sup>14</sup>And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made two great lights — the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup>to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening, and there was morning — the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup>And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." <sup>21</sup>So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase

in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." <sup>23</sup>And there was evening, and there was morning — the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup>And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. <sup>25</sup>God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,<sup>a</sup> and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

<sup>27</sup>So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

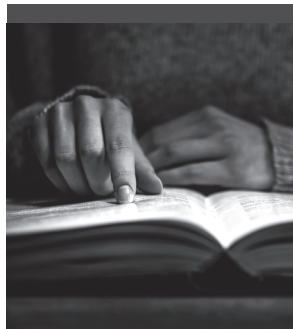
<sup>29</sup>Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. <sup>30</sup>And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

<sup>31</sup>God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day.

<sup>a</sup> 26 Probable reading of the original Hebrew text (see Syriac); Masoretic Text *the earth*

## MY NAME IS RAHAB

JOSHUA 2:1–21



Rahab, like the rest of Jericho's inhabitants, was deeply frightened (see Joshua 2:9). As a pagan prostitute in a doomed city, her prospects seemed bleak. Across the Jordan, on the plains of Moab, an invasion force had gathered. Its numbers were beyond counting, but the menacing army wasn't the only cause for fear. Word had spread that the Israelite God had roundly defeated the gods and army of Egypt. If the greatest empire in the world couldn't stop Israel, what hope remained for a Canaanite city like Jericho?

Rahab inhabited a house in the city wall, from which vantage point she prospered in her trade. There were always men hungry for pleasure. Most lived in the city, but the road that passed by Jericho also ensured a steady stream of weary travelers seeking what Rahab could provide.

Two strangers, hoping to escape notice, appeared at her door. What was more common than travelers seeking out a harlot? But the two were spotted and identified as Israelite spies. Rahab saw an opportunity, hid the Israelites and then lied to the king's men, sending them out of the city in pointless pursuit of these enemies of Jericho (see vv. 2–7). Why not? What did she owe the king or anyone else in Jericho? The Israelites would soon overwhelm the city. Besides, something new was growing in her heart—an unaccustomed stirring called hope.

Her hope was based on what she'd learned about the invisible God of Israel. His name—"I Am"—was unlike that of any other god. The gods she knew were little deities who were supposed to control weather, crops or fertility. She could bargain with them, just as she was accustomed to haggling with a man over the price of her services. This "I Am" wasn't in the business of wrangling over terms, so Rahab negotiated instead with the spies in an effort to ensure her family's survival (see vv. 8–16). But in doing so, Rahab gained more than safety: She received a new life. The God of Israel enfolded her into the community of his people. She left a life of shame to ultimately become a wife and a mother. Amazingly, from Rahab would come the line of David and his greatest descendant: the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of humankind (see Matthew 1:5–6).

All of this began with Rahab's faith in a God she had come to know secondhand through nearly unbelievable stories of his great works (see Joshua 2:8–11). Rahab placed her hope in a God greater than those fashioned by human beings. This is the same God who can deliver us. He's great enough to dry up the "seas" to make our way safe (see v. 10); destroy all the obstacles that threaten to destroy us (see v. 10); and demonstrate that he's greater than heaven and earth (see v. 11).

How did Rahab tap into God's might? She formed an accurate understanding of him (see vv. 8–11); trusted those who had experienced God's power and entered his service (see vv. 12–14); served him by helping the spies escape (see vv. 15–16); and followed the instructions of those who had already learned God's ways (see vv. 17–21).

Rahab's faith and service not only saved her (see Hebrews 11:31) but gave her a home among God's people (see Joshua 6:22–23). The symbol of salvation for Rahab and her family was the scarlet cord in her window (see 2:18, 21). Today we can cling to another "scarlet cord"—the blood of Jesus, which cleanses us and makes us God's prized possessions. We've been "redeemed from the empty way of life" that once enslaved us by "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18–19). Rahab hoped for mere survival but gained salvation on the basis of her faith. Many enter recovery seeking sobriety—and find the Savior.

## My Name Is Norma

I'M A BELIEVER WHO STRUGGLES WITH CODEPENDENCY  
AND ANGER

Please read the story of Deborah's leadership of God's people in Judges 4.

I was raised in a loving Christian home with godly parents and a lot of love. As the oldest of three, I was quite typical of a child in that position. I considered myself to be like Deborah, Israel's judge and peacemaker, since I worked hard at caring for others. But because I had a habit of pointing out every broken rule, I also felt unappreciated.

Steve and I met just before I graduated from high school. We dated for two years and then married. The first time I ever truly had to give something to God was when we realized in the third month of my pregnancy that our baby wouldn't live. I was shocked and crushed, but my husband immediately reminded me to depend on God and "take things one day at a time."

In the early 1980s financial difficulty brought us to the brink of bankruptcy and the loss of our home, but God intervened, and we slowly began to recover financially. Then we faced a bitter lawsuit, again with the potential of financial ruin, but once again we relied on God. We won the lawsuit and gave God the glory. These markers are important because they were turning points for us—pivotal moments when we turned over our wills to God.

In August, 2001, I attended a Celebrate Recovery meeting at Saddleback Church to check out this Christ-centered ministry. As I learned about recovery, I was forced to admit to myself that there was a part of my heart that was resentful and angry regarding my marriage. Steve and I were different in the ways we communicated, and our conflicts caused us both pain. We had created many unhealthy habits over the years by continuing to repeat the same mistakes over and over again. I had thought—mistakenly, as I would come to learn—that I could live with these bitter feelings because everything else was so good. I'll never forget sitting at the table at home after one meeting and crying as God called me to be a leader, like Deborah. He wanted me to serve in this ministry of recovery, not just for my own benefit but also to help others.

I had spent the majority of our 32 years together using Steve's anger as an excuse for my pain. It was easy to point to him as the culprit, which then let me off the hook. I had read Matthew 7:3 ("Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?") many times, but each time I had missed its application for me, refusing to see myself as the one in need of change.

The more information I received about Celebrate Recovery, the more aware I became that I needed to step out of denial and confess the hidden hurts and chaos in my own life and marriage. As I worked the principles, God began to show me my hidden motives, my self-righteous attitude and my other character flaws. I was controlling, critical and perfectionistic—the very traits I deplore in others.

I must also admit that I spend a lot of energy trying to make sure other people are happy, often at my own expense—a cycle that continues to build within me a resentment of others. I'm a "people pleaser" who finds it difficult to say no. I've learned through Celebrate Recovery that my desire to please others has kept me from creating healthy relationships, and I'm learning to look to God for affirmation.

Principle Six was the most difficult principle for me, but it was also the one that changed my heart. I remember the night I apologized to Steve from my heart for my arrogance in blaming him totally for the problems in our marriage. I believe now that my anger, resentment and bitterness may have hurt our marriage more than Steve's anger. Step Nine of the Christ-centered 12 steps was a turning point for us. God began to change me, giving me an awesome peace and joy in our marriage. Self-pity began to disappear, and my selfish, negative thoughts surfaced less frequently. God began erasing my past hurts and replacing them with future memories we were creating in the present. The change in Steve is obvious, as I now live with a softer-spoken, humbled husband who is turning over his tendency to harbor anger toward God. In fact, we're both learning to relinquish to God our controlling tendencies. Through the process our marriage has been healed and cleansed, and we're experiencing a new closeness, tenderness and intimacy.

I have come to understand that pain is an unavoidable part of life but that I do have a choice regarding my response to hurts and my tendency to harbor bitterness in my heart. I have found Psalm 32:3–5 to be a reflection of my thoughts:

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Norma



<sup>7</sup> Do not be wise in your own eyes;  
fear the LORD and shun evil.  
<sup>8</sup> This will bring health to your body  
and nourishment to your  
bones.

<sup>9</sup> Honor the LORD with your wealth,  
with the firstfruits of all your  
crops;  
<sup>10</sup> then your barns will be filled to  
overflowing,  
and your vats will brim over with  
new wine.

<sup>11</sup> My son, do not despise the LORD's  
discipline,  
and do not resent his rebuke,

<sup>12</sup> because the LORD disciplines those he  
loves,  
as a father the son he delights in.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Blessed are those who find wisdom,  
those who gain understanding,  
<sup>14</sup> for she is more profitable than silver  
and yields better returns than gold.

<sup>15</sup> She is more precious than rubies;  
nothing you desire can compare  
with her.

<sup>16</sup> Long life is in her right hand;  
in her left hand are riches and  
honor.

<sup>17</sup> Her ways are pleasant ways,  
and all her paths are peace.

<sup>a</sup> 12 Hebrew; Septuagint loves, / and he chastens everyone he accepts as his child

## ACTION LESSON [ Principle Three ]

For the previous entry in the ACTION lesson, go to Psalm 143:10  
(page 733).

For a discussion of Principles One through Eight and a listing of their  
related lessons, go to pages xiv-xxxvi.

*In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

PROVERBS 3:6

In Principle Three we consciously choose to commit all our lives and will to Christ's care and control. We make the decision to TURN every aspect of our lives and will over to our Higher Power, Jesus Christ. In order to turn our lives over to Christ's care and control, we need to take ACTION.

The letter *T* in ACTION stands for TURN IT OVER. In other words, "let go and let God." That's a popular recovery phase we've heard again and again. Notice that it doesn't tell us to let go of anything in particular, to turn over certain specific aspects of our lives—even the big things—to God. Proverbs 3:6 uses the word "all," not "some"; this verse tells us to let go of *everything*. Jesus Christ doesn't just want a relationship with part of us. He desires to be intimate with us at every level.

What burdens are we lugging around that we need to turn over to Jesus? He invites, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

The next letter in ACTION is *I*. Go to Philippians 1:6 (page 1483).



# Matthew

**THEME:** Mercy and justice are to be paramount virtues in a Christian's life. Mercy dictates love for fellow human beings and directly affects a believer's relationship to God.

**AUTHOR:** The author of this Gospel was probably Matthew (Levi), the man who left his tax office to follow Jesus (see character study on page 1140).

**DATE OF WRITING:** Matthew was probably written between AD 70 and 80.

**ENCOURAGEMENT FROM MATTHEW:** "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29–31).

**CHALLENGE FROM MATTHEW:** "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

**REFLECTION FROM MATTHEW:** "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times'" (Matthew 18:21–22).

Jesus Christ is the one and only Higher Power. He alone is able to save us from our sins and provide the way of access into heaven. In order to find true healing from our hurts, hang-ups and habits, we must turn our lives and wills over to his care. But most of us are not willing to trust our lives and future to someone we've never met. That's exactly what makes the Gospel of Matthew so amazing. Our Savior isn't hiding behind some mysterious religious haze. Instead, we are able to meet Jesus in an intimate way for the first time.

In this book we witness Jesus' unflinching confrontation with Satan, learning from our Lord's handling of temptation how we can face down our own enticements to fall back under the spell of whatever has allured us from the way of truth. We get to see him healing the sick, and we are allowed access into his darkest hours and his most glorious moments.

In Matthew Jesus delivers his most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon is the foundation for the eight principles of Celebrate Recovery. Jesus cares deeply about our hurts, hang-ups and habits and wants us to find victory over them by trusting in him. The book of Matthew begins to give us a picture of what kind of a Savior Jesus is and what he can do for us today.

## The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

**1** This is the genealogy<sup>a</sup> of Jesus the Messiah<sup>b</sup> the son of David, the son of Abraham:

<sup>2</sup> Abraham was the father of Isaac,  
Isaac the father of Jacob,  
Jacob the father of Judah and his  
brothers,

<sup>3</sup> Judah the father of Perez and Zerah,  
whose mother was Tamar,  
Perez the father of Hezron,  
Hezron the father of Ram,

<sup>4</sup> Ram the father of Amminadab,  
Amminadab the father of Nahshon,  
Nahshon the father of Salmon,

<sup>5</sup> Salmon the father of Boaz, whose  
mother was Rahab,  
Boaz the father of Obed, whose  
mother was Ruth,  
Obed the father of Jesse,

<sup>6</sup> and Jesse the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon,  
whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

<sup>7</sup> Solomon the father of Rehoboam,  
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,  
Abijah the father of Asa,

<sup>8</sup> Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,  
Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,

Jehoram the father of Uzziah,  
<sup>9</sup> Uzziah the father of Jotham,  
Jotham the father of Ahaz,  
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

<sup>10</sup> Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,  
Manasseh the father of Amon,  
Amon the father of Josiah,

<sup>11</sup> and Josiah the father of Jeconiah<sup>c</sup>  
and his brothers at the time of  
the exile to Babylon.

<sup>12</sup> After the exile to Babylon:  
Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,  
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,

<sup>13</sup> Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,  
Abihud the father of Eliakim,  
Eliakim the father of Azor,

<sup>14</sup> Azor the father of Zadok,  
Zadok the father of Akim,  
Akim the father of Elihud,

<sup>15</sup> Elihud the father of Eleazar,  
Eleazar the father of Matthan,  
Matthan the father of Jacob,

<sup>16</sup> and Jacob the father of Joseph,  
the husband of Mary, and Mary  
was the mother of Jesus who is  
called the Messiah.

<sup>17</sup> Thus there were fourteen generations  
in all from Abraham to David, fourteen  
from David to the exile to Babylon, and  
fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

## Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

<sup>18</sup> This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about<sup>d</sup>: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet<sup>e</sup> did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

<sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,<sup>f</sup> because he will save his people from their sins."

<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"<sup>g</sup> (which means "God with us").

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him

<sup>a</sup> 1 Or is an account of the origin    <sup>b</sup> 1 Or Jesus Christ. Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) both mean Anointed One; also in verse 18.    <sup>c</sup> 11 That is, Jehoiachin; also in verse 12    <sup>d</sup> 18 Or The origin of Jesus the Messiah was like this    <sup>e</sup> 19 Or was a righteous man and    <sup>f</sup> 21 Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means the LORD saves.    <sup>g</sup> 23 Isaiah 7:14

## MY NAME IS JOHN THE BAPTIST

MATTHEW 11:1–15



John the Baptist was a bold preacher who confronted his generation with a plainspoken call to repentance. Jesus confirmed John as a prophet and "more than a prophet" (Matthew 11:9)—John was the predicted messenger who prepared the way for the Christ. Jesus made the amazing statement, in fact, that no one had ever been born who was greater than John (see vv. 9–11). Yet John had a bout with doubt. He recognized Jesus as the Messiah, the long-awaited King of Israel, the Lamb of God. John had even heard the voice of God proclaiming that Jesus was his Son (see 3:17). Why, then, was the Messiah's messenger sitting in the dungeon of a king who had blatantly broken God's laws and who served the hated Romans? John had doubts that were fueled by big questions.

Doubt can divert us from the road to recovery. But doubt doesn't need to spell defeat. Doubt doesn't undo what God has already done in our life. But we need to do what John did with his qualms and questions: Take them to Jesus. He'll respond to us as he did to John. He'll send us messengers proclaiming his words and deeds (see 11:4). Our knowledge of what he has done in the past will confirm for us his healing, life-changing power (see v. 5). He'll commend us and our service to him (see vv. 7–15).

As great as Jesus proclaimed John to be, our Lord attached a puzzling addendum to his statement in verse 11: "Whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than [John]." John, remarkable as he was, during his own lifetime never got to enjoy the promised benefits of the kingdom. John lived and died under the law, the old Mosaic covenant. But we, as new covenant believers, enjoy many kingdom blessings John never experienced. One of the greatest of these is our unlimited, continuous access to God. With Jesus as our high priest, we can "approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). We need to reserve some time alone with God every day (Principle Seven).

When we have a bout with doubt, we can realize that we're going through a time of need. Unlike John, we don't have to send messengers to Jesus. We can take our doubts, questions, sins, needs and desires directly to him. When we do, we need to be ready for his messengers: our sponsor, accountability partner, pastor, friend or counselor. Thousands have already experienced God's life-changing power through Celebrate Recovery.

Seek them out and listen to their stories. Even John needed testimonies from others to encourage him in his faith. That's why almost half of the Large Group meetings in Celebrate Recovery focus on a recovery testimony. Jesus wants you to succeed and desires to applaud you for your service, just as he did John.