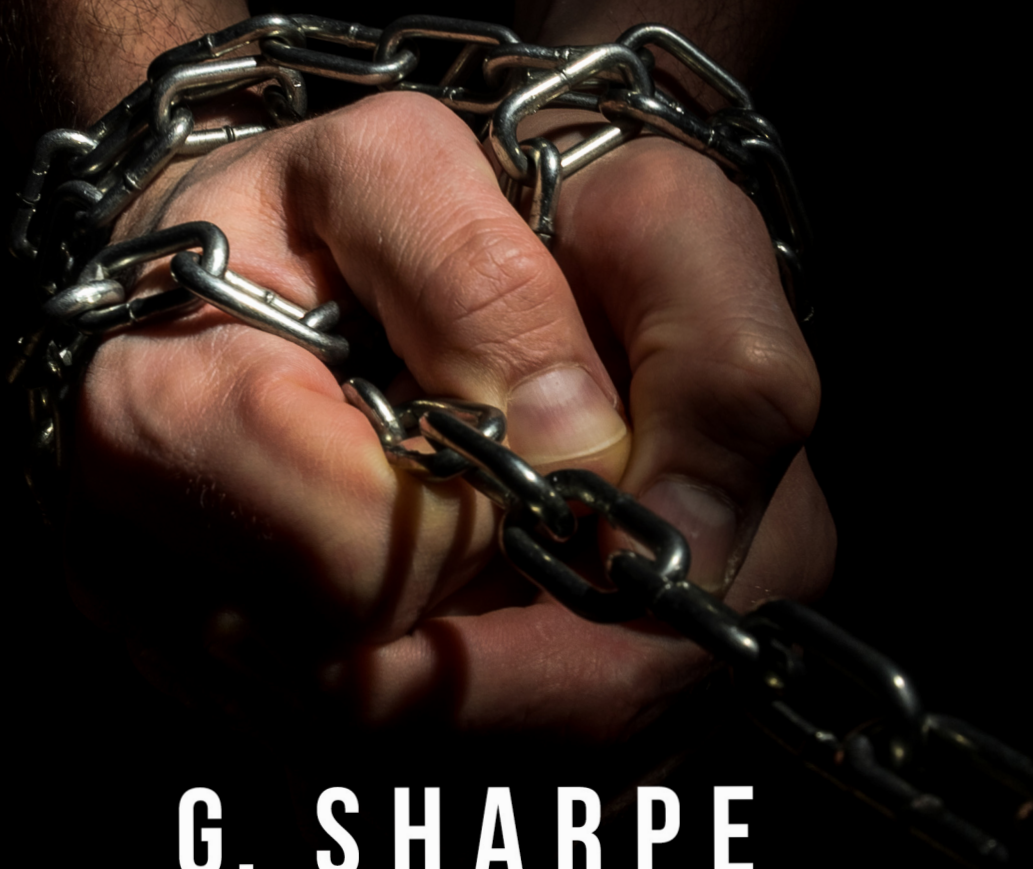


# GOD & THE 12 STEPS

*Breaking the Chains of Addiction*



**G. SHARPE**

FOREWORD BY STEPHEN ARTERBURN

**The following  
PREVIEW  
includes pages  
1-16 / 25-42**

# **GOD & THE 12 STEPS**

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*“LORD, help!” they cried in their trouble,  
and he saved them from their distress.*

*He led them from the darkness and  
deepest gloom; he snapped their chains.*

(Psalm 107:13-14)



## FOREWORD

While attending seminary in the 70s, I was fortunate enough to participate in some doctoral studies on self-help, recovery and 12-Step groups that have come and gone over the years. I was immediately confronted with the question; “Isn’t all we really need one step and that step is Jesus?” Fifty years later there are some still asking that question. The answer is “No, you don’t just need one step.” You don’t need just one step, because one step of accepting Christ saves your soul for all eternity and no other step can do that. What it does not do is provide you with instant character, wisdom and discernment. Those come in a process of sanctification. They require work and there is no better or more proven group of steps in the sanctification process than the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Why? Because they were developed from Scripture.

Dr. Bob and Bill W., two founders of AA, developed the 12 Steps. In the last speech Dr. Bob ever gave, he told where they came from. Dr. Bob said they got them from the Good Book—especially 1 Corinthians 13, the Sermon on the Mount and the book of James. As a Teaching Pastor at Northview Church in Carmel, I consider them the best 12-point sermon ever written. In fact, if we only needed one step, we wouldn’t need preachers like me to move us further along in our growth as followers of Christ. And over the years I have found that those 12 Steps are not just for addicts, they are for everyone.

What you have in *God & The 12 Steps* is a wonderful guide through the 12 Steps that lead to total transformation of a life. G. Sharpe has provided great wisdom and understanding on how to work through each step and apply it to your life, no matter what is the source of your struggle. You want to be free? Read this book and do what it tells you. Want to be wise beyond your years? It is time to get to work and you won’t find a better guide to help you find the life you have been looking for, the one God has designed for you.

## GOD & THE 12 STEPS

In Jeremiah 6:16, the prophet tells us to stop at the crossroads and consider which way to go and to look for the old, godly path. I think Jeremiah would agree that *“God & The 12 Steps”* is the best guide to finding and walking in that old godly path.

Stephen Arterburn

Stephen Arterburn is the founder and chairman of New Life Ministries and host of the # 1 nationally syndicated Christian counseling talk show “New Life Live!” heard and watched by 3 million people each weekday on 200 radio stations nationwide, on Sirius/XM radio and on the NRB television network. He is a best-selling author of 50 books, and Executive Editor of The Life Recovery Bible.



## MY STORY

*And they have defeated him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die (Revelation 12:11).*

*God & The 12 Steps* was birthed by the Lord because of a sincere, desperate prayer that I made on July 6, 1994. Two days earlier, I had found my wife at the time dead in our bed from a drug overdose – we had been on a three-day drug and alcohol binge. After several desperate attempts to perform CPR, I called 911. The paramedics were unable to resuscitate her either, and they rushed her to the hospital where she was pronounced dead on arrival. After more failed attempts to bring her back to life, the doctors were ready to give up. At that point, only God knew how long she had been dead. I continued to plead with God on the floor of the lobby while the doctors worked on her. With a final shock, there came a faint heartbeat. Astonishment washed over the medical staff's faces. The nurses immediately began pumping air into her damaged lungs. Lifeless, she was rushed to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and placed on feeding tubes and expensive machines to keep her alive.

After a day and a half of intense worrying and remorseful prayers, the doctors brought me into her ICU room. With the life sucked out of me, I stared at her as the doctor began to speak. "We're sorry, sir, but your wife is dying," said the chief physician. Hope was ripped from my soul! "Look at these machines. They have been keeping her alive. Now they are shutting down. You have a decision to make as the husband – you can shut the machines off or leave them on. Know this: If she lives by some miracle, she will probably be in a vegetative state on a feeding tube for the rest of her life. Ultimately, the decision is yours."

Hearing this, I collapsed to the hospital floor and began to weep. Thoughts about her death, her distraught family, and prison crippled me. My mother came in and tried to comfort me, asking what the doctor had said. After I repeated the dire news, my mother gained her composure, looked me straight in the eye, and said, "Son, the only chance you have is to get right with the Lord, right now."

With nothing to lose and the desperation of a drowning man, I knelt on the hospital floor, grabbed her arm, looked down and said, "Lord Jesus, if You save my wife, I will serve You one day and help people with drug and alcohol problems." The very next morning, the Lord woke her from her death-coma, and allowed her to freely walk out of the hospital three days later, with no brain or neurological damage of any kind. It was a complete miracle for the glory of Almighty God!

I wish I could say I stayed clean and sober after witnessing that miraculous event, but I did not. Seven months later, I was doing the very same things I swore I would never do again. The power of darkness and the influence of drunken friends, along with my own selfish desires, led me back into active addiction. I was on the fast track to hell and ignoring the consequences of my poor choices. Thankfully, the Lord never forgot the promise I had made Him on that hospital floor. Between praying family members and the grace of God, I survived years of abusive drug and alcohol use, escaping prison and death by the skin of my teeth.

Fast forward. The Lord came to collect on the debt I owed Him on August 10, 2004. At 11:42 a.m., as I was driving to get a screenplay that I had written copyrighted, the sky became very bright and the Spirit of God came into my car. I shook in my seat and cried out in an inexpressible groaning. My car ended up on the side of the road as if the hand of God gently placed me there. As clear as a voice, yet without words, I heard within my soul: "It's time to serve My Son." With my hands trembling on the steering wheel, I fearfully stared at the sky, crying uncontrollably. I knew deep down in my heart the source of that still, small voice. I also knew my life was no longer mine.

Driving as if I was floating on a cloud, I finally made it home. I thought I was dreaming, but I was not. I needed answers and I needed them right at that moment. I grabbed my Bible and held it close to my heart, asking the Lord, "What do You want from me? Show me the plans You have for my life." The Holy Spirit directed me to Acts 28:23–31:

*So a time was set, and on that day a large number of people came to Paul's lodging. He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures. Using the law of Moses and the books of the prophets, he spoke to them from morning until evening. Some were persuaded by the things he said, but others did not believe. And after they had argued back and forth among themselves, they left with this final word from Paul: "The Holy Spirit was right when he said to your ancestors through Isaiah the prophet, 'Go and say to this people: When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend. For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes—so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.' So I want you to know that this salvation from God has also been offered to the Gentiles, and they will accept it." For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him.*

After reading about the apostle Paul's life, I cried out with a surrendered heart, knowing that my life was officially God's. With all the sincerity I could muster, I told the Lord Jesus, "I will follow You always and do whatever You want me to do. I am completely Yours; have Your way with me."

Immediately, a hunger and thirst for God and His Word consumed me—so much that I eventually quit my job, trusting that the Lord would take care of me as I sought to do His will. I spent the next seven months reading the Bible for hours every day, taking notes, and worshiping God. During that time, the Lord led me back to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). It was there that I began to testify about the goodness of the Lord and encourage others to seek God. I was persecuted at every meeting and told to remain silent, but I would not listen to the hostile crowd. All I did was share my experience, strength, and hope with the intention of helping others find freedom from addiction. One by one, people came up to me after each meeting, wanting to know about Jesus. By God's grace, I would lead them in prayer to a personal relationship with the Lord. They were spiritually reborn and filled with hope. With the help of a good sponsor, I formally worked the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and eventually became a sponsor myself.

After the valuable experience of attending countless NA (Narcotics Anonymous) and AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) meetings, workshops, and conferences, the Lord instructed me to create the *God & The 12 Steps* Recovery Ministry. Within thirty minutes, the Holy Spirit helped me write the preamble for the gathering. The structure of the meeting consisted of the following:

- 1) read the preamble;
- 2) introduce guests;
- 3) open the meeting with prayer;
- 4) teach a step out of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous;
- 5) teach the correlating scriptures found in the Life Recovery Bible;
- 6) open the meeting up for sharing; and
- 7) close the meeting with prayer.

Fast forward again. On July 9, 2005, exactly eleven years to the day that my ex-wife had walked out of the hospital, the first *God & The 12 Steps* meeting took place in North Miami Beach, Florida. We met in a recovery clubhouse that forbade “religious” meetings. God used my sponsor to speak at the committee meetings on His behalf. Hearts began to soften as God’s will was being established. Although board members had sworn that a meeting about Jesus would never take place there, the sovereign Lord had His way so that people could hear truth and focus more on the solution than the problem. Everyone who had accepted Jesus as their “Higher Power” with me after the AA meetings was at this first gathering. They rejoiced as I taught about recovery and preached the Word of God. I truly believe the following scripture came alive that night: *“For the LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs”* (Zephaniah 3:17).

By God’s provision, power, and grace, the recovery ministry of *God & The 12 Steps* grew to four meetings in South Florida. I had pastoral oversight and held regular leadership meetings to make sure we were fulfilling God’s will. The *God & The 12 Steps* leadership team consisted of two pastors and several facilitators who led the meetings. Countless lives were changed forever by the love of God, the saving grace of the Lord Jesus, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and the honest working of the 12 Steps. Many addicts and alcoholics who attended the meetings

went on to become active members of Bible-based churches, with some even being called into the work of the ministry – including me. Glory to God!

Today, the Lord is doing something new with *God & The 12 Steps*; hence, the creation of this Recovery Workbook. He wants to do something new in you, too, according to Isaiah 43:18–19. What God has done for me in my recovery, He can certainly do to all who sincerely seek Him, “*For God does not show favoritism*” (Romans 2:11). I pray that God (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) would reveal Himself to you in a powerful way as you read His Word and work through this Recovery Workbook. May the work that comes through the 12 Steps bring healing, revelation, strength, hope, and a new sense of purpose into your life. Enjoy the scenery of this journey called recovery. May the peace, love, and joy of Jesus be with you. Much love and a holy hug to you. God bless! In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



# HOW TO USE THIS RECOVERY WORKBOOK

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer (Psalm 19:14).*

This Recovery Workbook is not meant to be read like an ordinary book. Through prayer and fasting, I wrote this book to help individuals understand their addictions, but most importantly, to grow in the knowledge of the source of our breakthrough and blessings (God). Even though you may not fully relate to my testimony that is threaded throughout this book, God will still bless you and transform you if you give Him the chance. Personalize what is written. Open your heart to the Lord and watch Him do great and mighty things in your life. It is suggested that you do the following as you read:

- Choose a quiet place to seek the Lord, read, and do all the work in this Recovery Workbook.
  - *But from there you will search again for the LORD your God. And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him (Deuteronomy 4:29).*
- Pray before, during, and after you read and work through any section or chapter of this Recovery Workbook. Prayer is essential for completing this rewarding work. God has already promised in His Word:
  - *Ask me and I will tell you remarkable secrets you do not know about things to come (Jeremiah 33:3).*

- Meditate on the Bible verses that are written throughout this Recovery Workbook. God desires to speak to you through His Word.
  - *Study this Book of Instruction [the Bible] continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do (Joshua 1:8).*
- Seek spiritual guidance from a pastor, minister, priest, or ministry leader when you have questions about Bible verses and/or need godly counsel about the questions in this Recovery Workbook. You should show them this book before you journey on the road to recovery.
  - *Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).*
- Have one or more accountability partners who will encourage you as you do the work. An accountability partner can be a pastor, minister, priest, ministry leader, trusted God-fearing friend, sponsor or mentor.
  - *As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend (Proverbs 27:17).*
- Use the faith that God has given you to trust that He will meet you where you are at in your addictions or recovery and help you to win the battle over your addictions. Remember, God is for you – He loves you with unconditional love – and He designed this Recovery Workbook for people like us.
  - *The LORD is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving (Psalm 28:7).*

May the apostle Paul's prayer to his brothers and sisters in Colosse fill you with hope as you begin this journey with the Lord:

*So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and give*

*you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better. We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light (Colossians 1:9–12).*

Please know this – there are many brothers and sisters in Christ who are praying this beautiful prayer over you right now!



## INTRODUCTION

*Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him (Philippians 2:12-13).*

The purpose of this Recovery Workbook is to help individuals find freedom from active addictions through cultivating a growing relationship with God, through spending time in His Word and prayer, and by working these 12 Steps from a biblical view. Do not rush through this workbook. Instead, each time you pick it up, pray and believe that God will help you. According to Isaiah 10:27 and 61:1, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit bring about the anointing that breaks the yokes of our addictions, sets us free from our sinful nature, and releases us from the prisons of our past and present.

Many Christians come to an altar, pray to the Lord about their addictions, and receive freedom – yet they are still bound by strongholds (e.g., demonic influences, ideologies, delusions of grandeur, false thinking, etc.). Without the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and the transforming power of God’s Word, many return to their addictions. I have experienced this firsthand. A prison door cannot be opened without a key. God’s living Word, Jesus Christ, is the key that will open every prison door and truly set a person free from strongholds and addictions.

Why Jesus? Why not just God? Why do we need a relationship with the Holy Spirit to recover from our addictions? Unfortunately, many people cannot define God’s true nature and divine purpose. This Recovery Workbook will also help you gain a better understanding

of who God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit really are according to the Bible, and the role each One plays in our lives and our recovery. The apostle John wrote about the Blessed Trinity, *“So we have these three witnesses in heaven – the Father, the Word [Son], and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one”* (1 John 5:7, see footnote in Life Recovery Bible). Below are just some of God’s glorious attributes – many more can be found in the Bible.

**God the Father is:**

- The first person of the Trinity (the highest expression of the Triune God).
- The Creator of all things. (See Ephesians 3:9.)
- Sovereign (in control) over all things. (See 1 Chronicles 29:11.)
- The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See 2 Corinthians 1:3.)
- The Giver of eternal life through His Son, Jesus. (See Romans 6:23.)
- The spiritual Father to all believers. (See 2 Corinthians 6:18.)
- A Father to the fatherless and a Defender of the widows. (See Psalm 68:5.)
- The Author of love; God is love. (See 1 John 4:8.)
- A just Judge who rewards those who live for Him. (See Psalm 58:11.)
- Merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. (See Psalm 145:8.)
- Waiting for us to surrender our lives to Him and learn about His will, which is good, pleasing, and perfect. (See Romans 12:1–2.)

**God the Son (Jesus) is:**

- The second person of the Trinity (the bodily image of the Triune God).

## INTRODUCTION

- Who God the Father used to create all things, in the heavens and the earth, according to His own will; Jesus holds all of creation together. (See Colossians 1:15–17.)
- One with the Father; Jesus is coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial with the Father. (See John 10:30.)
- The One who stepped down from heaven and was born as a human being, appearing in human form. Jesus is fully God and was fully man. (See Philippians 2:5–8.)
- The only begotten Son of the Father, that whoever believes in Him (Jesus) will not perish but have eternal life. (See John 3:16.)
- God’s Christ (Messiah and Savior), who died for our sins, was buried, and was resurrected from the dead on the third day. (See 1 Corinthians 15:3–4.)
- The One who came to destroy the works of the devil (our addictions). (See 1 John 3:8.)
- The Champion who initiates and perfects our faith. (See Hebrews 12:2.)
- At the right hand of God the Father, interceding (praying) for us. (See Romans 8:34.)
- The “way, the truth, and the life” – He is the *way* to the Father, His Word is *truth*, and through Him we can have a new *life*. (See John 14:6.)
- Knocking on the door of our hearts, wanting to have a personal relationship with us so He may rule and reign in our lives. (See Revelation 3:20.)

### **God the Holy Spirit is:**

- The third person of the Trinity (the pervasive presence of the Triune God).
- Coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial with the Father and the Son. (See Matthew 28:19.)

- The power by which God created the earth through His Son, Jesus. (See Genesis 1:2.)
- A gift to us from the Father when we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. (See John 7:39.)
- Our Helper in times of weakness – praying on our behalf when we do not know how to pray, and praying for us according to God’s will. (See Romans 8:26–27.)
- The Advocate who convicts the world and each one of us: of sin, God’s righteousness, and the coming judgment. (See John 16:7–8.)
- The Spirit of truth who will guide us in all truth. (See John 16:13.)
- The supernatural Teacher who worked through the prophets and the apostles as they wrote the Bible. (See 2 Peter 1:19–21.)
- The One who helps us understand God’s Word as we read the Bible. (See 1 Corinthians 2:10–12.)
- The One who administers spiritual gifts to all believers, according to His will, with the purpose of building God’s Kingdom on the earth and glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 12:3–11.)
- Waiting for us to have fellowship with Him as we receive the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and embrace the love of God our Father. (See 2 Corinthians 13:14.)

Be sure to look up each one of the scriptures mentioned and let their meaning penetrate your heart as you reflect on them throughout the recovery process.

*And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow – not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below – indeed, nothing in all creation [including our addictions] will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38–39).*

Blessings, honor, glory, and power belong to our God!



# THE 12 STEPS

## *YOUR PATH TO TRANSFORMATION*

*The LORD says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you" (Psalm 32:8).*

*Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:2).*



# THE 12 STEPS

*The LORD says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you” (Psalm 32:8).*

Alcoholics Anonymous is an organization that has helped millions of people worldwide recovery from alcoholism. Below are the Twelve Steps as they are written in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

## **The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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The 12 Steps of *God & The 12 Steps* are written in the present tense as if the participant is currently making that decision and taking that step.

### **The Twelve Steps of *God & The 12 Steps***

1. We admit that within ourselves, we are powerless over our addictions and that our lives have become unmanageable.
2. We choose to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity and give us a new life. That Power is God.
3. We make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, and to make Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.
4. We make a sincere and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admit to God, to ourselves, and to another trusted human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We are entirely ready to have God remove our defects of character (our sins) that have contributed to our addictions.

## THE 12 STEPS

7. We humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings and sanctify us for His glory.
8. We make a list of all persons we have harmed, and we are willing to make amends to them all.
9. We will make direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when doing so would injure them or others.
10. We continue to take personal inventory, and when we are wrong, we promptly admit it.
11. We seek through prayer and meditation to grow in our relationship with God (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), praying for the knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of our growing relationship with God and by working these steps, we intend to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



## WORKING THE 12 STEPS

*“But I, the LORD, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve” (Jeremiah 17:10).*

If we are broken, tired of losing the battle with our addictions, and ready for our lives to be changed, God (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is ready to meet with us and do the work that only He can do. *“God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble”* (Psalm 46:1). The Lord is ready to deliver us, heal us, restore us, and give us a new life – addiction free, one day at a time. He is searching our hearts right now and drawing us closer to Himself. God loves you dearly! Through the prophet Jeremiah, God confirmed His love for us, saying: *“I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself”* (Jeremiah 31:3). The ultimate sign of God’s love for us was the sacrificial giving of His Son, Jesus, for the whole world to be saved as described in John 3:16. Romans 8:32 tells us, *“Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t he also give us everything else?”* Embrace His love for you and His promise to give you what you need to recover.

By working the 12 Steps with the faith of a child and the readiness of a dying person wanting a few more years to live, God will reward us in ways we cannot even imagine – both now and forever. The 12 Steps, pulled from God’s holy Word, will help clear the wreckage of our past, allow us to face the pain and ungodly behaviors that have fueled our addictions, bring deliverance and freedom into our lives, and help us live lives that are pleasing to God. The steps are meant to be done in order, and this process will draw us nearer to God. As we read about and work the steps together, we should pray for honesty and humility, and seek spiritual guidance from our pastor, minister, priest, ministry

leader, trusted God-fearing friend, sponsor or mentor. Remember, our journey in recovery is not meant to be done alone. **You will need a notebook and a pen or pencil to do certain parts of the steps.** This hard yet rewarding work will change you from the inside out. Are you ready for this glorious journey?

There are scriptural references from the Life Recovery Bible throughout this Recovery Workbook. Bible references without the actual verses should be looked up as we read; others are written out for us to meditate on. Either way, God's holy Word is the foundation of this work. It is important that we allow God to speak to us as we meditate on the Bible verses. His Word will always produce fruit and accomplish what He wants, prospering everywhere He sends it, according to Isaiah 55:11. For those who struggle with believing that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, here are some scriptures on which to meditate:

- *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*
- *Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God (2 Peter 1:20-21).*
- *I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law [the Word of God] will disappear until its purpose is achieved (Matthew 5:18).*
- *Your eternal word, O LORD, stands firm in heaven... Even perfection has its limits, but your commands have no limit (Psalm 119:89, 96).*
- *For the word of the LORD holds true, and we can trust everything he does (Psalm 33:4).*
- *For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires (Hebrews 4:12).*

- *Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled (Romans 15:4).*

You can use the prayers in each step as they are written, or you can use them as a guide to help you pray. With God's aid, you will eventually develop your own prayer language that will be personal. Remember, it is not the words that God is looking for; it is the heart behind your prayers that matters the most to Him. Let God's Word build your confidence to pray because *"The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles"* (Psalm 34:17).

In closing, let the apostle Paul's encouraging words ignite a fire within our souls:

*"So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless"* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

If that is not enough to motivate us to grow in our relationship with God and work the 12 Steps, we can also meditate on King David's exaltation of the Lord:

*"Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's! The LORD gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly"* (Psalm 103:2-6).

Let the healing work begin! Glory to God!



# STEP 1

## SMASHING DENIAL

We admit that within ourselves, we are powerless over our addictions and that our lives have become unmanageable.

### Scriptural References for Step 1:

*And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway (Romans 7:18–19).*

*But I don't have the strength to endure. I have nothing to live for. Do I have the strength of a stone? Is my body made of bronze? No, I am utterly helpless, without any chance of success (Job 6:11–13).*

### Biblical Principles Behind Step 1 – Honesty & Humility

Over the years, I have heard many people in various 12 Step fellowships say, “Step 1 is the only step you have to do perfectly.” Perfectly? I did not understand what they were talking about until I finally realized that I could not beat my addictions. I could not end the vicious cycle of being sober, then relapsing; being drug-free, then relapsing; giving up pornography, then relapsing; and giving up gambling, then relapsing. Even after sitting in numerous Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, I still had not

worked Step 1 honestly. My secret desire to one day gain power over my addictions held me back from sincerely working this step. The brief moments of control that I had over my drinking and drugging gave me this false sense of hope, which was ultimately nothing more than delusional thinking.

Many who are in active addiction live a life that is full of lies – we tell them, we live in them, and we buy them from others. To make matters worse, denial takes our minds captive and our mouths hostage. Adding fuel to the fire of our addictive behaviors, we use our master’s degree in rationalization and our Ph.D. in justification when it comes to explaining our addictions and our appetite for sin. Within seconds, we can cunningly produce a reason or an excuse for our addictive behaviors: “I’m just partying... I just need to blow off some steam... Work’s been great, so it’s time to celebrate... This helps me to relax... God created sex, so it’s a good thing... It’s only a video; I’m not actually having sex with anyone... Well, at least I’m not doing ‘that’ drug... I’m not as bad as they are... You see me; I can drive drunk with no problem, so what’s the big deal? ... I haven’t lost my job because of my addiction... It’s only food... You don’t understand!”

How can we be so foolish? The people around us who are not feeding into our addictions usually can see that we are heading for destruction. Yet, in our own eyes, everything is okay and our life is somewhat manageable. With this delusional mindset and a closed ear to instruction, we are living out the proverb that says, *“There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death”* (Proverbs 14:12). Today, we can smash denial by admitting that within ourselves, we are powerless over our addictions and that our lives will become unmanageable if we act them out.

My recovery from all my addictions did not begin until I finally worked Step 1 honestly and surrendered to my powerlessness. I had to shut the voices up in my head that were telling me things like: “Admitting you’re an addict and alcoholic is a sign of weakness. You don’t need help; you can do this on your own. What will people think of you when they find out? Those people in the meetings are the ones who have problems, not you. You can change without working the steps. You’re strong enough to just say ‘no.’ You can beat this.”

The breakthrough I desperately needed came on August 9, 2004. I was high on several drugs and my alcohol buzz was fighting for my

attention. As I was driving, I began speaking to myself. “I can’t stop using,” I said. “This is pathetic – I can’t choose You, Lord, over these drugs!” Just a few weeks earlier, I had stumbled out of a hotel, looked up at the sunny sky, and said, “My life is a mess! God, I know You don’t like this.” Looking back, I had finally admitted to myself that I was powerless over my addictions and that my life was unmanageable. I had spoken it from my heart and did not try to rationalize or justify my wicked lifestyle. I also had admitted this to God as I understood Him. I went home that afternoon, grabbed all my drugs and alcohol, and flushed them down the toilet. With tears flowing down my face and a sincere heart, I said, “Lord Jesus, today I choose You over these drugs. Please forgive me of my sins. I don’t know how I am going to stay clean and sober, but I trust You to help me.”

That day in August was the day that God’s Word came to life, giving me the power to defeat a giant stronghold (denial) so I could begin my true recovery. I heard an echo in my heart of the words Jesus spoke to the apostle Paul, *“My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me*” (2 Corinthians 12:9). These powerful words are for all of us. Let the grace and the power of Jesus Christ work in you as you work this step. Jesus loves you!



# STEP 1 WORK

We admit that within ourselves, we are powerless over our addictions and that our lives have become unmanageable.

This part of the Recovery Workbook will require you to do a little soul-searching as you answer the questions below. Get ready to go to the Lord in prayer, believing that He will be with you as you do this rewarding work. Let your heart take comfort from the following scripture:

*“When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior” (Isaiah 43:2–3).*

**Part 1—Prayer and Reflection:** Pray that God, by His Holy Spirit, in Jesus’ name, would reveal truth about your addictions and your life apart from His will, and that He would keep you honest, humble, and sincere through this important step. Ask God for a willingness to embrace recovery. Pray that you would be broken before God. Remember the words of King David: *“The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God”* (Psalm 51:17).

**Part 2:** After your prayer, answer the following questions that apply to your life to the very best of your ability. Circle Yes or No:

- a. Have you ever tried to quit your addictions (e.g., drugs, alcohol, sex, pornography, gambling, food, cigarettes, and/or social media) on your own power and failed? (Yes or No)
- b. Have you had brief moments of victory over your addictions and then relapsed? (Yes or No)
- c. Have you ever done something illegal while you were in active addiction? (Yes or No)
- d. Have you ever sworn off your addictions only to return to them a short time later? (Yes or No)
- e. Have you ever returned to your addictions even after living through a harsh consequence (e.g., legal matter, near-death, DUI, divorce, etc.)? (Yes or No)
- f. Do you do things while under the influence of your addictions that you would never do while living addiction-free? (Yes or No)
- g. Do you lose control over your emotions or actions once you feed your addictions? (Yes or No)
- h. Do you become a different person under the influence of your addictions? (Yes or No)
- i. Do you do the same addictive behaviors over and over again, expecting different results and never achieving them? (Yes or No)

**Part 3:** If you answered “Yes” to more than four questions above, then you can move on to Part 4. If you answered “No” to all the questions above, you may want to take them to your pastor, minister, priest, ministry leader, trusted God-fearing friend, sponsor or mentor and get his or her feedback about these questions as they pertain to your life.

**Part 4:** Answer the following questions that apply to your life. Circle your answer:

- j. Are you ready to be completely honest and admit to yourself and to God that you have addictions? (Yes or No)
- k. Do you concede to yourself that your addictions are too powerful for you to overcome on your own? (Yes or No)
- l. Do you recognize the unmanageability or insanity in your life because of your addictions? (Yes or No)
- m. Do you realize that your life will become unmanageable and full of insanity if you act out in your addictions again? (Yes or No)
- n. What are your addictions? (e.g., drugs, alcohol, sex, pornography, gambling, food, cigarettes, and/or social media , and/or other):
- o. Do you have a reservation to pick up your addictions again in the future? (Yes or No)
- p. Are you ready to let go of your addictions with the hope of never returning – one day at a time? (Yes or No)

**Part 5:** If you have peace regarding your answers to the questions above, then you can move on to the Step 1 prayer. If you do not have peace or if you struggle with the questions, you may want to take them to your pastor, minister, priest, ministry leader, trusted God-fearing friend, sponsor or mentor and get his or her feedback about the questions as they pertain to your life. Once you have peace that you have answered them to the best of your ability, and you understand the basis of Step 1 as it applies to your life, you can move on to the Step 1 prayer.

### STEP 1 PRAYER FOCUS

[Please note: (1) if you are praying this prayer individually, you can quote it word-for-word or you can be creative and genuine, inserting your own

words at times; (2) if you are a facilitator, you should lead your group in quoting this prayer out loud one line at a time.]

*“God, I humbly come to You broken. I admit that I am powerless over my addictions. I concede that my life is unmanageable when I choose to live in sin and be active in my addictions. I am sorry for my sins against You. Please forgive me, Lord. I do not want to hurt You, God, by living in active addiction. Please help me, Jesus, to move forward in my recovery. I want to be set free from my addictions. Please, God, take away any reservations I may have about my addictions. I need a change of heart. Thank You for answering my prayer. Blessed and great is Your name. I love You, God. Thank You for loving me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.”*

You should sit still for a while after your prayer and let the Lord have His way with you. Cry if you need to – those healing tears will worship and honor the Lord.

You should plan to do Step 2 as soon as possible.