

## INTRODUCTION

### Welcome to Family Support

The purpose of Family Support groups is to help family members who have a loved one in addiction. The information within this Pilot Program is not about what we as family members can do to save and rescue our loved one from his/her addiction. This program is about learning how to allow God to rescue us as we surrender all others to Him. We still care about and hope for the recovery for our loved ones, but we learn to surrender our plans for their recovery to our Father in Heaven and learn to trust in His plan for them and for us. Many of us feel the tremendous burden of not knowing what to do. The information in “Finding Healing Through Christ” can begin to open up new learning paths as promised in the scriptures: “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” (Jer. 33: 3)

When we make the decision to begin attending support group meetings, we discover in our very first meeting *that we are not alone*. We come together to face a common dilemma: We are not sure how to continue living our lives with an addicted family member. Each of us has been affected by someone else's addiction. Before coming to Family Support meetings, we have tried to keep up the appearance that all was well in our lives even though we were secretly living in deep emotional pain. We may have attempted to isolate ourselves out of fear, guilt or shame, believing that no one else could possibly understand the struggles we were facing.

Many of us have felt hopeless and complete confusion as what we could do to remedy our situation. We were unable to help our addicted loved ones, thus creating within us feelings of desperation and helplessness. We have also felt wounded by things our loved ones have said and done, and we may be unsure of how to remedy the damage to our hearts and souls. We may have been hurt by comments from well meaning church members who are unable to fully understand the challenges we are facing.

We come to meetings with the purpose *to learn more about ourselves; to understand how our efforts to fix, control and rescue contribute to our own pain; and to learn what we must do to find healing for ourselves*. We can approach this process without shame, for when we know better, we do better. Up until now, we believed that our efforts would somehow cause a change in loved ones, which would ultimately result in a change in our circumstances. We fully held the false belief that once my loved one gets better, then I'll be better. However, the truth is that our confusion, pain and suffering does not go away whether our loved one recovers or whether we divorce or estrange ourselves from loved ones in addiction.

### *The Addicted and the Afflicted*

Those who are overcome by addiction suffer and are literally in bondage. Family members are also afflicted by spiritual, emotional and psychological pain. When we discover we have a loved one with a sexual addiction, we are often overwhelmed by feelings of fear, betrayal, anger and a sense of injustice that we can hardly bear. We suffer as a result of setting false expectations about our loved one in addiction and about ourselves, which often brings about a collapse of our hope for future happiness.

One of the most painful realities about addiction of any kind is the heart-deep affliction suffered by the addict's family and friends. Even so, due to the eternal significance of marriage in the LDS faith, there may be no comparison in the world for the shock and even trauma that happens to an LDS woman who finds out that her husband is sexually addicted. The foundation of our marriage has often been established through Temple covenants and vows and we look to our husbands as spiritual leaders, patriarchs and priesthood holders devoted to God. Our trust in them, to be separate from the sins of the world, collapses as we are faced with the reality that they are caught in sexual addiction. The resulting grief a wife feels could easily be compared to that felt over the death of a loved one. Often her normal thinking processes are interrupted, as she struggles with persistent feelings that somehow she is responsible, that if she had only “measured up” she could have held her husband's loyalty.

As spouses we feel destitute, robbed of trust that we are loved and cherished, and we are left vulnerable to Satan's efforts to destroy our own feelings of self worth. Eventually, we must admit that just as our loved ones addiction has taken its toll in the spiritual depths of our lives, so it has also become a challenge to our spirituality. Regardless of their choice, we must take the steps necessary to connect with our Heavenly Father's divine gift of His Son Jesus Christ, and His power to save us.

In a conference talk on adversity, President Henry B. Eyring captured our feelings so well when he said, “We all must deal with adversity...The anger comes at least in part from a feeling that what is happening is unfair...[we often feel]... ‘I have always tried to be good. How could this happen?’ That aching for an answer to ‘How could this happen?’ becomes even more painful, when those struggling include those we love.” Elder Eyring's comforting answer to that question is: “I bear you my testimony that God the Father lives. . . [and] He can and will give us strength to rise through every trial.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Understanding Dependency Challenges*

Many of us upon becoming aware of a loved one in sexual addiction are deeply impacted. “Disclosure and discovery of a husband's

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<sup>1</sup> Henry B. Eyring, “Adversity,” *Ensign*, May 2009 [Link](#)

sexual/pornography addiction is particularly shocking to the wife because it requires her to abruptly accept a new view of her spouse, herself, and their relationship, all at once. Consequences such as shame and isolation can occur, and helpful information and support can be particularly difficult to find.... [It has been found that] 69.9% of [all] women...who had experienced disclosures of sexual addiction by their spouses met all but one criterion for a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder.... Qualitative studies and reports of professional clinical cases describe a variety of distressing psychological and emotional symptoms experienced by women who have discovered their husbands' sexual addictions. These symptoms may include: anxiety, depression, anger, rage, obsessive thoughts, difficulty concentrating, increased isolation, and hyper-vigilance.”<sup>2</sup> We have experienced intense emotional reactions upon discovering the addiction of a loved one. Our pain may influence behaviors that can become harmful to us and others. We have been impacted as a result of our loved one's addiction and therefore we need to seek help and healing.

Admittedly, healing from trauma is challenging work. Nevertheless, if we do not validate our emotions as this happens to us and address our traumatic shock, we may actually find ourselves losing our ability to function successfully in our own lives. This detrimental condition that affects the closely bonded loved ones of addicted family members has been referred to as “codependency” for decades by those studying addiction and its consequences. Some people wrongfully assume that this term is used to cast blame or shame on the family member or loved one who feels desperate to help their loved ones in addiction. Nothing could be further from the truth. The term was created in order to give a name to the disruption in normal thinking and functioning that transpires in the life of those who have loved ones in addiction.

Because this condition can result in behaviors that are destructive to our own lives and to our marriage relationship, we have felt it appropriate to refer to it in this study guide as “Destructive Dependency.” As we allow our emotions, actions and thoughts to be *dependent* and thus determined by what our addicted loved ones have done, are doing or are not doing, we can become obsessive and even compulsive ourselves as we interact with our loved one in addiction. If they are doing well, we are doing well, but if they are not doing well, our emotions of anger or fear motivate us to control our addicted loved one to soothe our own painful feelings.

There are two ways that this type of emotional dependency can manifest itself. On the one hand, we may become obsessed with thoughts of how to control our loved ones' choices, and feel compelled to do anything we need to in order to rescue our loved ones from their addiction. The second form this powerful type of dependency can take involves becoming consumed with feelings of despair, hopelessness, low self esteem, self blame and deep

depression. We think and feel as if our life is not worth living if they do not get better and change. Other forms of problematic emotional dependency in addition to controlling may include enabling which can result in unsuccessful behaviors such as rescuing, avoiding, rationalizing, covering up and/or denial of the addiction of a loved one. “They're really not addicted, they'll get better if I just...” All of these behaviors are an attempt to cope with our emotional and psychological pain and can negatively impact the recovery process for our addicted loved one and our own healing and recovery journey.

*It is important to become aware of what we should and should not do . . .*

### ***Avoid Rescuing Behaviors:***

- Lying and covering up for addicted loved ones
- Not allowing consequences of addictive behaviors to take place
- Policing the activities of those in addiction
- Constant checking up on their daily activities
- Forcing church attendance, scripture study or prayer
- Using methods to bribe those in addiction to stop
- Pleasing behaviors to not upset those in addiction hoping that addicted family members will get better if we just love them enough.

### ***Avoid Being a Victim:***

- Blaming our addicted loved one for all our pain and misery
- Gossiping and complaining to others about our family member in addiction
- Using the addiction of another as an excuse for feelings of depression and our inability to function in our daily responsibilities
- Feeling shame because of the actions of our addicted loved ones

### ***Avoid Persecuting:***

- Screaming, yelling, crying, as a tool to control addicted loved ones
- Withdrawing love and emotional closeness towards those suffering addiction
- Trying to increase their shame through condemning, criticizing and telling them they are a failure

### ***Avoid Denial:***

- Avoiding honest recognition of the detrimental impact of addiction upon the marriage and family.
- Thoughts of denial may be: “It's really not that bad. It will go away if I ignore it. They can't help it.”

Recovery for us, as spouses, will begin when we awaken to the fact that despite all the negative thinking we allow

<sup>2</sup> Mike Nelson, “Wives of Sex Addicts”, Capstone Paper for Masters Degree, USU, p. 5-6

ourselves to think and also allow all that Satan is trying to instill in our minds, we can find power in Heavenly Father and the Savior to see ourselves from Their eternal perspective and feel Their comfort. Recovery begins when we take the following words of the Savior to heart and hear them as personally spoken to us: “I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you” (John 14:18). As we seek the words of Christ through the power of the Holy Ghost and the Savior’s own witness—as promised in the Sacrament prayers each week, we will find the ability to quiet the negative mental chatter in our minds and rise above our fear of others’ opinions. As we become grounded more and more securely in the testimony of Christ as to our worth to Him and to our Father, and as we rely more and more on His comfort and counsel we will find the power to conquer any dark, obsessive thoughts that torment us.

### ***Comprehending the Battle of Addiction***

One of the most painful realities about addiction of any kind is the heart-deep affliction suffered by the addict’s family and friends. Even so, due to the eternal significance of marriage in the LDS faith, there may be no comparison in the world for the shock and even trauma that happens to an LDS woman who finds out that her husband is sexually addicted. The foundation of our marriage has often been established through Temple covenants and vows and we look to our husbands as spiritual leaders, patriarchs and priesthood holders devoted to God. Our trust in them, to be separate from the sins of the world, collapses as we are faced with the reality that they are caught in sexual addiction. The resulting grief a wife feels could easily be compared to that felt over the death of a loved one. Often her normal thinking processes are interrupted, as she struggles with persistent feelings that somehow she is responsible, that if she had only “measured up” she could have held her husband’s loyalty.

As spouses we feel destitute, robbed of trust that we are loved and cherished, and we are left vulnerable to Satan’s efforts to destroy our own feelings of self worth. Eventually, we must admit that just as our loved ones’ addiction has taken its toll in the spiritual depths of our lives, so it has also become a challenge to our spirituality. Regardless of their choice, we must take the steps necessary to connect with our Heavenly Father’s divine gift of His Son Jesus Christ, and His power to save us.

As we face this challenge it is helpful for the family member to understand the nature of sexual addiction. It is not a bad habit or chosen behavior. It is a powerful internal dependency upon drugs produced by one’s own brain during repeated exposure to pornography. Medical studies have shown that these reactions in the brain are as powerful as cocaine or heroin, and can lead a person to use pornography as a way to self-medicate when under the stress of negative emotions. Thus, sexual addiction can actually be totally unrelated to a person’s satisfaction in their marital

relationship. Many men suffering from a sexual addiction honestly feel a great love for their wives. As a spouse, we need to understand this truth so that we do not feel that our addicted loved one is personally rejecting us.

Most active, believing LDS husbands love their wives and children and have a testimony of the eternal significance of marriage. They know, deep in their heart, that they should be living worthy of the priesthood they’ve been given. Satan actually uses these feelings to torture and convince them that their whole world will be destroyed if they ever let anyone know. Thus Satan drives the lie deeper and deeper, causing more and more pain that addicted loved ones try to numb with repeated acts of addiction. They feel caught in a never-ending negative cycle with no hope of escape. However, when recovery begins and continues—even in a less than perfect manner—the areas of the brain affected by the addiction can gradually return to normal as recovery continues, and the ability to abstain from sexually addictive behaviors can be sustained.

Once an addiction has developed in a person’s life, it is a powerful challenge. “[Those in addiction] are prisoners within their own bodies. Many feel totally helpless, dependent, and desperate.”<sup>3</sup> Despair is the adversary’s tool to keep all the children of God from believing that there is hope for change and overcoming something as powerful as addiction—and he will use it against both your husband *and* you. The message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and this study guide based on His power to redeem is that He has prepared a way for your escape—both your husband and yourself. As He said, “Behold, I *am* the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?” (Jer. 32: 17, 27) The spiritual truth you must cling to is that there is nothing too difficult for any of us to overcome as we turn to our Savior and seek His counsel. As the Book of Mormon promises:

Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God. (Alma 37:37)

As our loved ones continue in the path of learning and applying recovery principles, which leads them to deeply connect with their Savior Jesus Christ and His atoning power, they will find strength in Him to overcome all the triggers and temptations that are constantly confronting them. By relying completely on the Savior, all can come to know the miracle as Alma did “that their hearts [have] been changed; that they [have] no more desire to do evil [and to participate in their addictive behaviors].” (Alma 19: 33)

<sup>3</sup> Marvin J. Ashton, “‘Shake Off the Chains with Which Ye Are Bound,’” *Ensign*, Nov 1986 [Link](#)

This process takes time, commitment and patience. This is one reason why recovery is not a “quick fix,” or overnight change. It is essential to comprehend that no one can immediately stop this addiction. The recovery process requires several years of sobriety in order for a healing change in brain chemistry to take place. There may be slips and relapses along the way. These can be learning experiences when our addicted loved ones turn to those in recovery and professionals on how to avoid setbacks. While this process is going on, it is essential that those suffering from addiction find and develop hopeful, positive thoughts and feelings on the recovery process. This is the miraculous effect of understanding and applying the true spiritual principles contained in 12 Step recovery programs.

Those who have previously felt completely hopeless in their addiction come to rely upon the love, mercy and power of Jesus Christ. They come to know that He truly is their Savior and Redeemer. They also receive knowledge, skills and hope from those who have obtained recovery. They learn to counsel with recovering addicts. Therapists trained in addiction recovery principles can also strengthen and help the recovery process.

### ***Can Those Trapped in Sexual Addiction Recover?***

***Absolutely!*** The recovery process takes commitment to attending meetings, reading and applying the spiritual 12 Steps, talking with those in recovery, etc. This is critical especially in the first year. Recovery is hard work! But the reward for the effort is to be restored to health and safety, spiritually, emotionally and sexually. Marriages that survive this battle with Satan—the common enemy of us all—can actually become stronger, deeper and more filled with compassion and emotional oneness as both partners draw close to the Savior and partake of His perfect love for Heavenly Father, for themselves and for each other. The assurance provided by Elder Boyd K. Packer is: “*There is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no crime exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness.*”<sup>4</sup>

One husband in recovery testified: “Only through Christ can anything be accomplished and particularly when it is something as drastically difficult and consuming and addictive as pornography or any other addictive patterns in our lives. Only Christ can fix it. Our wills are not strong enough. Our Bishops are not enough, our wives are not enough, our children are not enough. They can only love, accept and pray. When we want recovery and deliverance for ourselves, then the Redeemer can take our grief, pain and sorrow and somehow – somehow make those buried burdens powerful in our lives. Only then can change happen, can redemption come.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness,” Ensign, Nov. 1995

[Link](#)

<sup>5</sup> Anonymous comments from someone in recovery from sex addiction

As you and your loved one fully embrace the 12 Step program it will lead both of you out of the wilderness of despair and suffering and into healing through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland counseled: “Are you battling a demon of addiction—tobacco or drugs or gambling, or the pernicious contemporary plague of pornography? Is your marriage in trouble or your child in danger? ....Whatever other steps you may need to take to resolve these concerns, come *first* to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Trust in heaven’s promises. In that regard Alma’s testimony is my testimony: ‘I do know,’ he says, ‘that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions.’”<sup>6</sup>

### ***What Do We Do Now?***

As we proceed forward with this challenge, we, as spouses, will be faced with many decisions and complex situations. One area for us to reflect on is the concept of ***boundaries***. Boundaries are not something that we put around others to confine and control them. The purpose of boundaries is to define our own truth about what we need in order to feel safe. We seek the inspiration of the Lord for guidance as well as the courage to set boundaries that will protect us and our children and our marriage relationship from any danger spiritually, emotionally and physically. We must never forget that there is nowhere on earth that is more sacred to our Heavenly Father than our homes. He desires them to be secure havens against the perils of the last days.

Our own recovery will provide peace, serenity and wholeness when we are willing to believe we have the Lord’s love, no matter what our husband does. This will not happen automatically, though, even if our loved ones find freedom from their addiction. It may be helpful to think of this truth in a story or parable form. Imagine if a husband and wife, traveling together in a small plane, experience a crash deep in a mountainous wilderness. While both of them survived the crash, they have both sustained wounds severe enough that neither of them can do anything to help the other hike out to safety. In other words, to use a phrase from the scriptures, they can only “work out [their] own salvation.” (Mormon 9:27). This study guide is to help you do just that—to work out your own salvation in the midst of this crisis. There is no going back. There is no undoing the truth. There is only hope in embracing the truth and allowing the Spirit of Truth to lead you out of your dilemma.

Recovery is the process (and the work) of hiking out. This is accomplished by attending support group meetings, studying and applying the gospel principles in the 12 steps, owning and working through our own feelings with self honesty and seeking the guidance and powerful help of Jesus Christ. This is our *own* journey. We focus on our *own* lives and healing through the 12 Step program. Though this crisis (like the imaginary plane crash) has happened, our efforts to turn to

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey R. Holland, “Broken Things to Mend,” Ensign, May 2006 [Link](#)

the Savior and deepen our personal connection to Him and our Father in Heaven can turn this crisis into our greatest blessing.

### ***Overcome Difficulties through Divine Dependency***

This opportunity to overcome our difficulty is offered to us through the 12 Step Family Support Groups. We will learn to let go of destructive and harmful dependency and replace it with “Divine Dependency”. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland shared: “Alma’s testimony is my testimony: I do know,” he says, “that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions.”<sup>7</sup> We learn to rely on our Father in Heaven for His guidance, wisdom, strength, healing and a restoration to wholeness. It is also learning to recognize and value our *divine worth* and come to a realization of the importance of caring for our own spiritual, emotional and physical health.

As we apply the spiritual principles from the Steps into our lives we begin to discover and feel within us a deep sense of peace and strength. We begin to find an *inner strength* that has a positive effect on all of our personal relationships, because we learn to live in peace with ourselves and avoid efforts to control another person. The 12 Steps assist us in all of our daily life circumstances and restore our happiness in our present situation and impact our future contentment as well. For our Savior has promised: “he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” (Luke 4: 18) His promise is:

- He will heal our broken hearts.
- He will deliver us from the bondage and captivity of anger and fear and heal our emotional and spiritual wounds.
- He will open our eyes to understand our current situation and apply the spiritual principles that will bring about our healing.
- He, only He, can free us from the pain of our bruised self image and restore our feelings of self worth.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson encouraged us: “...to convert tribulation into triumph” and reminded us that even those who are living righteously will not be free from trials: “If you feel that personal righteousness should preclude all loss and suffering, you might want to have a chat with Job.”<sup>8</sup> We also will discover the comforting power of God in our lives in a way we may have never experienced before.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey R. Holland, “Broken Things to Mend,” Ensign, May 2006 [Link](#)

<sup>8</sup> D. Todd Christofferson, “The Power of Covenants,” Ensign, May 2009 [Link](#)

We find that we really do have the power to change our lives through the grace of Jesus Christ. We embrace the opportunity to open our perception of what we consider to be an impossible and painful trial and begin to obtain a vision of what God has in store for us.

### ***Spouses Share their Experience with the 12 Steps***

“The women’s 12 step program has been a balm for my soul. Being able to participate in the weekly meetings has been equal to someone throwing me a life preserver as I was about to succumb to having no strength left to fight for my life. There is no doubt in my mind that this program is heaven-sent and that it is very worth-while. I thank the Lord daily for guiding me to it.”

Another sister stated: “I love the 12 step program, and the help it is offering me. I don’t think I ever really understood the Atonement, and its’ power or intimately personal nature, before working the 12 steps. I didn’t know my Savior in the same way as I do now. I didn’t understand the power in repentance, of the healing power of forgiveness. I gain so much strength from attending meetings, and feel the love of the sisters and the Savior so strongly now, that I love going. There can be happiness even while dealing with addiction. With the help of Christ I can heal, and my husband can overcome his addiction and heal as well.”

And another sister shared her change of heart experience: “When I first started attending 12-Step, I was surprised that we didn’t sit and talk about our husbands’ addictions.

Instead, we focused on ourselves and what we can do to make our own lives better. We learned to recognize that we cannot control our husband’s addictions or anything else our husbands do for that matter. That lesson in and of itself was incredibly invaluable for me to learn right from the start, because I was feeling like such a victim. Today, I feel liberated when I can sit and discuss what I am going to do for myself, and I can make my own goals, boundaries and decisions and work towards developing my talents and strengths. I have learned to choose to feel whatever emotion I decide to. I am thankful for 12-Step and everything it has done for me and for the other women. It is truly life-changing.”

Another wife and mother commented: “Discovering my husband’s addiction was the most painful and difficult thing I have ever had to encounter so far in this life. I am a person who is fiercely loyal and my husband’s addiction felt like betrayal to me. As he started into the process of recovery I believed that recovery was a possibility for him but that the wounds and damage that he caused me would never go away. I was extremely angry and felt stuck--stuck in my marriage--stuck in my hurt.

I searched the scriptures and other material trying to find out how or if there was a way to find peace someday. I felt no

peace. I felt so alone in my suffering. I felt no one had ever felt what I was feeling. Therefore, I concluded that there was no help for me.

My husband asked me to go to the 12 step spouse support recovery meetings. I agreed to go, but I believed that I would just be listening to a bunch of tolerant and passive women who had been so hurt they were unable to find their own happiness. I quickly discovered that the women at these meetings weren't what I had imagined. They were hurt, yes, but those in recovery and healing were strong and full of faith. The material we discussed wasn't what I had imagined either. I found that we read and talked about principles that helped me and my issues with healing and changing, not my husbands.

I am learning through the 12 step process that there is hope and healing for the spouse of an addict. It is through the Atonement of Christ. But even His Atonement cannot heal me unless I let it. I learned that I was the one getting in the way. I would think and worry and cry about how I had been wronged. But all the Lord wanted me to say was, 'I am hurt, this is bigger than me and it is ruining my life, therefore, I give it to you'.

A young wife and mother shared: "I have been married for nearly 3 years and found out about my husband's sexual addiction a couple of months into our marriage. It has been so hard to deal with this addiction and try to make sense of it in my life. I struggled alone with handling this problem for the first year and a half of our marriage. I say alone because even though I did have the support of family and priesthood leaders who knew about our situation, I still felt so alone and that no one understood what I was going through. Finally I was directed to go to a LDS PASG 12-Step spouse support group. This is when my healing began.

I call it my 'awakening.' It was not an awakening to how bad my husband was or how I should be more scared of the severity of the situation because of the countless sad stories of other women I heard, but it was an awakening of hope. I became awakened to my personal Savior, Jesus Christ. I learned that I needed my Savior and that I have things to overcome too, not just my husband.

Since our group has been using this new program my eyes have been opened even wider. The original 12-Step program was great, but this new program is amazing. It is so to-the-point and directed to me as a spouse of a sexual addict. It gives greater detail of the things I have been going through in this specific problem and gives me hope. Hope that all things are in the Lord's hands and if I give Him my will my life will be good, full of direction and peace.

I don't feel alone anymore because of the friends I have gained through the 12-Step program, the knowledge of my

Savior, and this more specific 12-Step program. I feel very blessed to be on the journey I am and have the amazing resources that I do. I would recommend 12-Step to anyone who is struggling with addiction in their life and especially this new program to those who are dealing with a loved one's sexual addiction."

The Savior can make our burdens light. He already has paid the price. He has placed His help upon the table for us and we can choose to walk away from it or pick it up and enjoy it, but He has paid the price either way. I have to remind myself every day that He is in charge, He loves me and He can make sense of what makes no sense. I just have to let Him.

### ***Swim Lesson Analogy***

It is vital to comprehend that the 12 Step pathway requires our full attention, commitment and application *and a lot of practice!* Like learning to swim, it is not something you can do without jumping in and participating. Sitting on the side of the pool, just listening to the instructor or watching others try what's being taught, will not prepare us to avoid drowning, ourselves when life shoves us in the "deep end."

As far as the 12 Step program is concerned, if we want healing, we have to:

- attend meetings regularly, connect with others in recovery and learn from their experiences
- study the Step lessons
- write personal responses to the questions
- apply the spiritual principles from the Steps

We have to be willing to jump into the healing waters and learn to swim through the challenges we are facing. And when we feel like we're about to go under, we will find our Savior and our sisters in recovery willing to offer us support. That's why we who have applied these Twelve Steps are so grateful to have you join us in coming unto Christ and learning to rely *wholly* (completely) upon the merits of the one who is mighty to save. (2 Nephi 31:19)

*The information that you are reading, is from a pilot program that was originally approved for use in North Utah County, Utah LDS PASG 12 Step Program. Since that time it has been used with permission in many Agencies in at least 6 other States. This is still a "Pilot Program" because LDS Family Services is in the process of developing a final approach to Family Support Meetings. On June 28, 2009, permission was given by Larry Crenshaw; Director of LDS Family Services, for this Pilot Program material to continue to be used until such time as LDS Family Services develops an official approved set of lessons. Utah County and any of the other groups that are using this material, or the companion Pilot Program materials for the PASG program, may continue to use them. Changes in and/or discontinuation of these specific materials may occur in the future. Questions about this Pilot Program may be directed to*

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## The Journey of Faith, Hope and Healing

### PASg Spouse healing and recovery support groups

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The following recovery and healing stories have been shared by spouses attending PASG 12 Step Family Support Group meetings held in Utah County, St. George, Utah and San Antonio, Texas. These groups have been using materials that were written as a pilot program through LDS Family Services.

- *“Before I came to meetings, I felt so alone and hopeless.”*
- *“The handouts I receive at the meetings help me understand how to handle this life challenge”*
- *“Through the 12 Step program my life is changing. My husband is in a better place and so am I.”*
- *“I always felt my husband was the one with all the problems and I needed to rescue him. I now realize that I cannot do what God can do.”*
- *“The women’s 12 step program has been a balm for my soul. Being able to participate in the weekly meetings has been equal to someone throwing me a life preserver as I was about to succumb to having no strength left to fight for my life. There is no doubt in my mind that this program is heaven-sent and that it is very worth-while. I thank the Lord daily for guiding me to it.”*
- *Since using the PASG spouse pilot program it has brought tears of gratitude to the members of our group that there is something special for them. They feel the Lord has heard their collective prayers for more understanding of the trials they face. Spirits are lifted, and hearts are mending.*

#### Their Stories:

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**A wife whose husband is in recovery from sexual addiction shares:** “Discovering my husband’s addiction was the most painful and difficult thing I have ever had to encounter so far in this life. I am a person who is fiercely loyal and my husband’s addiction felt like betrayal to me. As he started into the process of recovery I believed that recovery was a possibility for him but that the wounds and damage that he caused me would never go away. I was extremely angry and felt stuck--stuck in my marriage--stuck in my hurt.

I searched the scriptures and other material trying to find out how or if there was a way to find peace someday. I felt no peace. I felt so alone in my suffering. I felt no one had ever felt what I was feeling. Therefore, I concluded that there was no help for me.

My husband asked me to go to the 12 step spouse support recovery meetings. I agreed to go, but I believed that I would just be listening to a bunch of tolerant and passive women who had been so hurt they were unable to find their own happiness. I quickly discovered that the women at these meetings weren’t what I had imagined. They were hurt, yes, but those in recovery and healing were strong and full of faith. The material we discussed wasn’t what I had imagined either. I found that we read and talked about principles that helped me and my issues with healing and changing, not my husbands.

I am learning through the 12 step process that there is hope and healing for the spouse of an addict. It is through the Atonement of Christ. But even His Atonement cannot heal me unless I let it. I learned that I was the one getting in the way. I would think and worry and cry about how I had been wronged. But all the Lord wanted me to say was, ‘I am hurt, this is bigger than me and it is ruining my life, therefore, I give it to you’.

The Savior can make our burdens light. He already has paid the price. He has placed His help upon the table for us and we can choose to walk away from it or pick it up and enjoy it, but He has paid the price either way. I have to remind myself every day that He is in charge, He loves me and He can make sense of what makes no sense. I just have to let Him.

**A wife from another spouse group shares:** “I did not believe what I was hearing when I went to my first 12 step meeting. I was angry and hurt and thought that there must be a mistake, because the information we were reading should not be about me, I felt we should definitely be talking about the one who had hurt me.

Having been a member of the church all my life I believed that I understood the Atonement and how to come to Christ. But I found out that I didn’t understand how I needed that power NOW and how to obtain it.

I kept coming to class because I could feel the spirit. Then I kept coming because something began to happen. I realized I was really coming to Christ. This was something I kept praying to know how to do. I now have the steps to let the Atonement work for me in my life. I came to see that Heavenly Father loves me personally. This was a very new feeling, although not a new concept because I had been taught this principle throughout my life. The twelve step program and coming to understand just what codependency is has been vital to me, my life and to my happiness.

Before I came to the support groups, I was mad, angry and very bitter. I am now, through the miracles of a loving

Heavenly Father, happy, and compassionate, sensitive, and stronger. It is like my life has all been turned upside down and shook and when it all settled, everything was the same, except the change was within me. I wasn't trying to do it all any more, instead I allowed Christ to help and He did so, from the inside out in amazing ways. And instead of trying to live the gospel I came to powerfully embrace the gospel. It is hard to explain what has happened to me but it simply has been the blessing I was praying for. I have now experienced what they call amazing grace.



I feel so thankful to Heavenly Father for this 12 step program. I feel the information provided was designed especially for me. This information is excelling my healing progress even faster. I am impressed with the program. It truly is an inspired program and it has saved one soul. Mine. It has brought me to my loving Savior. You see, I really didn't know the way to His help. Thanks to all those who have put in so much time and effort. It is so wonderful."

#### **A young wife and mother shares:**

"I have been married for nearly 3 years and found out about my husband's sexual addiction a couple of months into our marriage. It has been so hard to deal with this addiction and try to make sense of it in my life. I struggled alone with handling this problem for the first year and a half of our marriage. I say alone because even though I did have the support of family and priesthood leaders who knew about our situation, I still felt so alone and that no one understood what I was going through.

Finally I was directed to go to a LDS PASG 12-Step spouse support group. This is when my healing began. I call it my 'awakening.' It was not an awakening to how bad my husband was or how I should be more scared of the severity of the situation because of the countless sad stories of other women I heard, but it was an awakening of hope. I became awakened to my personal Savior, Jesus Christ. I learned that I needed my Savior and that I have things to overcome too, not just my husband.

Since our group has been using this new program my eyes have been opened even wider. The original 12-Step program was great, but this new program is amazing. It is so to-the-point and directed to me as a spouse of a sexual addict. It gives greater detail of the things I have been going through in this specific problem and gives me hope. Hope that all things are in the Lord's hands and if I give Him my will my life will be good, full of direction and peace.

I don't feel alone anymore because of the friends have gained through the 12-Step program, the knowledge of my Savoir, and this more specific 12-Step program. I feel very blessed to be on the journey I am and have the amazing resources that I do. I would recommend 12-Step to anyone who is struggling with addiction in their life and especially this new program to

those who are dealing with a loved one's sexual addiction."

#### ***A wife shares her healing path and the power of the 12***

***Steps:*** "My husband planned an Anniversary Cruise for our 25th Anniversary. On our drive home from the cruise he opened up and shared with me his struggles with sexual addictions that had spanned his 40 plus years of life, starting with the sexual abuse he endured as a child. He had started attending the LDS 12 step Pornography and Sexual Addiction Recovery Program several months before, and was finally finding hope that he could overcome his addictions. I'm sure that he expected me to clap my hands and join with him in his excitement, but my reaction was quite different than that. Probably because of the horrifying details and specifics of his addictions that he shared with me, combined with my 20 plus years of hurt and anger and resentment towards him, I was devastated. I felt betrayed, used, unbearably hurt, bitter and alone. I had no one to talk to, no way to process so many emotions at one time. It was like all of the hurt and difficulties of all the years came crashing down on me at once. I cried for days and days. I could think of nothing else. Even when I tried to divert my attention with a trip to the store, the pain throbbed on and I felt like a zombie just going through the motions of life.

My husband didn't know what to do to help me. Everything he said just made my pain worse. After several weeks, He invited me to attend the 12 step family support group meetings, which I quickly assured him I never wanted to attend. He asked me again each week, telling me it would help him with his recovery. I knew it couldn't possibly help him to have me sit in another room during his meeting, but to prove that I was the "good" person in this marriage, I let him drag me to the meeting. I was humiliated and angry, but at the meeting I noticed that the other wives there didn't seem nearly as unable to cope with the situation as I was. I went with him several weeks, and it felt really good to have someone I could tell about the pain and wrongs that I had been given. I began to feel the love and concern of the sister missionaries, and connected with a couple of the other sisters there. I so appreciated their allowing me to be as angry as I needed to be, without shunning me. Slowly I began to hear what they were saying about finding healing and hope. I didn't really believe that I needed to work the 12 steps, but I listened to their testimonies of turning to the Savior for strength and healing.

I started praying and sharing all my pains and struggles with the Savior. I finally started to feel a tiny glimmer of hope that life could be better someday. Eventually I began working the 12 steps for myself. It was liberating to feel that the Savior was the one who would fix our mess of a marriage, instead of having to fix it myself. I came to the 12 step meetings voluntarily, and put on a happy face, and I did feel improvement in our lives, but I think I still held onto a lot of pride in what a good wife I was being to support such a terrible husband, and I kept uncovering hurt and pain that I thought I had overcome. I had worked through steps 1 - 3, and was wondering what I could write about for step 4 as an

inventory of the things that I needed to repent of. I didn't want to do step 4, and I kept putting it off, still feeling a bit like my husband was the one who needed this step, not me.

I came down with what I thought was the flu, and was unable to keep food down for 2 weeks. I was finally hospitalized, diagnosed, and treated for a condition, but the improvement we hoped for never came. Week after week I lay at home or in the hospital, unable to eat, getting weaker and weaker, thinner and thinner. I found myself going through all kinds of emotions and thoughts. There were times when I counseled the Lord and told Him what needed to be done to make me well again. I felt abandoned by God, sometimes I thought maybe I was being punished for my pride and sins. At times I felt satisfaction that my husband finally had to learn how hard it was to care for another person. I experienced many thoughts and feelings that, with time, the Lord was able to replace with more humble, righteous ones. I learned how dependant we are on God for our every breath. I got to the point that it was obvious to me that I had control over absolutely nothing, and that I finally submitted my life and my will to God. After about 5 months of struggling to stay alive, the doctors found a correct diagnosis, and my body began to accept food and the many other symptoms began disappearing.

In the healing weeks that followed, I was blessed with profound spiritual healing as well. I learned so much about myself and the parts of my life that need to be changed. I understood that my husband's addictions are part of the refining, exalting plan of God, and that I need to love him and let God change and refine him, while I work at changing and refining myself. I learned of the great love the Savior has for me, and of His eagerness to help me and teach me better ways to live so that I can find joy.

As I regained my strength, I knew what the Lord wanted me to include in my step 4 inventory. I have been working my steps, slowly trying to be thorough and as sincere as I can, and I am now seeing great changes in myself and my relationship with my husband. There are still hard times, hurts, and misunderstandings, but we are more willing to ask for the Lord's help and focus on our own contributions to the problems.

I love the 12 step program, and the help it is offering me. I don't think I ever really understood the Atonement, and its' power or intimately personal nature, before working the 12 steps. I didn't know my Savior in the same way as I do now. I didn't understand the power in repentance, of the healing power of forgiveness. I gain so much strength from attending meetings, and feel the love of the sisters and the Savior so strongly now, that I love going. I love being able to welcome in newcomers and assure them that with the Savior's help they can find hope and peace. I'm so grateful for the love and guidance that God has given me. There can be happiness while dealing with addiction, and there can be healing and recovery through His grace as well.

*Another spouse found help and hope:* "I believe the new information for women and sexual addiction is the best thing that has happened to the program! There is no pain, anger & confusion in the world that can compare with having your husband diagnosed as having a sexual addiction. It is impossible to understand without help, and the things covered in the Guidebook are good, but I felt it fell far short in helping the spouses deal with the problem. The disease of sexual addiction is totally unique in comparison with other addictions. My husband's main choice of "drugs" has been intensity, which has left him open to all sorts of addictions--substances, gambling, and adrenalin. You name it; we have been through the addiction. Sexual addiction hits at a totally different level from all the others, and without help specifically dealing with sexual addiction, it's a band aid, it does not clean out the wound.

I have been to CODA, Alanon, & COSA, plus family week conferences at both inpatient recovery centers that my husband went to. This new information for the 12 Step Spouse Support groups is unique in that it deals both with the spiritual, as it relates to LDS, and the other "real stuff" we have to deal with to accomplish healing.

*A sister overcomes feeling like a victim and shares:* When I first started attending 12-Step, I was surprised that we didn't sit and talk about our husbands' addictions. Instead, we focused on ourselves and what we can do to make our own lives better. We learned to recognize that we cannot control our husband's addictions or anything else our husbands do for that matter. That lesson in and of itself was incredibly invaluable for me to learn right from the start, because I was feeling like such a victim. Through 12-Step, I have felt strength from other women who are struggling with living with a loved one in sexual addiction, just as I am. It gives me strength just to know that I am not alone. It gives me strength to know that other women are rising above the tough challenges they are facing. I feel liberated when I can sit and discuss what I am going to do for myself, and I can make my own goals, boundaries and decisions and work towards developing my talents and strengths. I feel more in control of my life. I actually went from feeling naive, alone, out-of-control, sad (devastated), and moody to feeling knowledgeable, confident, supported, in-control of myself, hopeful, and happy because I have learned to choose to feel whatever emotion I decide to. I am thankful for 12-Step and everything it has done for me and for the other women. It is truly life-changing."

*A missionary in the PASG 12 Step Spouse Support group shares her story:* "Six years ago I had the horrifying experience of going through divorce after 30 years of marriage in the temple. I went to Family Services for counseling, however at the time they had no training in sexual addiction and no 12 step groups available for spouses of sex addicts.

I was blessed with a contact that put me in touch with a

counselor trained at The Meadows, by Patrick Carnes. The funny thing was that I only saw him once, but spoke to him on the phone enough to finally get his message, "Detach...and go to 12 steps!"

He was like a broken record...that is all he would say in response to every plea for help, "DETACH AND GO TO 12 STEP"!!! I FINALLY got the message and went to my first S-anon meeting and I've been thanking the Lord ever since! When I moved to Saint George there was no S-anon, but there finally was an LDS Women's 12 step group.

Since then I was introduced to what I consider to be LDS 12 step meetings, which is S-anon and beyond! It changed the healing rate in our group overnight...by leaps and bounds! Everyone was so grateful in their sharing that God, in His great mercy had blessed us with this program and had not left us to suffer in silence and pain any longer. It wasn't my husband's addictions that were killing me, but my own blindness to my own addiction of co-dependency! To say my blind eyes have been opened is an understatement! This knowledge has changed my life forever. It has created true peace and joy in the void that was left when my husband's pornography led to adultery and leaving the family.

Today I am happy and feel wrapped in the 'arms of His love', and in the LDS PASG 12 step support group! To say 'Thank You' is not enough! I feel truly born again into a new life and a happiness I never dreamed was possible."

#### *A spouse who has learned patience shared:*

"My husband and I have been married for 18 years. He was upfront with me and told me before we got married that he had a problem with pornography. His sincerity and honesty touched me and I was sure that soon it would be a thing of the past.

At that time, he didn't actively seek out pornography, but whenever he would come across it, he wouldn't resist. I was frustrated because I couldn't see the resolve in him that I thought he should have. I really had no one to talk to because we kept that part of our lives a secret. I told him that I was okay with not talking to anyone if I could talk to him about things, if I needed to. What resulted was an inward struggle. It was hard to sort through my feelings on my own. I didn't want to come across as accusing and mean, because if I weren't supportive, he wouldn't change, right? Through all his many confessions, I never yelled at him, which I prided myself in, but I would always cry.

His addiction took a downward turn when his work required him to be gone for several weeks at a time overseas. Each trip was saturated in pornography. His work had him live away from home for a year during the weekdays and home on weekends. We would go through this weekly cycle of him being away for the week and I would spend my time hoping that he could succeed that week. He would come home on the

weekend with a poor report of his activities and our weekends would be me crying and trying to come up with a plan for him to implement in the upcoming week. It was a pattern that we went through week after week for that entire year.

With his increasing use, his testimony started to wane. He came to a point where he told me he was considering leaving the church. My whole world was crashing in on me.

My husband's problems still continued. He would find his way onto inappropriate sites at both work and home. I came up with so many plans for him and couldn't understand why he wouldn't just dive into them. I thought that he didn't want to put in the effort needed to change.

Our bishop suggested that we attend the 12-step program through LDS Family Services. We couldn't see how that would help with the problem because on our own we were reading books on the subject. If we were to attend the 12-step program, our secret would be out. Seven months later, our bishop suggested again that we participate in the 12-step program.

I started to attend with my husband. We went to the weekly meetings. We read together through their materials. We started working through the steps. We'd sit on the bed together with the materials and questions in front of us, answering the questions in our own notebooks. I was seeing to it that my husband was working the program. Even though I was participating in the program, I wasn't doing it with the mindset that I needed to change my life. Nothing was really changing in either of our lives.

Logically, I understood that I wasn't the cause of the problem, but every time that my husband would confess something to me, I would hear my inner voice shout, 'You're not skinny enough!' The truth was that I've always had a thin body. But my inner voice and fear increased my mistaken need to be thinner. I started to skip meals and not eat enough calories in the day. I enjoyed the feeling that I was in "control." Of course, my life was getting way out of control.

I decided that I was going to work through the steps, again. This time I wanted to change. I wanted to feel close to my Heavenly Father, to feel the divinity within me. I prayed to know who should be my sponsor and I started to seriously try to work through the steps. My husband, at that time, was attending the weekly meetings, but was not working the steps. This did not matter to me. I was humble enough to want to make changes in my life without looking over my shoulder to see how he was doing.

I found the steps to be quite difficult to internalize. How could I say that I was powerless when I am a woman of power? I struggled through that concept until I really believed it. I can now say, "I am powerless" with conviction and joy, knowing that I truly am powerless, and that that is a good thing.

Each step continued in the same manner. Some concepts were harder than others for me to grasp. I spent some time with each step, but made sure that I worked on a step daily.

Naturally, as I internalized these steps, my life changed for the better. My husband recently passed through several months where he was succumbing to his addiction. I did not jump on the roller coaster and allow my emotions to ride up and down with how he was doing in his life. My self-worth was not wrapped up in his addiction. I would tell him that he was doing great even though his actions might have said otherwise. I really believe, though, that he is a different person than before. Maybe, though, since I had detached myself from his addictive behavior and allowed myself an identity of my own, I could see him for who he truly was.

I did tell him that I didn't want him to report to me anymore how he was doing. He now has a sponsor to whom he reports along with our bishop. Our current bishop has been a great support to my husband and me. He attended a 12-step meeting with my husband to better understand the program. I have been attending the 12-step meetings for three years, now. I am going through the steps for the third time. The steps are a way for me to better understand the Atonement and apply it in my life. I don't think that I have ever been in a happier place in my life than now."

**A spouse testifies of the power of the Atonement:** "In Step 1 of the LDS 12 Step book it states: 'We have known great sorrow, but we have seen the power of the Savior turn our most devastating defeats into glorious spiritual victories. We who once lived with daily depression, anxiety, fear, and debilitating anger now experience joy and peace. We have witnessed miracles in our own lives and in the lives of others who were ensnared in addiction.' I have truly felt these promises as I started attending the 12 step program. I initially started attending for support because of the addictions of my husband. It was painful for me to feel so alone and isolated. I needed somewhere I could go to talk and feel the spirit. Through the 12 step program I am learning what the Atonement is and how to apply it in my life. I am learning who I am and I am learning how the tools of the gospel can help me in my times of trial. I love and respect the sisters that are there and the support that they give. It is truly a place where confidentiality and honesty make it a safe place to share. This has been a hard road and will still continue to be hard, but I have finally found peace."

## STEP 1 - HONESTY

**KEY PRINCIPLE:** *Accept the truth and reality that we are powerless over our loved ones' addiction, and that as a result of our emotional responses towards their addiction, our own thoughts and behaviors have become unmanageable.*

*After reading each section, briefly discuss the information*

### **Part 1—Where We Are**

It is difficult to comprehend our current situation because we often ask ourselves; “What can we do to resolve this problem?” The first answer to that question comes from comprehending what we cannot do. In Step One, we come to recognize that *we did not cause* the addiction of our loved ones. It is not our fault! In many cases, individuals become addicted in their preteen years. Others may become trapped in addiction after marriage. Regardless of when an addiction begins, we learn to accept that *we cannot control it* and *we cannot cure it*. Powerlessness means that despite our best efforts, there is nothing we can do to directly pressure our loved ones to cease their addiction. This is a hard truth to face because of how much we want this circumstance to change.

We are confronted with the seeming irrational concept of admitting powerlessness in Step One. We want to cry out; “How can it be helpful to admit that I’m powerless? Isn’t it the equivalent of abandoning my loved one and of giving up and letting evil take over?” The truth is, when we take Step One, we are actually taking the first step out of being a victim of our circumstances. By admitting our powerlessness not only over our loved one’s choices, but also over our reaction to them, we are freeing ourselves to seek the help we need. By giving up our determination to fix, control and rescue another, we are beginning to respond rather than react. We are able to admit that we need to start taking care of our own mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well being. This must be our top priority, no matter what our loved one in addiction chooses to do.

### **What are Unmanageable Behaviors?**

Motivated by all-consuming emotions, we may engage in behaviors that are more harmful than helpful. Our attempts to fix our loved ones’ problems as a means to ease our pain may result in undesirable consequences that are not easily or quickly resolved. Though we feel our addicted loved one is the only person in bondage, we may find ourselves slipping into an emotional bondage of our own. We become consumed by our intense feelings and our efforts to control or change our loved one’s conduct so that we might feel better. Try as we might, we cannot stop these negative feelings from haunting us. We may actually find ourselves losing the ability to function successfully in our own lives. We desperately attempt to keep up the outward appearance of normalcy, but internally we may feel as if we are living in a secret nightmare that borders on insanity. As a result of these overwhelming emotions, we become powerless over our own thoughts and behaviors. We feel isolated from those around us, believing that we are alone in our struggles.

Due to the fear that we feel, we fall into destructive dependent thinking patterns of how we can fix our loved one. We end up trying to police their daily activities. We find this a disappointing failure so we try even harder. These efforts begin to take over our lives

and literally consume us. We mistakenly believe that our efforts will bring some sense of peace and comfort to our souls. As one spouse observed, “When I try to control other people, I make them and myself crazy. When I try to control addictions, the addictions control me.”<sup>1</sup> Unsuccessful controlling behaviors that many of us may have tried are:

- Compulsively monitoring computer activity, cell phones, etc.
- Obsessively phoning or emailing to ask what they are doing.
- Demanding a daily accounting of their behavior.
- Trying to stop the addiction through begging, screaming, crying, threatening, bargaining, or shaming.

“It’s natural to want to control others, especially when they’re hurting themselves ... we learn to identify what we can and cannot do. We learn to identify when we’re trying to do the impossible or trying to do that which is not our job. When I lose my peace and serenity. . . When I stop dealing with my feelings, when I get caught up in trying to control events and people I consider my life unmanageable. So much of what we call codependency [or destructive dependency] is simply human attempts to avoid, deny, or divert our pain.”<sup>2</sup> We come to understand that our healing must become *independent* from what our addicted loved one does or does not do. We are rescued by the knowledge that “it is not our responsibility to keep [those in addiction] sober. Instead, it is our job to manage our own lives, whether or not [those in addiction choose] sobriety.”<sup>3</sup>

In our obsession to control and rescue, there is a false expectation that “we will feel better when they stop using.” The truth is that when we find our own healing path, we feel better and our lives become manageable by learning to become dependent upon divine guidance rather than on the actions of another.

### **Part 2— Where We Want to Go**

As we embrace Step One and surrender our powerlessness and unmanageability to God, we recognize that only He can heal us and our loved ones. We allow the healing influence of the Savior’s grace to lift the suffering from our lives. As we let go of the fear, anger and frustration that we have directed towards others, we come to realize that the real battle is not between us and another person, *but is inside our own hearts and minds*. Elder L. Lionel Kendrick counseled: “We cannot always control everything that happens to us in this life, but we can control how we respond. When we place blame for our actions on others or circumstances that we find ourselves in, we can never gain the strength to change.”<sup>4</sup> Though we are doing the best we can to try to cope, we need to take an honest look at ourselves and how our reactions are contributing to the unmanageability of our lives. “Taking the 1<sup>st</sup> Step allows a great weight to fall from our shoulders. We let go of the losing battle we have been waging. . . We surrender completely.”<sup>5</sup> Paradoxically, this is the only battle that we actually win by surrendering. We can only win the battle by giving our loved one and ourselves over to God’s healing power. We become willing to surrender our efforts to control

<sup>1</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 23

<sup>2</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 18-25

<sup>3</sup> S-Anon International Family Groups, p. 2

<sup>4</sup> L. Lionel Kendrick, “Strength During Struggles,” Ensign, Oct 2001 [Link](#)

<sup>5</sup> *How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics*, p. 46

and rescue our loved ones. We accept that we cannot do what seems to be the obvious thing we think we must do. We are not giving in; we are simply transferring the responsibility of recovery to God and to our loved ones.

We are strengthened as we begin to experience the freedom that comes from letting go. “At first, this Step can feel dark and frightening. It doesn’t have to, not for long. It renders *us powerless over what we cannot control*, so we can become *empowered* [to let go and let God].”<sup>6</sup> When we recognize that we are powerless over our loved ones’ problems and the negative responses we’ve created, the black cloud of hopelessness and despair will begin to lift. We will begin to feel relief and freedom from taking on the responsibility of solving another person’s problems. Our hearts and minds will become free from desperate measures as we release our desire to control our loved one and focus on the one soul we can bring to the Lord for guidance, and healing—*ourselves*.

### **Part 3 - Agency & Personal Choice - How to get there**

A spouse who felt victimized by her husband’s addiction shared, “There is no pain, anger and confusion in the world that can compare with having your husband diagnosed as having a sexual addiction.” The dictionary defines a victim as a person who suffers because of the destructive or injurious actions of another. Although we may initially find ourselves victimized by another person’s actions, we don’t have to remain a victim. There is a way out of our pain and suffering. Our Savior has promised to “bind up the brokenhearted . . . [and] comfort all that mourn.” (Isa. 61: 1-2)

Christ will heal our hearts and bring peace to our souls. However, because Christ honors the principle of agency, He cannot comfort us and remove our pain unless we are willing to surrender our victim thinking. When we are ready to let go of our suffering and stop seeing ourselves as “victims,” then we are ready to become “victors” through Christ’s atoning power! We will no longer feel the need to blame others for our situation and we will be able to evaluate our lives with self-honesty and accountability. C. Terry Warner explained, “Blame is the lie by which we convince ourselves that we are victims. It is the lie that robs us of our serenity.”<sup>7</sup>

As we learn to accept the principles of agency and personal responsibility, we realize that we are the ones who choose how we feel and how we act. That is the beauty of agency. Exercising our God-given freedom of choice, we use the tool of self-honesty to confront our pain. First, *we define* what we are feeling. Second, *we accept* the feelings that have entered into our hearts. And third, *we face our pain* with courage and ask for His deliverance. This is how we begin to set ourselves free. We let go of being a victim and become a victor in Christ.

All He asks is that we are willing to give our suffering to Him. He cannot take what we are not willing to give. When *we decide* that we are ready to let go of the burden which weighs us down, then we are prepared for the final step of giving it over to our

<sup>6</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 25-27

<sup>7</sup> C. Terry Warner, <http://utahmarriage.org/html/dating/happy-talk/>

Heavenly Father. “I have been supported under trials and troubles of every kind, yea, and in all manner of afflictions. . . I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me.” (Alma 36:27) He will take away our suffering!

How is this accomplished? The most powerful source of help is through prayer. We ask our Father in Heaven to help us let go of our obsessive thoughts and our overwhelming desire to rescue our loved one. We also let go of our feelings of inadequacy, shame, anger and fear. “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.” (D&C 6: 36) As we exercise our faith, we come to trust that God desires to help and heal us and that He has the infinite power to do so.

Consider the following story, entitled **The Wolf Parable**. “An elder Apache was teaching his grandchildren about life. He said to them, ‘A fight is going on inside me; it is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, competition, superiority, and ego. The other stands for joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. This same fight is going on inside you and inside every other person too.’ The grandchildren thought about the story for a minute and then one child asked his grandfather, ‘Which wolf will win?’ The old Grandpa simply replied, ‘The one you feed.’” (Author unknown) We either “feed” that which creates suffering or we “feed” that which leads us to recovery and healing.

### **Embracing Divine Dependency and Reliance**

As we get up each morning, we make a decision to either hold on to our pain or to let it go (detach). Likewise, we can choose to be emotionally and spiritually independent of our loved ones’ actions. We can choose to heal. We do this by learning to act and react in ways that promote healing in our own lives. We learn to interact with others in a healthy and peaceful manner. We *detach* from the reactions, thought processes and emotions that increase our suffering and *attach* to God and His guidance, to His solutions, to His comfort, strength and wisdom. We begin to understand that hurt generates hurt and healing generates healing. Elder Christofferson wisely counseled: “Love begets love, compassion begets compassion”<sup>8</sup>

Step One is only the beginning of our learning journey. It helps us to recognize which behaviors are helpful and which are hurtful in bringing about healing and change in our own lives. As one spouse shared: “If I didn’t cause it, I can’t fix it either.” Those in addiction must be willing to seek healing and recovery for themselves. By recognizing our powerlessness, we are truly free to let the Lord take over. We come to realize that we are not the saviors of our addicted family members. *There is only one Savior, who is Jesus Christ*. As we let go of the things we cannot control and all thoughts and behaviors associated with destructive dependency, we move into a place of divine dependency and allow our Father in Heaven, Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy Ghost to do the rescuing and the saving of our own souls and all those we love.

<sup>8</sup> D. Todd Christofferson, “The Power of Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 2009 [Link](#)

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND ANSWER

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1. How have I responded to the knowledge about my loved one's addiction?
2. What strategies or threats have I resorted to in order to try to rescue my loved one from their addiction?
3. How can recognizing my powerlessness become a gift as I allow the Lord to lift the burden of thinking I have to "fix" my loved one?
4. How can remembering the 3 C's of Al-Anon (I didn't cause it, I can't control it and I can't cure it) help me stay focused on what I can do?
5. How has my hurt and my shame affected my identity and how I view myself? Am I willing to surrender these feelings? Why or why not?
6. Have I ever thought, "If only I were \_\_\_\_\_, my spouse would be able to stop, or want to stop, their addictive behavior?" or "If only \_\_\_\_\_ were different my life would be better? If so, how have these beliefs affected my life in a negative way?"
7. How has my emotional, spiritual, physical, and social health been affected by my attempts to control my loved one's addiction?
8. How has my life become unmanageable?
9. How have I ignored my own needs and responsibilities by focusing too much on the behavior of my loved one in addiction?

## STEP ONE INVENTORY CHECKLIST

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Each of us may exhibit different types of codependent behaviors. A codependent often desperately wants to control their loved one's behavior. Some of the behaviors that we may have experienced are:

Have I ever tried to control someone else's sexual thoughts or behavior through any of the following methods?

- ✓ Compulsively monitoring computer activity through increasing filters, changing passwords, checking emails and text messages, hovering over an addicted loved one while they use the computer, or even removing the computer from the home.
- ✓ Starving oneself or altering my own image or dress in order to compete with various sexual images.
- ✓ Overeating to comfort painful feelings or to punish my loved one.
- ✓ Withdrawing sexual intimacy.
- ✓ Frequently asking my loved one accusatory questions about their work activities, who they associate with, where they have been, what they are doing on the internet, etc.
- ✓ Demanding that my loved one in addiction receive the punishment I think they deserve.
- ✓ Playing the role of a victim or martyr by:
  - telling others or gossiping about my loved one's addiction & behaviors.
  - giving the silent treatment towards my spouse
  - collapsing into tears, screaming, and yelling.
  - using my loved one's addiction as an excuse to not carry out essential responsibilities as a wife, mother, homemaker, etc.
  - withdrawing emotional intimacy, tenderness, kindness, support, love and encouragement.

As we recognize our powerlessness in Step One and turn to our Heavenly Father we can begin to find the peace we desire. After we have completed step One it is valuable to review it with a sponsor (see Step 12 for sponsor guidelines). After we have completed a Step 1 inventory and reviewed it with our sponsor, it is helpful to remember the thoughts and feelings that contribute to falling prey to negative and hurtful behaviors.

## STEP 2 - HOPE

**KEY PRINCIPLE:** *Come to believe that the power of God can restore us to complete spiritual and emotional health.*

*After reading each section, briefly discuss the information*

### ***Spiritual and Emotional Health***

As soon as we learn to apply Step One, we are ready to be rescued by the wonderful truths of Step Two. Step One helps us realize that our unmanageable feelings often impacted our spiritual and emotional health. Step Two builds on this awareness of our powerlessness and as Elder Richard G. Scott testified: “Many of you suffer needlessly from carrying heavy burdens because you do not open your hearts to the healing power of the Lord . . . lay the burden at the feet of the Savior. He has invited you to do that so that you can be free from pointless worry and depression”<sup>1</sup>

We choose to focus on healing through God’s saving power rather than on suffering. We will discover God’s presence in our lives as we exercise faith that He can bring us healing and renewal. God can restore us to complete spiritual and emotional health regardless of what others are doing. Destructive dependent thoughts and actions deplete us emotionally and spiritually. In Step Two we learn that we can become whole through Christ even if we currently feel broken.

*Emotional health* may be defined as learning to have a good relationship with our emotions. Through Christ we no longer allow our emotions to dominate and control our actions in a destructive way. And through Christ we are enabled to create positive emotions, which then create a positive way of life.

*Spiritual health* can best be described as a deep trust that God’s love and power will help us through all of life’s challenges. We have a powerful assurance that He will never fail us. He lovingly counsels us to “be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” ([Hebrews 13:5](#)).

Through Christ we become emotionally and spiritually healthy and we have a knowledge that we can handle anything that comes our way. Spiritual strength comes from a sense of peace, hope, worth, purpose, redemption, and charity. We can seek God’s guidance each day and listen to His voice or we can listen to the inner voices of shame, frustration, and anger, which create unmanageable behavior. “It can be enticing to choose doubt and disbelief over faith. . . Faith and fear cannot coexist. One gives way to the other. The simple fact is we all need to constantly build faith and overcome sources of destructive disbelief. . . We do have a choice. We get what we focus on consistently . . . there are forces that erode our faith. Some are the result of Satan’s direct influence. But for others, we have no one but ourselves to blame. These stem from personal tendencies, attitudes, and habits we can learn to change. . . Doubt is a negative emotion related to fear . . . Discouragement comes from missed expectations.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Richard G. Scott, “To Be Free of Heavy Burdens,” *Ensign*, Nov 2002 [Link](#)

<sup>2</sup> Kevin W. Pearson, “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 2009 [Link](#)

### ***Hope and Expectations***

Step Two’s saving principle is based upon hope in Christ. President Uchtdorf taught that “The adversary uses despair to bind hearts and minds in suffocating darkness. Despair can seem like a staircase that leads only and forever downward. Hope has the power to fill our lives with happiness. It’s absence—*when this desire of our heart is delayed*—can make ‘the heart sick.’ ”<sup>3</sup> We are especially vulnerable to this kind of despair and heart sickness when our own expectations and timetable are not met.

The solution for this challenge is to surrender our timetable to God’s timetable and trust in His plan for us. If our expectations become firmly grounded in what God can and will do for us, then we will increase our hope and strengthen our spiritual and emotional health. A sure foundation on which to build our spiritual health is to expect that our prayers are heard by a loving Father in Heaven and they will be answered. Expect that God will be with us – to support, guide and sustain us. Expect that God’s plan will always result in our future happiness. Our hope isn’t based on how bad things are but how good things can become with God’s help. Elder Neal A. Maxwell encouraged us to hold on to hope by “not looking back, and refusing to let yesterday hold tomorrow hostage.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Twelve C’s of Emotional and Spiritual Healing**

1. I come to understand that I didn’t cause the addiction.
2. I come to realize that I can’t control my loved one or their addictive behaviors.
3. I come to accept that I can’t cure the addiction. However. . .
4. I can become aware of the challenges of addiction and the recovery process involved (length of time, relapses, etc.).
5. I can come to recognize that the recovery process of those in addiction is their choice and responsibility.
6. I can choose to avoid continually focusing on my loved one’s recovery journey because it can interfere with my own healing journey.
7. I can learn to let go of my negative emotions and efforts to control, rescue or shame so that I will quit harming myself and others around me through destructive thoughts, feelings and behaviors.
8. I can come to accept that it is my responsibility with the help of my Father in Heaven to discover what I need to do to heal and recover.
9. I can establish healthy emotional and physical boundaries for myself and my loved ones.
10. I can avoid setting my own expectations about the future that negatively influence my emotional and spiritual health. I trust the future to God.
11. I can seek healing (recovery) and guidance from the Lord for myself and follow His plan for me.
12. I welcome the fervent hope that “in Christ there [will] come every good thing” regardless of what lies ahead in my future. ([Moro. 7:22](#)).

### ***Placing Our Trust in Heavenly Father***

President Uchtdorf continued his teaching; “Hope. . . is like the

<sup>3</sup> Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Infinite Power of Hope,” *Ensign*, Nov 2008 [Link](#)

<sup>4</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, “Hope through the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov 1998 [Link](#)

beam of sunlight rising up and above the horizon of our present circumstances. It pierces the darkness with a brilliant dawn. It encourages and inspires us to place our trust in the loving care of an eternal Heavenly Father. In times of distress, we can hold tightly to the hope that things will ‘work together for [our] good’<sup>5</sup> The expectation that even this challenge will work together for our good, is a sure foundation that strengthens our hope and helps support our spiritual health.

Our hope is based upon our willingness to completely rely upon the power of Him who is mighty to save us. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland lovingly counseled: “[Christ] is saying to us . . . ‘If you will follow me, I will lead you out of darkness. . . . I will give you answers to your prayers. I will give you rest to your souls.’ My beloved friends, I know of no other way for us to succeed or to be safe amid life’s many pitfalls and problems. . . . ‘If ye can no more than *desire* to believe,’ Alma says, exercising just ‘a *particle* of faith,’ giving even a *small place* for the promises of God to find a home—that is enough to begin. Just believing, just having a ‘molecule’ of faith—simply hoping for things which are not yet seen in our lives, but which are nevertheless truly there to be bestowed—that simple step, when focused on the Lord Jesus Christ, has ever been and always will be the first principle of His eternal gospel, the first step out of despair. . . . Whatever your distress, *please* don’t give up and *please* don’t yield to fear. . . . ‘Be not afraid, only believe.’”<sup>6</sup> Faith in God and His promise to answer our prayers, to give us rest, to keep us safe amid our problems is truly a healing balm in our spiritual restoration.

Applying Step Two requires a new vision of what we must do. We seek heavenly solutions through the assistance of our loving Heavenly Father. We become willing to believe as Elder Lawrence Corbridge testified: “Only He can give us power, knowledge, peace, and joy. We have only two choices. We can either follow the Lord and be endowed with His power and have peace, light, strength, knowledge, confidence, love, and joy, or we can go some other way, any other way, whatever other way, and go it alone—without His support, without His power, without guidance, in darkness, turmoil, doubt, grief, and despair.”<sup>7</sup>

### ***Gratitude is Essential to the Healing Process***

As President Gordon B. Hinckley reminded us: “Gratitude is a divine principle.”<sup>8</sup> When we practice daily gratitude with love, we will witness a mighty change of heart. It is the foundation of our emotional healing journey. Every day we can write down five things we are grateful for. We look for tender mercies, even the smallest of blessings from God and others. We kneel and pray for God to reveal to our hearts and mind those blessings we have not yet recognized. As we review our gratitude lists, we allow our hearts to be filled with love for God and others. If we follow this “divine principle” each day, in a short time we will feel an abundance of love, peace, faith and hope. Gratitude begets humility and humility begets joy. Our positive spiritual and emotional

feelings will be strengthened with the assurance that God is blessing us.

### ***Coming to Believe in the Power of God***

We come to accept that though we may be powerless over the addiction of our loved one, we are not helpless because we can receive power and help through the assistance of our Father in Heaven to find healing for ourselves. Each of us finally reaches a place where we come to fully comprehend our personal need for the Atonement of Jesus Christ. As Elder David A. Bednar witnessed: “There is no physical pain, no anguish of soul, no suffering of spirit, no infirmity or weakness that you or I ever experience during our mortal journey that the Savior did not experience first. You and I in a moment of weakness may cry out, ‘*No one understands. No one knows. No human being, perhaps, knows. But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He felt and bore our burdens before we ever did.*’ And because He paid the ultimate price and bore that burden, He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy in so many phases of our life. He can reach out, touch and succor—literally run to us—and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do through relying only upon our own power.”<sup>9</sup> Christ can heal our emotional suffering if we ask Him to and if we are willing to let it go.

As we continue to immerse ourselves in comprehending and applying the principles of Step Two, we will be able to apply the scriptures to our own lives in a more powerful way. We are assured that as we “draw nigh unto God . . . He will draw nigh to you.” (James 4: 8) The promise of God’s help is for our day! His declaration is: “Upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. . . .that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” (Joel 2:28, 32.)

Our Heavenly Father reassures us that we will have His Spirit to guide us, and He will deliver us from the struggles we face. We will come to know as the apostle Paul: “[We] can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth [us].” (Philippians 4:13) President Henry B. Eyring counseled: “Even when you feel the truth [that] the Lord [will] deliver you in your trials, it may still test your courage and strength to endure. . . the Lord always suits the relief to the person in need to best strengthen and purify him or her.”<sup>10</sup> As we apply our faith and courage in Christ, we will begin to feel our restoration to complete emotional and spiritual health.

After all, He who had the power to create Heaven and Earth, He who had the power to cause the blind man to see; He who had the power to cleanse the leper; He who had the power to raise Lazarus from the dead --- He, He is the one who has the power to heal our heart and mind. He is the one who has the power to heal our loved one. He is the only one that has the power to do these things, for surely – “Is anything too hard for

<sup>5</sup> Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Infinite Power of Hope,” *Ensign*, Nov 2008 [Link](#)

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey R. Holland, “Broken Things to Mend,” *Ensign*, May 2006 [Link](#)

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence E. Corbridge, “The Way,” *Ensign*, Nov 2008 [Link](#)

<sup>8</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, “‘With All Thy Getting Get Understanding,’” *Ensign*, Aug 1988 [Link](#)

<sup>9</sup> David A. Bednar, BYU Devotional, “In the Strength of the Lord”, Jan 01 [Link](#)

<sup>10</sup> Henry B. Eyring, “Adversity,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 23–27 [Link](#)

the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14) He has the power to help, all we have to do is come to believe in His power and ask for His help.

4. What are the things I can do that will bring me hope and help me become stronger in my recovery? (Attend meetings, reading 12 Step material, talking to others, etc.)

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND ANSWER

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One of the spouses from the PASG women's family support 12 Step program shared: "Before I came to the support groups, I was mad, angry and very bitter. I am now, through the miracles of a loving Heavenly Father, happy, and compassionate, sensitive, and stronger. It is as if my life has been turned upside down and all shook up. After it all settled, everything was the same, except the change was within me. I wasn't trying to do it all any more, instead I allowed Christ to help and He did so, from the inside out in amazing ways. And instead of trying to live the gospel, I came to powerfully embrace the gospel. It is hard to explain what has happened to me but it simply has been the blessing I was praying for." It is only through Christ that we find serenity, healing, and wholeness. Our greatest trials can become our greatest blessings. Today's test therefore can become tomorrow's testimony.

5. What does my complete emotional and spiritual health look like to me? Make a list of the ways that I would like to experience complete restoration.

1. What evidences do I have that the Lord loves me and knows me and has throughout my life?

6. What is a plan of self care that I can begin now and that I can continue that will support my recovery efforts? (What daily activities)

2. What can I do to strengthen my belief that God has the power to restore me to complete spiritual and emotional health?

7. Which things (talking with recovery people, reading recovery literature, prayer, and scriptures) have brought me hope?

3. What are some ways I can recognize God's deliverance happening in my own life? (prayer, meditation, gratitude journals)

8. What can I do to increase my reliance upon the power of God?

## STEP 3 - TRUST IN GOD

**Key principle:** *Decide to turn our will and our life over to the care of God the Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ.*

*After reading each section, briefly discuss the information*

### ***Surrendering Our Will***

Step Three is the decision step to completely surrender our lives to the care of Heavenly Father. Elder Richard G. Scott counseled: “I wonder if we can ever really fathom the immense power of prayer until we encounter an overpowering, urgent problem and realize that *we are powerless to resolve it*. Then we will turn to our Father in humble recognition of our total dependence on Him”<sup>1</sup>

Our total dependence on God requires us to completely relinquish our own will, our own plans to Him. Elder Neal A. Maxwell reminded us of the following life-changing principle: “The submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar. The many other things we ‘give,’ ... are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us. However, when you and I finally submit ourselves, by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give!”<sup>2</sup>

Several spouses share; “Now we are called upon to surrender our will and our lives, to surrender ourselves completely. . . We have learned that clinging desperately to an unmanageable way of life doesn’t work. It is only when we let go of our [fears and] desperation that we begin to truly live our lives. We are like drowning swimmers: by struggling to save our lives, we sink even deeper; by relaxing, we float to the surface. When we are willing to give up our lives, we can truly gain them. In other words, by depending on God to do what we cannot do, we gain independence of spirit. . . We can depend upon [our Heavenly Father] with the strength to guide us in times of need and indecision. We can be confident that God is always there for us and always desires the greatest good for us. Anyone can begin to tap into this source. To do so, we must only be willing.”<sup>3</sup>

In the book, *Codependents’ Guide to the Twelve Steps* we learn: “Turning our will and life over to the care of God takes the control of our life away from others. . . . We become free to choose how we are to act, and to react, instead of believing that our actions need be controlled by the actions and life of another. Things are being worked out in us. Things that we do not yet know about. Things we will see with the passage of time. Important changes are happening within us, as a result of present circumstances. Important changes are taking place in others, right now. How many times have I argued and fought with God over the way things are going? This is a mistake, I’ve screamed. This is wrong. This is not at all the way it should be. And then, a month later, sometimes a year later, I see the wisdom. I see the big plan, the one not limited by my vision. Then I thank God, truly thank God for not letting things work out the way I

wanted. We do not know the whole picture, not yet. All we are seeing is a small area on a large painting. When we relax, trust, and back up, we will see more. We will gain perspective. Surrendering cannot be forced or faked. It happens at a core, soul level--when whatever we’ve been trying to control, manipulate, influence, or resist becomes, at last, too much for us. We let go. . . . Surrender renders us teachable . . . [which] allows us to learn what we could never have learned, had we not become willing to become students.”<sup>4</sup>

### ***Developing Trust and Patience in God’s Plan***

We can trust God’s guidance in all things: our thoughts, our words and our actions. God is working on our challenges even without our knowledge. What comfort it brings into our lives to understand that there is always a saving process in place for us and our loved ones. When we want things to happen our way, it is as if we are saying to God that His way is wrong. Obsessive thoughts of fear and doubt can obstruct our view, but our trust in our Heavenly Father allows us to see: “*God has a plan, you have a part. Find it, follow it.*”<sup>5</sup> Giving our will to Him means that we trust that “all is well” and as it should be. We do not interfere, or change His plans. We can say with Paul: “for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” (Philipp. 4: 11) Our part is to ask God for the desires of our heart and then be willing to accept His answers, and His will in all things.

Giving our will completely to our Father in Heaven is a process that Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained in this way: “Spiritual submissiveness is not accomplished in an instant, but by the incremental improvements and by the successive use of stepping-stones. Stepping-stones are meant to be taken one at a time anyway. Eventually our wills can be ‘swallowed up in the will of the Father’ as we are ‘willing to submit . . . even as a child doth submit to his father’ ”<sup>6</sup>

Elder Maxwell taught about the importance of exercising patience as we learn to submit our will to God: “Patience is not indifference. Actually, [it’s] caring very much, but being willing, nevertheless, to submit both to the Lord and to what the scriptures call the process of time.”<sup>7</sup> Submission to the will of the Father requires us to engage in a spiritual process of applying our faith and trusting in His plan. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland reminded us, “Every person in every era has had to walk by faith into what has always been some uncertainty. This is the plan. Just be faithful. God is in charge. He knows your name and He knows your need.”<sup>8</sup> After we make the decision to surrender our will to God, we will begin to see His miracles and tender mercies constantly in our lives. We will gradually come to trust God’s thoughts and plans completely.

### ***The Tandem Bike Story***

Sometimes we think we are turning our will over to the Lord when in actuality we are simply praying and pleading for the Lord to

<sup>4</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 52-57

<sup>5</sup> The Oxford Group & Alcoholics Anonymous, Dick B., p. 41

<sup>6</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, “Consecrate Thy Performance,” *Liahona*, Jul 2002 [Link](#)

<sup>7</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, “Patience,” *Ensign*, October 1980 [Link](#)

<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey R. Holland, “This, the Greatest of All Dispensations” *Ensign*, Jul 2007 [Link](#)

<sup>1</sup> Richard G. Scott “Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer” *Ensign*, May 2007 [Link](#)

<sup>2</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, “‘Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father,’” *Ensign*, Nov 1995 [Link](#)

<sup>3</sup> *S-Anon International Family Groups*, p. 27

bring about our own plan. The following story helps illustrate this principle.

*“When I decided to give my life over to the care of Christ it seemed as though I was riding on a tandem bike with Christ sitting behind me on the back seat. I kept steering the bike as best as I could. It was a hard and rocky road. So I kept pleading with Christ to pedal harder to help me make it through the dangerous areas. There were treacherous corners, steep mountains, large rocks and deep holes on the road I was traveling. Because of the complexity of the path I kept crashing the bike and running off the road. I kept getting injured and I often lost hope that I could follow such a difficult path. After several serious mishaps, my Savior asked: ‘Might I steer for a while?’ Reluctantly, I agreed and climbed on the back of the bike and began pedaling as best as I could. I watched in wonder as Christ maneuvered the bicycle through the obstacles on the path. He was able to navigate through every danger we encountered. If I ever felt frightened He would lean back and touch me with comforting assurance. When I needed rest, He would stop pedaling to give me living water and the bread of life. He guided me to places and people who helped me gain knowledge, healing, acceptance and joy. Now I finally understand the message behind the Tandem Bike Story. I need to completely trust in God. I willingly invite Christ to do the steering in my life, and when I think that maybe I can’t do it anymore, Christ always smiles at me and reminds me to keep pedaling.”<sup>9</sup>*

### **A Higher Vision**

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.” (Isa. 55: 8) Whenever we are tempted to do things our way, let us keep in mind who we are, and who God is. “Thus saith the Lord your God, even Jesus Christ . . . the same which knoweth all things, for all things are present before mine eyes.” (D&C 38: 2) We are unable to see one hour into the future, while God knows what lies ahead of us and what the future can become if we follow His will. Therefore, we need to keep the perspective of who has the wisdom to know what needs to happen and the power to do what we cannot do.

A slogan often used in 12 Step programs is; “Sorrow is looking back—worry is looking around.” Our own understanding is limited by our mortality and our personal pain. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught that we must be willing to “yield to a vision higher and holier than our own.”<sup>10</sup> We need the guidance and support that can come only from God. Elder Richard G. Scott encouraged us: “Trust in God . . . no matter how challenging the circumstance. . . Your peace of mind, your assurance of answers to vexing problems, your ultimate joy depend upon your trust in Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.”<sup>11</sup>

Our Father in Heaven is always with us. He always cares. His plan is one that will bless all aspects of our lives. Surrendering to Him allows us to become teachable and prepares us to receive wisdom far beyond our own. When we are willing to accept God’s plan for us our prayers become focused on His will and not our own. We come to fully understand Nephi’s counsel: “Yea, my God will give me, if I

ask not amiss.” (2 Ne. 4: 35) Sister Grassli stated in General Conference: “There will be some tough days in your lives—very tough days. But when you follow God’s plan, you can know what to do, and that’s when you are in control.”<sup>12</sup> We come to believe that He can make more of us than we can make of ourselves. We experience new freedom, joy and peace as we align our lives with the will of God.

### **Gratitude as a “Tool of Surrender”**

“Focusing on the negative, focusing on the ‘what’s wrong with this picture’ is a large part of our codependency [destructive dependency]. Gratitude empowers and increases what’s right in our lives. It helps make things right. We say thank you for every detail of our present circumstances, including what we’re going through, who we are, where we are, what we’re feeling, and what is frustrating us. Gratitude diminishes the power of the problem and empowers the solution.”<sup>13</sup>

Gratitude helps lead us to a point of serenity and surrender, enabling us to give our lives over to the complete care of our Heavenly Father. President Henry B. Eyring shared: “As I would cast my mind over the day, I would see evidence of what God had done for one of us that I had not recognized in the busy moments of the day. As that happened, and it happened often, I realized that trying to remember had allowed God to show me what He had done. My point is to urge you to find ways to recognize and remember God’s kindness. It will build our testimonies.”<sup>14</sup> We come to fully understand that God’s will always blesses our lives. As we continually recognize how blessed we are, and how ever present God is, Step Three will be the easiest decision we’ve ever made.

Steps One, Two and Three are the foundation of our lives and all the following Steps. Daily we remember, Step One - **I can’t**, Step Two - **God can**, and Step Three - **I will let Him**. To only say *I can’t* feels so hopeless. To say and believe that *God can* is the beginning of hope, but still lacks the implementation of God’s power. When we are willing to say *I will let Him be in charge*, it completes the formula thus forming an unshakeable foundation for healing and miracles to begin to happen.

“This is the freedom step. In this step we make a decision to live life differently. We make a conscious decision to begin taking care of ourselves with God’s help. We start creating a life for ourselves, the life that we want to live. The process of surrender happens not once, but again and again as we master a succession of lessons – lessons of healing, liberation, and love. . . . We will find that our faith has been well placed at last. . . The journey is exciting. It holds secrets, mysteries and lessons beyond our comprehension. It holds gifts bigger than our arms and hearts can hold. Trust the process. It will take us where we truly want and need to go—in Divine and Perfect timing. Trust God’s plan, for it is better than ours. Trust ourselves, for we have now tapped into a power and source infinitely more powerful than anything we’ve known.”<sup>15</sup> Our Savior, Jesus Christ is knocking at our door to rescue us.

<sup>9</sup> Author unknown

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey R. Holland “The Will of the Father in All Things,” BYU 1989–99 Devotional and Fireside Speeches [Link](#)

<sup>11</sup> Richard G. Scott, “The Sustaining Power of Faith in Times of Uncertainty and Testing,” Ensign, May 2003 [Link](#)

<sup>12</sup> Michaelene P. Grassli, “I Will Follow God’s Plan for Me,” Ensign, Nov 1988 [Link](#)

<sup>13</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 51

<sup>14</sup> Henry B. Eyring, “O Remember, Remember,” Ensign, Nov 2007 [Link](#)

<sup>15</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 57-58

When we give our will to Him, we are opening the door to His loving power and saving plan.

5. “There is help. There is happiness. There really *is* light at the end of the tunnel. To any who may be struggling to see that light and find that hope, I say: Hold on. Keep trying. God loves you. Things will improve. Every one of us has times when we need to know things will get better. . . [and] there is the promise of good things to come.”<sup>16</sup> How can I apply the process of patience into my life each day as I follow the Lord’s will and believe that good things will come?

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND ANSWER

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1. What thoughts and attitudes do I need to develop in order for me to completely submit my will to my Heavenly Father?

2. What thoughts and attitudes prevent me from allowing Heavenly Father to guide me in all areas of my life?

3. Do I trust that Heavenly Father’s plan for me will bring me peace of mind and bring me ultimate joy? How can I apply that trust in my daily life?

4. What is it that God can do that we cannot do? (Remove our pain, open our perspective and nourish our self esteem, etc.)

6. “It is the wounded Christ who leads us through our moments of difficulty. It is He who bears us up when we need more air to breathe or direction to follow or even more courage to continue. If we will...walk hand in hand with Him in His paths, we will go forward with faith and never feel alone.”<sup>17</sup> What are some things I can do that will help me walk daily with Christ?

7. How can I become willing to turn my will over to my Father in Heaven and my Savior Jesus Christ with the belief and trust that He can make a lot more out of my life than I can?

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<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey R. Holland “An High Priest of Good Things to Come” *Ensign*, Nov 1999 [Link](#)

<sup>17</sup>W. Craig Zwick, “The Lord Thy God Will Hold Thy Hand,” *Ensign*, Nov2003 [Link](#)

## STEP 4 - TRUTH

**KEY PRINCIPLE:** *Make a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.*

*After reading each section, briefly discuss the information*

### **The Gift of Step Four**

This Step provides the precious gift of life awareness. As we begin a process of looking within ourselves, a Step Four inventory lays a foundation for self-understanding and healing. Steps Four and Five can be challenging for the family member of someone in addiction, because the wrongs of those in addiction are so easily visible. It can be very painful for us to let go of the focus on what others have done, and allow the focus to be on our own lives. But if we are truly seeking healing, then these Steps are a necessary part of our recovery.

Many of us may be afraid to do this Step because of what we might discover. An author who wrote about Step Four stated: “many of us hide from our pain. Many of us hide from ourselves. Perhaps the last, safest, and strongest holdout from looking at ourselves is blaming our circumstances and condition on others. Focusing on others will neither solve our problems nor bring relief from the pain....It won’t bring healing. Focusing on others won’t change our circumstances. Many of us make the mistake of stopping our recovery efforts before we work this Step. We recover long enough to identify the other person’s problem and realize it’s not our fault....Honestly facing ourselves and taking responsibility for ourselves is where our true power lies....We don’t have to be afraid of what we will find. We simply decide to look within to find ourselves. We can welcome and embrace this challenge.”<sup>1</sup>

Step Four teaches us to take responsibility for ourselves within the framework of our entire past. Essentially, we are making a complete inventory of who we are. This personal inventory can be compared to the inventory that is carried out at a department store. Employees go through the shelves and racks, evaluating and rearranging all their stock with the intent to help the business succeed. In the process, they find hidden items in the back warehouse and identify their surplus, making detailed lists and observations as they go. This is essentially what we are doing as we inventory our personal life experiences.

If we struggle with destructive dependency, our inventory can provide insight into our life experiences that influence our need to control others. We also become aware of what is contributing to our anger or fear. Spouses who have applied this Step explained: “This process is not so much self-analysis as it is self-examination. It is a relaxed, objective look at what’s really there. It leads to self-understanding, which can help us to make great changes in our thoughts and behavior. When we search through our own moral issues, we can look deep into attitudes, motives and secret thoughts we hide so well.”<sup>2</sup>

Another woman shared her experience with doing Step Four: “Before I did my Fourth Step, I had this image of a cellar in a

house...the basement was dark. There were windows in it, but they were darkened with soot and covered with bushes. The cellar was a mess. Cluttered. Dirty. And no light filtered in. It scared me. That room...in my house was frightening. I didn’t want to look at it. I didn’t want to go in it. Yet I was always aware of its presence. I’ve now done several Fourth steps... [And] each time I took one, the cellar became a little more orderly and organized. Cleaner. Now when I see the basement in that house, it’s a nice room. It’s redecorated and livable. The windows have been cleaned and polished—they’re large and open—and the room is filled with golden light. I’m not scared of that part of my house anymore. It’s comfortable for me to go into it and look around whenever I want to. That house is me....This Step is the beginning of our own housecleaning. It is where we begin looking within for the solution to our problems and pain. It is how we begin healing ourselves and our hearts....we begin to allow the light to come into ourselves.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Beginning a Fourth Step Inventory**

It is helpful to begin this process with a clear understanding of our purpose. “This Step doesn’t tell us to make a critical, hostile, blaming inventory of ourselves. It doesn’t tell us endlessly to find fault, hold ourselves irresponsible or over responsible, or others unaccountable....We take stock of our behaviors—positive and negative....We take a searching and fearless look at what bothers us now and what has bothered us in the past, a look that is free from the restrictions of denial, free from fear of speaking the truth. We look for anger, fear, pain, rage, and resentment, including anger at God. We look for victimization—ways others have victimized us, ways we have allowed ourselves to be victimized by others, and ways we have victimized ourselves [by holding on to our suffering]. We look for painful repressed memories. We seek out our fears and our limiting beliefs, messages that aren’t true and may be setting the stage for our life. We look for the blocks that may be interfering with our ability to live and love. We don’t do this to criticize or further wound ourselves, or blame ourselves and others. We do this to heal from all that has taken place in our lives. *We do this to set ourselves free from the past.* We do this to hold ourselves accountable for our own healing and to achieve the highest level of self-responsibility and self-accountability possible.”<sup>4</sup>

One approach to writing a personal inventory is to simply take out a pad and pen and begin to write whatever comes to us. Writing gets the past out of us. It allows the painful memories to surface so we can deal with the unresolved issues and let ourselves begin to heal. Some of us have found it necessary to seek professional help because of the nature of what we have experienced. There is no need to try to write a perfect inventory. We don’t need to publish it. We just do the best we can and let the learning begin.

### **PART ONE –**

*My Strengths*– Looking at our positive traits first helps us establish a constructive and encouraging basis for the rest of our inventories. We list our good qualities, our talents, our strength of character, and what’s right about us. What have we done in our life that we are proud of? We honestly and humbly recognize our integrity, our reliability, our compassion and all the good that encompasses who

<sup>1</sup>Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, p. 61

<sup>2</sup>S-Anon International Family Groups, p. 39-40

<sup>3</sup>Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 63-64

<sup>4</sup>Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 64-65

we are. We write about experiences from our past that verifies our good qualities. This forms the groundwork upon which we do all the rest of our inventories.

## **PART TWO**

*A General Life History* – Beginning with our birth, we write about where we lived, what events happened, our feelings and relationships, and so on. We simply relax and let our thoughts flow freely.

*A More Detailed Life History* – We choose to concentrate on a specific relationship or area such as family life, memories of school or adolescence, or our past interpersonal relationships. We can explore a part of our life that was challenging or wonderful.

## **PART THREE**

*Destructive Dependent Feelings and Behaviors* – Do we feel that we have to control people and situations around us in order to be happy? Do we allow our thoughts to be consumed by negative emotions? Do we focus on the behaviors of others? Do we try to rescue others from the consequences of their own choices? Do we seek to point out the faults of others in order to control them or to make ourselves feel better?

*Mistakes, Shame and Blame* – What behaviors and interactions in our lives have caused us to feel shame and guilt? Is there anything that we dislike or want to modify in our behavior? The purpose of this section is to begin to understand and accept the past so that we can make changes in the present and let go of our feelings of guilt, shame, and blame.

*Feelings of Fear and Anger* – Do we allow fear to control our thoughts and actions? What things do we fear? Do we struggle with anger and resentment? Who do we feel anger towards? “It doesn’t matter who did what. Our feelings are our feelings. They’ll be with us until we deal with them, whether or not the other person changes. We can learn to let ourselves feel, and heal from the backlog of feelings from our past.”<sup>5</sup>

By completing a Step Four inventory, we get our painful memories out in the open. We face them. We learn from them. We consciously choose to no longer let them hurt us. As we review our inventory, we may discover that many of the codependent challenges we face are linked to unresolved issues from our past. We may recognize patterns that help us to understand why we feel the need to be in control of the people and circumstances around us. We can also gain insight into our feelings of victimization and recognize how we fall into the trap of becoming emotionally dependent on others.

### ***Lifting Our Burdens***

Completing Step Four helps to lift the heavy burdens we have been carrying. Elder Bruce D. Porter provided this powerful understanding: “The accumulated daily weight of our weaknesses and shortcomings can become a burden to our souls, weighing us down with feelings of inadequacy and guilt.”<sup>6</sup> The intent of this healing process is to build our self-esteem and to help us learn how

to fully accept and love ourselves. When we learn to freely love ourselves, we are open to truly love those around us. Our lives are blessed with greater harmony and peace.

Step Four helps us to uncover the real person inside each of us. “This is the healing Step. This is the healing-the-heart Step. This Step can change lives. Go deep. Go as deep within yourself as you can. Start with the top layer, and let the process take you deeper. Do not be afraid of what you will find. The things that have happened to us may be dark, but our core is beautiful and good. . . . Be honest, but also be gentle and understanding with ourselves as we work this Step. We have been doing what we believed we needed to do to survive. Now, we are on the way to becoming fully alive.”<sup>7</sup>

Step Four is a discovery process that helps us understand why we act the way we act and feel the way we feel. It is a revelatory experience that allows us to fully acknowledge our true selves before the Lord. We sincerely pray to our Heavenly Father for His help and inspiration as we begin working this Step, because it can be difficult to unearth painful experiences from our past. Heavenly Father will bring to our remembrance important experiences from our lives that are essential to our healing path. President James E. Faust counseled: “Include [your Father in Heaven] when you take inventory of your personal worth.”<sup>8</sup> As we open our hearts, the Lord will help us to accept-our past and see ourselves clearly.

The spirit of Step Four is to never judge our past by our current level of knowledge. We need to remember to be kind to ourselves now and in the future as well “This Step helps us learn to switch from a shame-based system to a system of loving and accepting ourselves—as is. We are clearing up our guilt and shame. An acceptance-based system means we love, cherish, nurture, and unconditionally accept ourselves and our histories. It means we allow ourselves to make mistakes and errors. This recovery program was designed for human, imperfect beings. Our new definition of perfection can mean embracing who we are at any given moment. *Mistakes are what we do, not who we are.*”<sup>9</sup>

Although it takes time and commitment to finish our Step Four inventories, it will be a blessing when they are completed. Creating a personal inventory is an ongoing process that may be even more beneficial as we repeat it multiple times, layer by layer throughout our healing journey. Taking this Step helps us to live our lives in wholeness and purity, face difficult truths, and rejoice in our own goodness. As the Savior taught, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” ([John 8: 32](#)).

\* For additional help and understanding on the process of applying Step 4, see *A Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing*, pages 21-25.

<sup>5</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 84

<sup>6</sup> Bruce D. Porter, “The First Principles and Ordinances of the Gospel,” Ensign, Oct 2000 [Link](#)

<sup>7</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 83- 84

<sup>8</sup> James E. Faust, “Welcoming Every Single One,” Ensign, Aug 2007 [Link](#)

<sup>9</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 75

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND ANSWER

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The following questions may be helpful as we do our inventories.

*Once we have completed our inventory, we begin to create a new life, built on the foundation of our Savior's Atonement and mercy. Our goal is to objectively evaluate our inventory without self-condemnation or self-righteousness. Former General Relief Society President, Barbara B. Smith encouraged; "we should recognize that ideals [and truths we discover in Step Four] are stars to steer by; they are not a stick to beat ourselves with."*<sup>10</sup>

1. What false beliefs or destructive feelings have I identified from my past?
2. How do old beliefs about myself or about life in general contribute to my codependent thoughts and behaviors today?
3. Do I feel stuck or blocked in any area of my life? Do I think it might be helpful to do a Fourth Step on that area?
4. Where did I cause harm to myself and others? Is there a common behavior pattern in these events or relationships?
5. Which of my attitudes or actions from my past are keeping me from achieving peace or feeling joy?
6. Is fear, resentment, pride or shame related to these attitudes and actions?
7. What am I most afraid to admit to myself? How can my Father in Heaven help me through this process?

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<sup>10</sup> Barbara B. Smith, "A Conversation with Sister Barbara B. Smith, Relief Society General President," *Ensign*, Mar 1976 [Link](#)

## STEP 5 - CONFESSION

**KEY PRINCIPLE:** *Admit to ourselves, to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ, to proper priesthood authority, and to another person experienced in 12 Step Recovery, the exact nature of our wrongs.*

*After reading each section, briefly discuss the information*

### **Confessing to God**

Step Five involves sharing the personal inventory that we created in Step Four. Although the process of creating the inventory is beneficial in itself, the real power of healing comes as we use our personal inventory to bring our lives out into the open.

“Historically, religions have preached that confession is good for the soul. This is true. . . Confession, honesty, and vulnerability are good for healing us and our souls. . . what we are seeking [is] soul-level changes in ourselves, changes that can be manifested in our lives and our relationships, beginning with our primary relationships with ourselves.”<sup>1</sup> How we feel about ourselves is often a contributing factor in our need to control or rescue others or our ability to be happy regardless of the choices of others.

Confession means we willingly *stand up*, so to speak, before God, our priesthood leaders if necessary, and to a chosen support person or therapist. Confessing is healing to the soul regardless of who we are or what we have done. No matter how good of a life we have lived, all of us still have areas in our lives where we feel the pang of guilt. Step Five helps us release any burdens of guilt we may carry. Our feelings of shame or regret will never diminish if we continue to replay them over and over again in our heart and mind. We begin by confessing to our Father in Heaven. We humbly speak with Him about the areas in our lives where we need forgiveness. We express our sorrow and remorse, and we commit to change with His help.

Family members who have applied this Step explained: “When we first [admit] our defects to God, we [aren’t] telling God something He [doesn’t] already know. The benefit lies in being able to see ourselves and being able to acknowledge what we see. It also helps us to learn how to communicate intimately with our [Heavenly Father]. With His help we [become] aware of the areas in our lives we [need] to change. Admitting these things to God [is] also the beginning of receiving forgiveness and the ability to forgive others.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Confessing to Proper Priesthood Authority**

Next, we seek to resolve any necessary issues with our priesthood leader. We should “confess to our bishops anything that was illegal or a sin or a misdeed that would have prevented us from having a temple recommend.”<sup>3</sup> It is not necessary to bring up past transgressions that have already been resolved with proper priesthood authority. Once this step is completed, we can turn to a support person in 12 Step Recovery for the rest of our disclosure.

### **Choosing a Support person**

When choosing a support person, we look for someone of the same gender who is ahead of us in working the Steps. We seek someone we can connect with who has the kind of recovery that we would like to achieve. This allows us to gain perspective from a person who has experienced this process firsthand. Our support person can help us reflect on what we have learned from the Steps up to this point. During this essential part of our recovery, it may also be helpful to work with a professional counselor who is knowledgeable in the 12 Steps.

### **The Value of a Support Person**

We may ask ourselves, “Why isn’t it enough to just confess to Heavenly Father? Why does anyone else need to know?” First, our desire to change is more powerfully imprinted in our minds when we acknowledge it to another human being. “When we reveal our shortcomings, the person who hears them becomes witness to our decision to change.”<sup>4</sup> Second, it is difficult, if not impossible, to view ourselves with complete objectivity. Another person can provide additional insight, counsel, accountability and comfort as we consider the significance of our Step Four inventory. When we are tempted to belittle or condemn ourselves, our support person can help us see what is good and valuable in our lives.

By sharing our personal inventory with another sister in recovery, we find a new sense of peace in our lives. We also establish patterns of emotional honesty as we learn to connect with ourselves and others in a healthy way.

### **A Word of Caution**

We must be careful in the process of choosing a support person and sharing our inventory. *The Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing* counsels: “Use great care and wisdom when selecting someone other than a priesthood leader. . . Do not share. . . sensitive information with individuals you suspect might extend improper guidance, provide misinformation, or have difficulty maintaining confidences. [A support person] . . . must be extremely trustworthy in both word and deed.”<sup>5</sup> Prayerfully seek for a support person who is empathetic, non-judgmental and wise. Select someone who is emotionally and spiritually stable in their own recovery process.

LDS Family Services Addiction Recovery Program guidelines advise: “On a cautionary note, disclosures of personal inventories are not shared with immediate family members or anybody who might be adversely affected by hearing it.”<sup>6</sup> Because of the deep emotional relationship in a marriage, it is strongly advised that those in addiction and their spouse do not share their complete Step Four inventories with each other.

### **The Blessing of Sharing Our Step Four Inventory**

As we begin to implement Step Five, “it is imperative that we unearth, release, get rid of, and be done with shame, fear, guilt, secrets, and anything else inside us that bothers us, causes us to feel less than, weighted down by, burdened by, and bad about ourselves. The way to do that is by opening our mouths and getting it out. It is a simple but effective way to begin healing ourselves.

<sup>1</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 86

<sup>2</sup> S-Anon International Family Groups, p. 51

<sup>3</sup> LDS Family Services, *A Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing*, 29

<sup>4</sup> S-Anon International Family Groups, p. 52

<sup>5</sup> LDS Family Services, *A Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing*, 29

<sup>6</sup> LDS Family Services *Support in Recovery*” document

We simply tell the truth about ourselves to ourselves, to another person, and to God in an attitude of self responsibility, acceptance, and forgiveness... We have started to shake up our souls. We have reached in with a Brillo pad and begun to scrub loose the debris and film within, those things blocking us from living the life we want.”<sup>7</sup> How do we actually accomplish our Step Five discussion with someone we have carefully chosen? “We make an appointment with someone trained in hearing Fifth Steps. . . we sit in a room, face to face with this person, and begin talking about what we have discovered in our Fourth Step work. We start talking with an attitude of humility, openness, self responsibility, and honesty. Then the process takes on a life of its own. We begin to get to the core, the heart, of what’s bothering us. For many of us, this is the first time in our lives we have done this.”<sup>8</sup>

We recognize that it is all right to be imperfect. “These Steps give us permission to be who we are, to forgive and love ourselves, and to forgive and love others... [And] to be human [and] vulnerable.”<sup>9</sup> Elder Bruce C. Hafen taught that mortality is a school where we learn from our experiences, both good and bad: “Life is a school, a place for us to learn and grow. We, like Adam and Eve, experience ‘growing pains’ through the sorrow and contamination of a lone and dreary world. These experiences may include sin, but they also include mistakes, disappointments, and the undeserved pain of adversity. The blessed news of the gospel is that the Atonement of Jesus Christ can purify all the uncleanness and sweeten all the bitterness we taste. By confronting the sad or happy consequences of our choices, we can learn through our own experience, as [Adam and Eve], to distinguish the bitter from the sweet.”<sup>10</sup>

### ***The Turning Point***

“Most found that doing this Step was a turning point in recovery as we took the principles of humility and honesty, which underlie all the Steps and put them into practice... Forgiveness and acceptance from another person spurred the beginnings of these qualities in ourselves. We began to learn how to really trust and how to let go of the shame and secrets that held us back.”<sup>11</sup>

An insightful story that supports this principle is the “Remember the Duck” Story. “There was a little boy named Johnny visiting his grandparents on their farm. He was given a slingshot to play with out in the woods. He practiced in the woods, but he could never hit the target. Getting a little discouraged, he headed back for dinner. As he was walking back he saw Grandma’s pet duck. Just out of impulse, he let the slingshot fly, hit the duck between the eyes and killed it. He was shocked and grieved. In a panic, he hid the dead duck in the wood pile, only to see his brother watching! Butch had seen it all, but he said nothing. After lunch the next day Grandma said, “Butch, let’s wash the dishes.” But Butch said, “Grandma, Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen.” Then he whispered to him, “Remember the duck?” So Johnny did the dishes while Butch went off and played. Later that day, Grandpa asked if the children wanted to go fishing and Grandma said, “I’m sorry Grandpa but I need Butch to paint the fence.” Butch just smiled and said, “Well, that’s all right because

Johnny told me he wanted to help.” He whispered again, “Remember the duck?” So Butch went fishing and Johnny painted the fence. Later --- Several days of Johnny doing both his chores and Butch’s --- he finally couldn’t stand it any longer. He came to his Grandma and confessed that he had killed the duck. His Grandma knelt down, gave him a big hug and said, “Sweetheart, I know. You see, I was standing at the window and I saw the whole thing. But because I love you, I forgave you. I was just wondering how long you would let Butch make a slave of you until you told me.”<sup>12</sup>

The adversary keeps reminding us of whatever we have done in our past. He wants to keep us in bondage through our feelings of shame and regret. God is standing at the window of our lives and He too sees all that we do. He’s waiting for us to come to Him. How often we allow ourselves to be enslaved out of fear or unwillingness to confess our sins. We obtain serenity and peace of mind as we are willing to let go of our guilt and receive the healing grace of Christ’s Atonement.

### ***Avoid Backward Glances***

Many find it beneficial to repeat Steps Four and Five on a regular basis until we come to a sense of resolution. This process is like peeling back the layers of an onion. Each time we repeat these Steps; we go a little deeper and heal a little more. Step Five is an amazing process of being washed clean. “This is the telling-the-truth Step. Use it as often as necessary. This is the Step that will set us free.”<sup>13</sup> Elder Jeffrey R. Holland counseled us to “avoid backward glances toward the darkness and remorse of the past.”<sup>14</sup> And to remember: “God doesn’t care nearly as much about where you have been as He does about where you are, and with His help, where you are willing to go.”<sup>15</sup>

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf stated: “There are some who believe that because they have made mistakes, they can no longer fully partake of the blessings of the gospel. How little they understand the purposes of the Lord. One of the great blessings of living the gospel is that it refines us and helps us learn from our mistakes. We ‘all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,’ yet the Atonement of Jesus Christ has the power to make us whole when we repent.”<sup>16</sup> Completing Step Five frees us from the burden of past regret and helps us move powerfully forward into our future with peace and wholeness. Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone shared: “When one has washed his robes in the blood of the Lamb, they are no longer soiled . . . When confession takes place, it ought to be from the inner-most depths of the heart and soul. I want to be able to meet my Savior with nothing left undone.”<sup>17</sup> Step Five is preparing us for that great future moment.

<sup>12</sup> Author Unknown

<sup>13</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 98

<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey R. Holland, “What I Wish Every New Member Knew—and Every Longtime Member Remembered,” *Ensign*, Oct 06 [Link](#)

<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey R. Holland, “Remember Lot’s Wife”, *BYU Devotional*, January 2009 [Link](#)

<sup>16</sup> Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Way of the Disciple,” *Ensign*, May 2009 [Link](#)

<sup>17</sup> Vaughn J. Featherstone, “‘Forgive Them, I Pray Thee’,” *Ensign*, Nov 1980 [Link](#)

<sup>7</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 87

<sup>8</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 88

<sup>9</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 97

<sup>10</sup> Bruce C. Hafen, “Beauty for Ashes: The Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr 1990 [Link](#)

<sup>11</sup> S-Anon International Family Groups, p. 59-60

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND ANSWER

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1. Having completed Step Four what new understanding about myself and others have I gained?
2. What fears do I have concerning doing a Step Five? Have I delayed doing this Step? If so, why?
3. What can I gain by doing this Step?
4. Have I prayerfully prayed about who I can ask to listen to my inventory?
5. How might my view of myself change through the process of working Step Five?
6. What are the areas of my life I really do not want to face? What do I want to hide from others? What feelings and thoughts might be keeping me from admitting these things?
7. How can I specifically work Step Five with Heavenly Father?
8. How do I apply the Atonement to Step Five?

## STEP 6 - CHANGE OF HEART

**KEY PRINCIPLE:** *Become entirely ready to have God remove all our character weaknesses.*

*After reading each section, briefly discuss the information*

### *Understanding the “Real Me”*

Step Six leads us to a change of heart as we learn to be genuinely honest with ourselves. This means that we come to recognize our weaknesses while also giving ourselves credit for our inherent goodness and strengths. Elder F. Enzo Busche explained: “the only way to find truth is through...self-honesty to see *the original ‘real me,’* the child of God, in its innocence and potential in contrast to the influence from the other part of me, “the flesh,” with its selfish desires and foolishness.”<sup>1</sup>

*Who is the “real me”?* Our self-image is greatly influenced by our interactions with others. We may have developed attitudes and beliefs about ourselves that do not reflect our divine worth as children of God. Destructive dependent behaviors are influenced by incorrect perceptions about ourselves. As we work through the Steps, we learn to let go of the negative self-image that life may have taught us, and we accept the positive self-image God wants to give us. As we seek to see ourselves as God sees us, we come to recognize the righteous desires and predisposition for goodness that is at the core of who we are.

Over the course of our lives, we may have developed unhealthy mechanisms in an attempt cope with our pain and protect ourselves from further suffering. We must remember that our weaknesses do not define who we are. Sister Patricia T. Holland counseled, “We must be patient with ourselves as we overcome weaknesses, and we must remember to rejoice over all that is good in us....I testify that you are holy—that divinity is abiding within you waiting to be uncovered—to be unleashed and magnified and demonstrated.”<sup>2</sup>

### *Avoiding Self Condemnation*

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: “It is not an easy thing, however, to be shown one’s weaknesses, as these are regularly demonstrated by life’s circumstances. Nevertheless, this is part of coming unto Christ, and it is a vital part of God’s plan of happiness.”

God’s correction is not intended to create a cycle of self-criticism or condemnation. Such negative feelings come only from Satan. Elder Maxwell reminded us, “He who was thrust down in the first estate delights to have us put ourselves down. Self contempt is of Satan; there is none of it in heaven.”<sup>3</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball taught about Jesus’ ability to separate the sin from the sinner: “Jesus saw sin as wrong but also was able to see sin as springing from deep and unmet needs on the part of the sinner. This permitted him to condemn the sin without condemning the individual.”<sup>4</sup> The scriptures teach us that the Savior is the final judge of all men. We are instructed to “judge not,” which includes harsh judgment of ourselves. ([D.&C. 64:10](#) & [Matthew 7:1](#))

Sister Norma B. Ashton counseled: “Self-condemnation is a paralyzing potion. We stagnate when we agonize over what we might have been or what we might have done.”<sup>5</sup> Many times we are simply standing in our own way. We might try to blame others or circumstances for our lack of progress, but in truth, it is through our self-loathing that we create a blockade to the joy that we could have. If we were able to remove our mental road blocks, we could feel and receive what Heavenly Father wants to give us, which incorporates truth, love and positive encouragement to let go of those areas of our lives that are detrimental to our happiness.

### *The Courage to Change*

Step Six is a beautiful part of our transformation. When we can see ourselves with complete honesty, we have the blessed opportunity to grow as we accept self-responsibility for our choices and behaviors. We need not fear what we will find, because God’s grace covers all of our imperfections, and His love leads us into love and acceptance for ourselves. We let go of the need to compare ourselves to others and the need to place ourselves above others. We are all equally in need of salvation. “We become ready to let go of our blocks and barriers to joy and love, even when we cannot name those blocks and barriers. We ask God to take away everything that stands in the way of us having all we deserve in our lives...we become ready to let go of all of our ‘don’t deserves’.”<sup>6</sup> As we let go of our weaknesses, the divinity within us will grow and our lives will become more joyful and fulfilling.

Change is a process. As one spouse shared, “‘I go through my day, and I see over and over again how controlling I am,’ said Jan. I’m not stopping controlling. I’m just seeing over and over again how controlling I am.’ “We may have spent years behaving in a certain way without having any awareness of, or experiencing noticeable consequences from, this behavior. Then, suddenly, it becomes time to change. We begin to notice that behavior. We bump into it, over and over again. We begin to feel the pain from that behavior, the helplessness, the hopelessness, our own inability to change. And we wonder how things will or can ever be any different. That’s when it’s time to remind ourselves that we are changing. Right now, we are in the process of becoming changed...Sometimes I get so sick of a certain behavior that I think I’m going to explode if I do it one more time. Then I usually engage in it one more time, and often several more. That’s how we become ready. We get

<sup>1</sup> F. Enzo Busche, “*Truth Is the Issue*,” Ensign, Nov 1993 [Link](#)

<sup>2</sup> Patricia T. Holland, “One Thing Needful,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1987 [Link](#)

<sup>3</sup> Elder Neal A. Maxwell, “*Not Withstanding My Weakness*,” Ensign, November 1976 [Link](#)

<sup>4</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Jesus: the Perfect Leader,” Ensign, August 1979 [Link](#)

<sup>5</sup> Norma B. Ashton, “*A Unique Melody*,” Ensign, Sep 1989 [Link](#)

<sup>6</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 105

pelleted, sometimes bombed, by awareness. That's how life gets our attention. Awareness. Acceptance. And change. I've noticed that the closer I come to being healed of a certain defect or issue, the harder it becomes to live with myself and that issue. It glares. It bites. It stands right there in my way. I despair of ever changing...That is when I say thank you, God, for who You are. Thank you for this program that says I don't have to do it alone. Thank you that I am right where I am supposed to be. Thank you for this defect. Thank you that I can't change it [alone]. Thank you that You can. Thank you that all I have to do is become ready to let go."<sup>7</sup>

### ***A Partnership With God***

With God's inspiration we seek to identify and understand our weaknesses and find a willingness to have God help us remove these defects from our lives. We become willing to identify our character defects and gain a realization that Heavenly Father has a much better life in store for us as we turn our weaknesses over to Him. "God does not remove a fault to produce a vacuum, but to make room for one of His ideas: love, kindness, tolerance."<sup>8</sup>

This endeavor requires self honesty and not making excuses that we cannot change. Elder Mervyn B. Arnold stated : "Some people have told me that because of their parents, what they were taught, or because of the environment in which they were raised, they can never change. Elder Robert D. Hales stated: 'If the example we have received from our parents [or others] was not good, it is our responsibility to break the cycle . . . . Each person can learn a better way and in so doing bless the lives of family members now and teach correct traditions for the generations that follow.' Please do not use your past as an excuse for not having a bright future. Remember, Paul, Alma the younger, and thousands of new converts every year have made, and continue to make, very substantial positive changes in their lives in their journey to receive the Savior's image in their countenances."<sup>9</sup>

We are involved in an endeavor that takes commitment and patience. Elder Marvin J. Ashton explained: "Yea, I say unto you come and fear not, and lay aside every sin, which easily doth beset you..." (*Alma 7:15*) "Those who are committed to improvement break chains by having the courage to try....Every worthy change means risk—the risk of losing an old and damaging habit for a new and improved way of life. If fear and an unwillingness to take the risk and challenge of the better way of life gain the upper hand, we will not be able to change....Even the chains of fear can be broken by those who will humbly seek God's help and strength."<sup>10</sup>

### ***Be willing to be changed through God's Power***

Step Six gives us the opportunity to pause and ask ourselves if we are ready to have God's power to help us change. We become willing to let go of all the attitudes and attributes that

keep us from changing. We ask for Him to help us see the blocks and barriers to our happiness. Elder Neal A. Maxwell gave this counsel: "...certain weaknesses can humble us and render us more susceptible to His shaping, which shaping will one day patiently knead these weaknesses out of us."<sup>11</sup>

All we have to give is our willingness and believe God's promise: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." (Ezek. 36: 26) God's promise is I will give . . . I will put . . . and I will take away. The key to this miracle is to let Him.

As we become ready, we can move on to Step Seven and watch the miraculous change begin. "This is not a do-it-ourselves program. We are not abdicating self-responsibility. But we are learning to trust God, trust this process, and trust ourselves. When it is time to change, we will become changed. We will receive the power, help, and ability to do that. For now, our part is becoming ready to let go....Lessons don't go away. They keep repeating themselves until we learn. In fact, when it's time to change, it becomes harder to stay the same than it does to change. This Step gives us permission to relax, trust, and become willing. It gives us permission to be who we are and let this process of change happen to us."<sup>12</sup>

Consider the wisdom of the scripture found in (2 Cor. 12: 9-10) "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, *that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*" Through this process, we come to feel the power of Christ rest upon us. What a precious gift! Therefore, we rejoice that we have come to recognize our weaknesses and become willing to give them to Him and receive an endowment of His power upon us.

This is one of the purposes of our mortal existence. Why should we be ashamed of this transformation process? As President Dieter F. Uchtdorf shared: "Oh, it is wonderful to know that our Heavenly Father loves us—even with all our flaws! His love is such that even should we give up on ourselves, He never will. We [might] see ourselves in terms of yesterday and today. Our Heavenly Father sees us in terms of forever. . . .The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of transformation. It takes us as men and women of the earth and refines us into men and women for the eternities."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 105-106

<sup>8</sup> Al-Anon, *The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage*, p. 85

<sup>9</sup> Mervyn B. Arnold, "Our Book of Life." *BYU-Idaho Devotional*, Jan. 29, 2008

<sup>10</sup> Marvin J. Ashton, "Shake Off the Chains with Which Ye Are Bound" *Ensign*, Nov 1986 [Link](#)

<sup>11</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, *Notwithstanding My Weakness*, p. 22

<sup>12</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 108-109

<sup>13</sup> Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Way of the Disciple," *Ensign*, May 2009 [Link](#)

- 6) List those character weaknesses, and next to them list the strengths that may replace the weaknesses through God’s grace.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND ANSWER

1) What are my defects of character and weaknesses that became revealed in my Fifth Step inventory?

2) Am I ready to give up all of my character defects? If not, what is keeping me from becoming willing to let them go?

3) How does accepting my weaknesses bring me closer to God?

4) What does “entirely ready” mean to me? When will I know I am entirely ready?

5) How can being willing to release my weaknesses increase my self-esteem and bring more peace and happiness into my life?

Negative Cycle FOCUS ON FEAR	Fixing, controlling & rescuing our loved one in addiction, compulsive monitoring of computer and cell phone activity, living in denial to cover our fear, covering up their addictive behaviors, blaming the sex industry, hopelessness, depression, excessive worry about the future, doubting that recovery is possible, feeling God has forsaken us.
<b>Positive Cycle</b> FOCUS ON FAITH IN GOD & HIS LOVE	Turning the problem over to God, letting God’s love and power help those in addiction (He is the Savior of our loved one-not us), praying for help and guidance for ourselves, look unto God in every thought, believing in and expecting miracles, developing a personal relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, expressing daily gratitude for blessings and tender mercies.
Negative Cycle FOCUS ON FEELINGS OF BETRAYAL	Condemning our loved one in addiction, playing the victim or martyr, withdrawal of affections emotionally and physically, religious sermons, calling them to repentance, self righteous statements, gossiping about those in addiction, seeking divorce or separation as a solution to punish and pay back the pain we feel
<b>Positive Cycle</b> FOCUS ON HEALING	Letting go of negative thoughts and behaviors, seeking help, reading, learning and applying principles of healing, spiritual and emotional growth. Asking and allowing God to heal our wounds. Learning to trust God and seek to believe and trust our addicted loved one.
Negative Cycle FOCUS ON ANGER	Crying uncontrollably, screaming, blaming the addicted loved one and/or God, emotionally punishing them, turning the children and other family members or friends against them, constant criticism of our loved one in addiction, using methods of retaliation (over spending, isolating, withdrawing affection, shaming, etc.)
<b>Positive Cycle</b> FOCUS ON FORGIVENESS	Releasing anger, condemnation and judgment, seeking understanding of the challenges of recovering from addiction, feeling forgiveness for imperfection in the other person and in ourselves, feeling compassion, praying for the gift of charity

	to awaken in our hearts.
Negative Cycle FOCUS ON LOW SELF ESTEEM	Comparing ourselves to others, competing with images in the sexual industry, or letting ourselves go, believing we are not enough, self loathing, self hatred, taking ownership for the addiction, feeling unable to accept church callings or other responsibilities, feeling hopeless and depressed.
<b>FOCUS ON POSITIVE THINKING AND POSITIVE FEELINGS</b>	Living in gratitude each day, recognizing and accepting change in ourselves and others, looking for the good things in our lives and learning to value ourselves, finding hope, serenity, happiness, daily prayers of faith that attract God's guidance through the power of the Holy Ghost.
<b>TRUST THE PROCESS</b>	Applying patience, cultivating peaceful emotions increasing in hope, growing in faith, increasing in wisdom, an ever deeper and stronger relationship with God and positive relationships with family and others.

## STEP 7 - HUMILITY

**KEY PRINCIPLE:** *Humbly ask Heavenly Father to help us remove our shortcomings.*

*After reading each section, briefly discuss the information*

### ***Deliverance through the Grace of God***

Steps Six and Seven are the “transformation” Steps. We are changed by Christ and through Christ! As we complete the Steps, “we [come to] accept ourselves as we are, with all our limitations. And chief among those limitations is the fact that we cannot cure ourselves. By accepting that God can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, we begin to achieve the humility that is necessary for change to take place. In Step Seven, we put that acceptance to work. We take action.”<sup>1</sup>

Step Seven is an action Step in the form of a prayer. We simply express *our complete willingness* to be changed and then *we believe* that God will help us begin this great miracle in our lives. Step Seven in a very real sense is the act of “getting out of His way.” We do not merely abstain from our weaknesses; we experience *deliverance* through the grace of God!

Elder David A. Bednar taught about this process of change. “The gospel of Jesus Christ encompasses much more than avoiding, overcoming, and being cleansed from sin and the bad influences in our lives. . . . This mighty change is not simply the result of working harder or developing greater individual discipline. Rather, it is the consequence of a fundamental change in our desires, our motives, and our natures made possible through the Atonement of Christ the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

Step Seven requires us to humbly *ask* God to help us remove these shortcomings that are destroying our happiness. Without *asking* we remain on the sidelines waiting for changes that never seem to occur. “[We] stop relying exclusively on our own strength and intelligence and come to genuinely trust in [Heavenly Father’s] will for us, asking God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.”<sup>3</sup>

Only through the mercy, grace and power of Jesus Christ is this most important miracle possible. Elder Boyd K. Packer taught about this change of heart. “The Lord promised, ‘A new heart . . . will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.’ That spiritual heart surgery, like in the body, may cause you pain and require a change in habits and conduct. But in both cases, recovery brings renewed life and peace of mind.”<sup>4</sup>

### ***Losing the Old Self***

As we seek to apply Step Seven in our lives, we may experience a fear that God would have us remove everything that makes us

who we are. We may fear that our own self identity may be altered and we will not like who we have become. However, if we trust this process of change, we will find that we like ourselves more because we are becoming who God has created us to be. Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught that “[Heavenly Father] is only asking us to lose the old self in order to find the new self. It is not a question of one’s losing identity but of finding [our] true identity!”<sup>5</sup>

One woman shared her thoughts about this change, “When we specifically take this Step, God doesn’t come down with a vacuum cleaner and suck out all that is inside us. God doesn’t take my personality. God doesn’t remove me. God takes only those traits that restrict and stop me from being myself. I’ve learned that letting go of my defects does not eliminate my personality. It allows it to come through and shine for the first time since I was a very young child.”<sup>6</sup>

When we realize that Heavenly Father only wants what will bring us the greatest peace and happiness, it is easier to let go of our weaknesses and allow God to be “a helper in our refining process. In doing so we are relieved of the burdens of our overly self-reliant past and our unmanageable circumstances. We are freed to learn better ways of thinking and acting.”<sup>7</sup>

Through Step Seven we not only give away our weaknesses and gain new strengths, but we learn to constantly rely upon our Heavenly Father’s power and loving help. Sister Bonnie D. Parkin stated: “Our weaknesses can direct our hearts toward Heavenly Father and His will for us. This can be a hard thing! It’s painful! It’s daunting! But it’s humbling, and when we are humble enough to acknowledge our dependence on the Lord in overcoming those weaknesses, He fills our hearts with His everlasting love, turning our weaknesses into strengths.”<sup>8</sup>

### ***Our Weaknesses Can Become Our Strengths***

Our Father in Heaven desires to guide us in the process of recognizing how our weaknesses can become strengths. “Obsessiveness turned upside down becomes determination. Some . . . defects needed to be refined or tempered. For instance, caretaking—focusing on others to the detriment and neglect of myself—can become love for self and love for others. That love can be manifested in a nurturing, life-giving way that holds me and the other people in esteem. . . . The desire to control can be tempered with appropriate boundaries and respect and then channeled into management and leadership abilities. All the energy we put into despising and disliking ourselves can be turned positive, can be used to love ourselves. . . . Fear, I’ve learned, is one thing that can just plain

<sup>5</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, “‘Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father,’” *Ensign*, Nov 1995 [Link](#)

<sup>6</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 111

<sup>7</sup> *S-Anon International Family Groups*, p. 81

<sup>8</sup> Bonnie D. Parkin, “Feeling the Love of the Lord through Humility,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2004 [Link](#)

<sup>1</sup> *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics*, p. 57

<sup>2</sup> David A. Bednar, “Clean Hands and a Pure Heart,” *Ensign*, Nov 2007 [Link](#)

<sup>3</sup> *S-Anon International Family Groups*, p. 82

<sup>4</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Touch of the Master’s Hand,” *Ensign*, May 2001 [Link](#)

go, unless it is telling me not to walk in front of an oncoming truck.”<sup>9</sup>

As we seek to let go of unhealthy thoughts and behaviors, fear is one of the major emotions that we deal with. Fear of what our Heavenly Father thinks of us, fear of what others think of us, fear of being loved and accepted by God, others and ourselves. Our Father in Heaven knows how powerfully destructive these feelings can be. His only desire is to help us remove from our lives the things that hurt ourselves and others and to develop qualities in their place that bless us and our loved ones.

As we reflect on our experience, we come to recognize how negative emotions such as fear, anger, resentment and a desire to control others have taken us into a dark place. Our interpersonal relationships have been damaged when we’ve been controlled solely by our feelings and reacted instinctively to the emotions of the moment instead of choosing to respond in a way that is emotionally and spiritually healthy. As we apply Steps Six and Seven, we are truly ready to let these destructive patterns disappear from our lives completely.

“Becoming ‘entirely ready to have God [direct and assist us in removing] these defects of character’ is one of the most beneficial processes we will go through in our lifetime. But it doesn’t mean all our defects will be lifted out instantly. Some might go right away. Others will go in time. Still other defects will improve with patient adherence to the principles of our program. We always want to aim for the best, even though we know that we cannot be perfect. We accept ourselves, as we travel at our own pace towards spiritual growth.”<sup>10</sup>

As we seek to overcome our weaknesses, we will find ourselves being willing to let go of them one day, but wanting to hang on to them the next. This pattern is a natural part of the process of change. Recognizing this truth can help us avoid discouragement. Rather than expecting instant perfection, we should focus on progressing one day at a time.

### Divine Support

Elder David A. Bednar recommended we counsel with the Lord through prayer concerning our desire to overcome our weaknesses: “There may be things in our character, in our behavior, or concerning our spiritual growth about which we need to counsel with Heavenly Father in morning prayer. After expressing appropriate thanks for blessings received, we plead for understanding, direction, and help to do the things we cannot do in our own strength alone. For example, as we pray, we might:

- Reflect [meditate] on those occasions when we have spoken harshly or inappropriately to those we love the most.
- Recognize that we know better than this, but we do not always act in accordance with what we know.
- Express remorse for our weaknesses and for not putting off the natural man more earnestly.

- Determine to pattern our life after the Savior more completely.
- Plead for greater strength to do and to become better.”<sup>11</sup>

It is helpful to remember as we work through Step Seven that every effort makes a difference. If we focus only on how far we have to go, we may become discouraged and feel that we are not really progressing. However, we can gain perspective by looking back and recognizing how far we have come. When we remember where we were before we began applying the Steps, we can see how our thoughts and feelings have changed and how much we have progressed. Elder Neal A. Maxwell reminded us: “*There are no instant Christians...* in so far as we are proceeding we are succeeding ...the Lord has clearly promised to succor us in the midst of our temptations (D&C 62:1) such divine close-in support as is promised in the scriptures means that God’s grace will be sufficient for us if we will be humble.... we must turn ourselves over to the Lord so that we can be succored by Him and so that our weaknesses can even become strengths.”<sup>12</sup>

### The Power of God’s Grace

What is God’s grace? In the Bible Dictionary we read, “The main idea of the word *grace* is divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.”<sup>13</sup> And the Book of Mormon reminds us: “The Lord God showeth us our weakness that we may know that it is by his grace...that we have power to do these things.” Jacob 4:7

One sister shared her experience in learning to trust in God’s grace rather than her own strength as she struggled to overcome her weaknesses. “My problem was not that I had done something wrong but that I had failed to do something right. In my pride, I was trying to make myself perfect, rather than humbling myself before Jesus Christ and asking for His help in overcoming my weaknesses. Of course I was failing! None of us can do it alone—we can become perfected only in Christ, with His help. We must do our part, of course. But unless we truly come unto Christ, we cannot be saved, nor can the power of the Atonement take effect in our lives. But if we come unto Christ, then His grace is sufficient for us—not too little, but enough.”<sup>14</sup>

Overcoming weaknesses is a natural part of life. It is a task that we will not finish during mortality. But the more we apply eternal principles in our lives, the more joy we will experience. Elder Bruce C. Hafen reaffirmed that weaknesses are a blessing; “If you have problems in your life, don’t assume there is something wrong with you. Struggling with those problems is at the very core of life’s purpose. As we draw close to God, He will show us our weaknesses and through them make us wiser, stronger. If you’re seeing more

<sup>11</sup> David A. Bednar, “Pray Always,” Ensign Nov 2008 [Link](#)

<sup>12</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, “*Notwithstanding My Weakness*”, pp. 14 - 18

<sup>13</sup> *Bible Dictionary*, p. 697

<sup>14</sup> Rosalyn Collings Eves, “What Was I Missing?,” *New Era*, Apr 2004 [Link](#)

<sup>9</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 111,114

<sup>10</sup> S-Anon International Family Groups, p. 64

of your weaknesses that just might mean you're moving nearer to God, not farther away.”<sup>15</sup>

3) How have I completely come to understand the role of humility in letting go of my weaknesses?

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND ANSWER

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“Each of us has many voices within, criticizing and praising, encouraging and discouraging, desiring and warning, reasoning and disregarding. We've all wondered at some time which voices were from the Lord and which were from Satan.... if the voice you hear leaves you feeling weaker, more doubtful about your capability of overcoming [weaknesses]....then it is not of the Spirit of the Lord....Satan emphasizes your weaknesses; the Lord, your ability to overcome. Satan urges immediate perfection to make you feel inadequate. The Lord leads you toward perfection....Once we can turn off the negative voices, we can see their source. Discouragement is not the Lord's method—it's Satan's.”<sup>16</sup>

4) As I reflect on my Sixth Step, what shortcomings can I bring to my Heavenly Father? What are some positive characteristics with which God might replace the defects? (For example, perhaps “identifying with others and compassion” could replace “judging others.”)

Elder Marvin J. Ashton stated: “To change or break some of our chains even in a small way means to give up some behavior or habits that have been very important to us in the past. Generally this is frightening. Change involves risks. ‘How will people react and respond to me if I change and am different?’ Even if our present way of life is painful and self-destructive, some of us think it serves a purpose, and so we become comfortable with it. Every worthy change means risk—the risk of losing an old and damaging habit for a new and improved way of life.”<sup>17</sup>

5) As I have worked this Step, have I kept a balanced view of myself and my character, understanding that making mistakes and experiencing the mistakes of others is a part of the human condition? Is it O.K. for me to make mistakes?

1) Prayerfully search the scriptures to comprehend God's grace and how it will help me overcome my weaknesses. Journal your understandings.

6) How has Heavenly Father's action in my life through Step Seven already changed me? How do I feel about that change?

2) How does remembering the truth that I am a daughter of my Heavenly Father and that He loves me and seeks for my happiness help me in applying this Step?

7) As I ponder and look back on my life how has God's grace helped my life improve? Do I prayerfully express gratitude for those changes?

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<sup>15</sup> Bruce C. Hafen “The Atonement: All for All, *Liahona*, May 2004 [Link](#)

<sup>16</sup> Steve Gilliland, “‘Awake My Soul!’: Dealing Firmly with Depression,” *Ensign*, Aug 1978 [Link](#)

<sup>17</sup> Marvin J. Ashton, “‘Shake Off the Chains with Which Ye Are Bound’,” *Ensign*, Nov 1986 [Link](#)

## STEP 8 - SEEKING FORGIVENESS

**KEY PRINCIPLE:** *Make a written list of all persons we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all.*

*After reading each section, briefly discuss the information*

### Beginning Our List

As we honestly examine our lives, we may become aware of areas where we need to make peace with others. We may have hurt others in the past, intentionally or unintentionally, and we can now begin to focus on our willingness to make amends. This is a “become willing” Step. We are getting ready to have the courage to forgive and to seek forgiveness.

As with the other Steps, we must focus on changing ourselves rather than trying to change others. Step Eight involves putting away the microscope that magnifies others’ weaknesses and getting out the mirror to see ourselves more clearly.

Forgiving is essentially a healing gift we give to ourselves. As President Thomas S. Monson shared “In many families, there are hurt feelings and a reluctance to forgive. It doesn’t really matter what the issue was. It cannot and should not be left to injure. Blame keeps wounds open. Only forgiveness heals. George Herbert, an early 17th-century poet, wrote these lines: ‘He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever reach heaven, for everyone has need of forgiveness.’”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, seeking forgiveness and forgiving others are inseparably connected. The scriptures remind us: “. . . if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.” Matthew 6:14

### Making a Written List Is a Learning Experience

In order to begin the process of making amends, “we need to write down names of specific people and how we harmed them. It does not matter if those people also harmed us. We have to look at our own feelings and actions. Were we loving and forgiving or were we bitter and resentful?”<sup>2</sup> When others have offended us, have we rejected them or withdrawn from them?

As we prepare a list we consider our relationships. Is there anyone or any situation where we are still harboring negative feelings? Our emotions are the key to creating our list. We are careful to not let denial cover and limit our list. Are there any feelings that are interfering with our ability to be at peace with ourselves and others? If so, we put it on the list. This is our list. We do not show it to others. We talk about it with our Heavenly Father, with our support person, and with a professional counselor if needed.

We look to our families first for those we may need to make amends with. As a consequence of obsessively trying to control our addicted loved one, we may have unknowingly hurt additional family members. “Some of us were so preoccupied with [our spouse] we neglected our children, depriving them of spiritual and emotional attention—even physical attention, at times. [Perhaps we may have taken] out our rage on our children, yelling at them because of our misery inside.”<sup>3</sup>

It is helpful to consider the following question in regards to our loved one in addiction, “Was our behavior toward [them] really above reproach, or do we have some amends to make for rage-filled attitudes, words or behavior? Were we spiteful? Did we want to punish him or her for all the hurt we felt? Did we want them to suffer, too? Were we condescending, shaming or blaming? Finally, how did we treat ourselves? Most of us had to make amends for being too hard on ourselves, especially in the beginning of recovery. . . We began to forgive ourselves, too.”<sup>4</sup>

Life is a learning path. As we come to acknowledge and accept our past mistakes, we can begin to focus our energy on reconciling those mistakes. This evaluation process increases our self understanding and helps us avoid these types of conflicts in the future. It is helpful to remind ourselves that, “When we know better, we do better.”

### Learning to Forgive

An essential part of the process of Step Eight is to become willing to forgive those who have harmed us, even if they are not sorry for their actions. If we do not feel willing or able to do this, we need to humbly ask Heavenly Father for help until we do feel willing.

A powerful approach for learning to forgive is taught in the Guidebook: “In preparation for making amends, many of us have found the following exercise helpful. Think of someone for whom you have had hard feelings. For two weeks, deliberately kneel and pray for him or her each day. Keep a record of changes in your thoughts and feelings about that person.”<sup>5</sup> We can specifically pray that an outpouring of blessings and love will come into that person’s life and that our hearts may be healed to sincerely feel love and compassion towards them.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland counseled us to let go of past mistakes, to forgive and forget: “. . . let me pause to add a lesson that applies both in your own life and also in the lives of others. There is something in us, at least in too many of us, that particularly fails to forgive and forget earlier mistakes in life -- either mistakes we ourselves have made or the mistakes of others. That is not good. It is not Christian. It stands in

<sup>3</sup>S-Anon International Family Groups, p. 86

<sup>4</sup>S-Anon International Family Groups, p. 86

<sup>5</sup>LDS Family Services, A Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing, 48

<sup>1</sup> Thomas S. Monson, “Hidden Wedges,” *Liahona*, Jul 2002 [Link](#)

<sup>2</sup> S-Anon International Family Groups, p. 86

terrible opposition to the grandeur and majesty of the Atonement of Christ. To be tied to earlier mistakes -- our own or other people's -- is the worst kind of wallowing in the past from which we are called to cease and desist . . . repentance has to be sincere, but when it is and when honest effort is being made to progress, we are guilty of the greater sin if we keep remembering and recalling and rebashing someone with their earlier mistakes, and that "someone" might be ourselves. When something is over and done with, when it has been repented of as fully as it can be repented of, when life has moved on as it should and a lot of other wonderfully good things have happened since then, it is not right to go back and open up some ancient wound which the Son of God Himself died trying to heal. Let people repent. Let people grow. Believe that people can change, and improve. Is that faith? Yes! Is it hope? Yes! Is it charity? Yes! Above all it is charity, the pure love of Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

### Forgiving Ourselves

“One thing to remember—in marriage, in the family, in all relationships of life—we are always dealing with imperfect people, including ourselves. And it isn’t fair to expect perfection in others when we can’t offer it ourselves. Life moves one way. We can’t go back. But we can go forever forward: improving, repenting, understanding, forgiving others—even forgiving ourselves—not justifying our faults, not saying that the wrong we do is right, but not defeating our own future, forever unforgiving or unforgiven.”<sup>7</sup> When we learn to forgive ourselves, we are learning to love ourselves. That is the foundation for preparing to forgive others. We should forgive as we wish to be forgiven. As we personally apply the healing power of the Atonement it will begin to relieve our own feelings of self condemnation as we realize that our Savior has paid the price for all of us.

When we uncover all that we’ve learned from our moral inventories, we’ve also uncovered how our insecurities and character weaknesses have impacted our interactions with others. If we’ve previously viewed the world through a lens of a negative self view, we can let that go and instead begin to see ourselves in a new light. This step continues to lead us to freedom -- freedom from self-loathing, freedom from the hurt we’ve caused and the hurt we’ve felt in our relationships with others, and freedom to love ourselves and others with a fullness we’ve never experienced before. Let us remember that our Heavenly Father loves us and believes in our goodness. We now can choose to believe in our own goodness as well and trust that our future interactions with others will be healthier and happier because we have forgiven ourselves.

### Learning to Let Go

Life is full of opportunities to become offended by the things that others do and say. Elder David A. Bednar wisely counseled: “When we believe or say we have been offended, we usually mean we feel insulted, mistreated, snubbed, or disrespected. And certainly clumsy, embarrassing, unprincipled, and mean-spirited

things do occur in our interactions with other people that would allow us to take offense. However, it ultimately is impossible for another person to offend you or to offend me. Indeed, believing that another person offended us is fundamentally false. To be offended is a choice we make; it is not a condition inflicted or imposed upon us by someone or something else.”<sup>8</sup> This becomes our opportunity to learn to let go of offense, of hurt feelings and of our pride and resentment.

All of us have human weaknesses and do and say things that may be hurtful. In many situations we are offended when no hurt was even intended. “Sometimes we can take offense so easily. On other occasions we are too stubborn to accept a sincere apology. Who will subordinate ego, pride, and hurt—then step forward with, ‘I am truly sorry! Let’s be as we once were: friends. Let’s not pass to future generations the grievances, the anger of our time.’ Let’s remove any hidden wedges that can do nothing but destroy. Where do hidden wedges originate? Some come from unresolved disputes, which lead to ill feelings, followed by remorse and regret. Others find their beginnings in disappointments, jealousies, arguments, and imagined hurts. We must solve them—lay them to rest and not leave them to canker, fester, and ultimately destroy.”<sup>9</sup> Holding on to emotional pain infects our hearts and souls and creates only misery and suffering.

### The Courage to Change

“An unresolved grudge gnaws at our hearts, disturbs our peace, and is a burden we would well be rid of. God will forgive whom he will, but of us it is *required* to forgive. We should forgive not only for what it does for others, but as a favor to ourselves, because forgiving relieves us of a lingering uneasiness inside ourselves. Oh, what easing of our relationships with loved ones, and with others also, with a lightening of our own lives, as we learn to forgive! And what other way is there? What are the alternatives? How can we expect forgiveness if we don’t forgive? What incentive would there be to improve and to repent if there were no forgiveness?”<sup>10</sup>

Courage is a necessary part of our path of becoming willing to forgive. President Utchtdorf counseled: “For our own good, we need the moral courage to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. Never is the soul nobler and more courageous than when we forgive. This includes forgiving ourselves. Each of us is under a divinely spoken obligation to reach out with pardon and mercy and to forgive one another. There is a great need for this Christ like attribute in our families, in our marriages, in our wards and stakes, in our communities, and in our nations.”<sup>11</sup> President James E. Faust encouraged us: “Keep a place in your heart for forgiveness, and when it comes,

<sup>8</sup>David A. Bednar, “And Nothing Shall Offend Them,” *Ensign*, Nov 2006 [Link](#)

<sup>9</sup>Thomas S. Monson, “Hidden Wedges,” *Liahona*, Jul 2002 [Link](#)

<sup>10</sup>“The Spoken Word,” *New Era*, Mar 1971 Elder Richard L. Evans [Link](#)

<sup>11</sup>Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Point of Safe Return,” *Ensign*, May 2007 [Link](#)

<sup>6</sup>Jeffrey R. Holland, “Remember Lot’s Wife”, BYU Devotional, January 13, 2009 [Link](#)

<sup>7</sup>“The Spoken Word,” *New Era*, Mar 1971 Elder Richard L. Evans [Link](#)

welcome it in.”<sup>12</sup> In time, we may come to fully comprehend that forgiveness is a great teacher, a powerful healer and a comforting gift we give ourselves.

4) How are willingness and humility related in Step Eight?

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND ANSWER

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“In considering the Eighth Step, it is important to remember that, until we can take this Step in a spirit of self-love and healing, we may not be ready for it. Step Eight, like the other Steps, is a step toward healing. It is not about humiliating ourselves or making others feel better at our expense. It is about owning up to what we have done and becoming willing to free ourselves from the [pain and hurt] our actions have caused us.”<sup>13</sup>

5) How can I obtain the courage to seek forgiveness?

1) It may seem contrary to this Step but some have found it helpful to first write a list of all those who have harmed us and set it aside. How can forgiving those who have harmed me bring “a newness of life and healing”?

6) Another consideration of making amends involves asking ourselves:

2) Write down the names of those we need to ask for forgiveness. This effort is a journey of discovery.

- Have we unnecessarily burdened others with our complaints about those in addiction?
- Have we isolated ourselves from other family members, friends and ward members?
- Have we spoken out of anger, bitterness, or shame to any of these people?
- Have we withdrawn from people or circumstances that could have furthered our growth?
- What can we do to prepare our hearts to make amends in these situations? In some instances, we may not need to formally ask for forgiveness, but we can make amends by changing the way we interact with them.

3) Who was harmed by my behavior? (This list might include family members, spouses [or ex-spouse], children, in-laws, employers, friends, myself, Heavenly Father, people who have since died?)

7) Have I asked my Support Person or others who are doing the 12 Steps about their Step 8 list-making? What can I learn from them?

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<sup>12</sup> James E. Faust, “The Healing Power of Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, May 2007 [Link](#)

<sup>13</sup> *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics*, p. 59

## STEP 9 - RESTITUTION AND RECONCILIATION

**KEY PRINCIPLE:** *Make direct amends to all persons wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.*

*After reading each section, briefly discuss the information*

### ***Seeking Forgiveness from Others***

This Step is about making peace with others we have harmed, with those who have harmed us, and with ourselves. Spouses with loved ones in addiction share their experience: “We are ready to take responsibility for our past and the hurt we have caused others. We need discernment, good timing and courage to take this Step, but with God’s help and guidance we will know whom to go to and when to make such amends. Each person will require a different approach. We need to know how much to disclose to each person, lest we do more harm than good. It is not always necessary to go into grim detail to make our amends... We need not wallow in excessive guilt or over-responsibility. Those feelings do not promote constructive action. We need to be honest and sincere, that is all... we go in a forgiving spirit and admit our ill feeling with humility. We never criticize such a person or tell him or her what to do. We stick to our own faults in a calm manner.”<sup>1</sup> These spouses also shared: “We clearly and sincerely apologize for how we have harmed others and offer to right the wrong if that is possible. Most of us found that brief, to-the-point admissions were better than long detailed explanations... [which] helps us guard against rationalization, justification, defensiveness and blame. We take care not to criticize or argue, even if the other person reacts angrily. Our task is simply to sweep our side of the street and do what we can to set our wrongs right”<sup>2</sup> We do not need to tell people that we are making amends because of our involvement in a 12 Step program. A sincere desire to set our wrongs right is all that we need to communicate.

Walking the pathway of forgiveness is easier with some people than with others. Recovering spouses have shared: “We have found it much harder to go to an enemy than a friend. It may be that such a person has done us more harm than we have done him or her. It is very difficult to lay our faults before someone who we fear will not receive us well. Nevertheless, we go in a forgiving spirit and admit our ill feeling with humility. We never criticize such a person or tell him or her what to do. We stick to our own faults in a calm manner. The outcome may be positive; the other person may even admit his or her fault. Yet it doesn’t matter if we are not warmly received. We have taken the responsibility to do our part and in that we receive our satisfaction and spiritual growth.”<sup>3</sup>

### ***Information that Could Be Harmful to Others***

“When could it be harmful to make direct amends? It might be harmful if a third party is involved. Telling a spouse or a boss something that would disclose another person’s faults or misdeeds may compound problems. There may be justifiable exceptions to this guideline, but we want to be cautious when we involve someone else. There is no rule of any sort; we merely suggest caution with some disclosures. It is important that our own conscience and our [Heavenly Father] be our guides here. We must take the time to plan conscientiously and to determine what is appropriate. It is often wise to discuss our plans with [our support person] or a spiritual advisor before going ahead with the amends. Some wrongs can never be fully made right. But if we have the right heart we needn’t worry. In some cases we cannot see people directly, so we send a letter. We try not to delay, for there is a long period of rebuilding ahead. We must be initiators. People need most from us a simple ‘I’m sorry.’<sup>4</sup>

### ***Helpful Hints on Forgiveness***

It is helpful to avoid replaying the hurtful actions of others over and over in our minds. Those thoughts only contribute to our pain. One woman shared the following strategies to learn to forgive, “There are some recovery ‘tricks’ that help me when I’m trying to achieve forgiveness and don’t feel very forgiving. Asking God to bless the person and shower happiness on him or her helps. Affirming that I forgive the person helps. Forcing myself to think good, positive thoughts about the person helps. Asking God to give me the gift of forgiveness and restore the relationship to right feelings helps. Forgiveness will come when we open ourselves to it. Forgiveness will find us when we are ready. Do not seek it too soon, before the feelings are felt. Do not avoid it too long, for it brings peace and freedom for us. [However] forgiving a person does not give them permission to continue treating us poorly.”<sup>5</sup> Even while offering forgiveness, we should establish appropriate boundaries to prevent any further harm from coming to ourselves or other family members in the future.

President James E. Faust gave wise counsel regarding the benefits of forgiveness: “Some hold grudges for a lifetime, unaware that courageously forgiving those who have wronged us is wholesome and therapeutic . . . If we can find forgiveness in our hearts for those who have caused us hurt and injury, we will rise to a higher level of self-esteem and wellbeing. Some recent studies show that people who are taught to forgive become ‘less angry, more hopeful, less depressed, less anxious and less stressed,’ which leads to greater physical well-being. Another of these studies concludes ‘that forgiveness . . . is a liberating gift [that] people can give to themselves.’<sup>6</sup>

Forgiveness is a healing path that brings us into a world full of peace and joy. “After you let go of hurt and resentment through forgiveness, the void is filled by such things as serenity,

<sup>1</sup> *S-Anon International Family Groups*, p. 99-100

<sup>2</sup> *S-Anon International Family Groups*, p. 107- 108

<sup>3</sup> *S-Anon International Family Groups*, p. 99-100

<sup>4</sup> *S-Anon International Family Groups*, p. 99-100

<sup>5</sup> *Melody Beattie, Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 139

<sup>6</sup> James E. Faust Ensign, “The Healing Power of Forgiveness” May 2007 [Link](#)

gratitude, self-respect, and kindness. Forgiveness provides the spirit with room to grow. As it grows, the spirit becomes stronger. The bitterness is replaced by warmth....Forgiveness does not take you back to the person you were before you were hurt. It takes you to a much higher plane.”<sup>7</sup>

### ***Recognizing Growth in Others and Ourselves***

As we follow the path of forgiveness, we recognize that others and ourselves have become changed and new in Christ. Elder Neal A. Maxwell reminded us: “Some of us refuse to acknowledge growth, change, and improvement in others. Some of us let the past lock us in, rigidly refusing to reclassify other people, which can be devastating to the development of anyone. We must permit others to press forward too. The past must not hold the future hostage; otherwise, what of the sons of Mosiah? Or Saul of Tarsus? Or many of us?”<sup>8</sup>

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland encouraged us to: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you. We should honor the Savior’s instruction to “be of good cheer.” Speak hopefully. Speak encouragingly, including about yourself.”<sup>9</sup>

Part of forgiving ourselves is changing the beliefs we have about ourselves. “We owe ourselves an apology and changed behavior for the sometimes terrible ideas we have maintained, dwelled on, and believed about ourselves. That we aren’t lovable, aren’t good enough, can’t think, don’t deserve success, don’t deserve to have fun, or don’t deserve to recover are untrue beliefs we have assumed, beliefs that need correcting as part of this program of making amends to ourselves.”<sup>10</sup> When we continue to focus on our own past mistakes we keep ourselves from moving forward.

President Thomas S. Monson offered these comforting words: “There are some who have difficulty forgiving themselves and who dwell on all of their perceived shortcomings. I quite like the account of a religious leader who went to the side of a woman who lay dying, attempting to comfort her—but to no avail. ‘I am lost,’ she said. ‘I’ve ruined my life and every life around me. There is no hope for me.’ The man noticed a framed picture of a lovely girl on the dresser. ‘Who is this?’ he asked. The woman brightened. ‘She is my daughter, the one beautiful thing in my life.’ ‘And would you help her if she were in trouble or had made a mistake? Would you forgive her? Would you still love her?’ ‘Of course I would!’ cried the woman. ‘I would do anything for her. Why do you ask such a question?’ ‘Because I want you to know,’ said the man, ‘that figuratively speaking, Heavenly Father has a picture of you on His dresser. He loves you and will help you. Call upon Him.’”<sup>11</sup>

### **Making Amends**

It is helpful as we seek to make amends to gather our thoughts as to the process. We are simple and direct, humble and kind.

1. We provide a brief description of the situation so that there is clear understanding of what we are referring to.
2. We humbly acknowledge any hurt or damage done.
3. We take responsibility for our actions without excuses or blaming others.
4. We express our regret for things said or done. Our focus is upon them and how they were hurt whether it was intentional or not.
5. We tell them we are sorry and we ask for forgiveness.
6. We provide any restitution if required and whenever possible.

In situations where directly apologizing would harm others, how can we still make amends? Similarly, how can we make restitution to those who are no longer alive? Some ideas might be: writing letters that are meant to be sent and reading them to a trusted counselor or friend; praying for the other person; making a living amends by changed attitudes towards the other person; volunteering to help others in similar circumstances; donating to a charity, etc.

Fear and pride often interfere with making amends as Elder Lowell L. Bennion explained: “We know when we’ve done wrong, but sometimes we’re afraid to go to those whom we’ve wronged. We are too proud to admit our failures. But when we have the courage to do it, we find that a great reconciliation takes place. It’s the offended person’s responsibility to react to our efforts to be reconciled. And when we can’t compensate a person for a wrong, when it’s too late or impossible, then we can bless other people. We all belong together in this world. We’re brothers and sisters with the same Eternal Father; we belong to the same human community. There are others we can bless, though we can’t repair the damage we may have done to some of his children.”<sup>12</sup>

Remember President James E. Faust’s comforting counsel: “It will take humility to do this, but if we will get on our knees and ask Heavenly Father for a feeling of forgiveness, He will help us. The Lord requires us ‘to forgive all men’ for our own good because ‘hatred retards spiritual growth.’ Only as we rid ourselves of hatred and bitterness can the Lord put comfort into our hearts.”<sup>13</sup> We do not allow this Step to produce fear in hearts concerning seeking forgiveness. As we develop a willing heart and trust that God will be with us, the opportunities to make amends will often present themselves.

<sup>7</sup> Robert J. Furey, *The Joy of Kindness*, 91-92

<sup>8</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, *Wherefore Ye Must Press Forward*, p 90

<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Tongue of Angels,” *Ensign*, May 2007 [Link](#)

<sup>10</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 149

<sup>11</sup> Thomas S. Monson, “Hidden Wedges,” *Liahona*, Jul 2002 [Link](#)

<sup>12</sup> Lowell L. Bennion, “Overcoming Our Mistakes,” *Tambuli*, Jul 1981, 47

<sup>13</sup> James E. Faust *Ensign*, “The Healing Power of Forgiveness” May 2007 [Link](#)

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND ANSWER

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- 1) Do I desire to have the peace and spiritual growth that forgiving others and myself will bring? What other benefits can I expect to receive by doing Step Nine?
- 2) After reviewing the list I made of those I have hurt or offended from my Step Eight list, who do I need to make amends with as soon as possible? Which names should be deferred for now?
- 3) Which amends need to be made in a non-direct way (for example, to those who have died, to those whose whereabouts are unknown, etc?)
- 4) Which amends am I most reluctant to make?
- 5) What spiritual efforts such as prayer and meditating have I sought in preparing to make amends?
- 6) What have I learned about seeking amends by reading, or counseling with spiritual advisors or others strong in 12 Step recovery experience?

## STEP 10 - DAILY ACCOUNTABILITY

**KEY PRINCIPLE:** *Continue to take personal inventory, and when we are wrong promptly admit it.*

*After reading each section, briefly discuss the information*

### **Daily Self Examination**

Step Ten continues the process of improving our lives through admitting our wrongs, desiring to overcome our weaknesses, seeking forgiveness, and quickly making amends. Growth and change is a journey not a destination. Change does not take place without our ability to recognize and admit our mistakes willingly. Step Ten provides the opportunity for this awareness which helps us maintain our serenity.

A daily personal inventory takes place throughout our day. Before we were in recovery, we may not have truly dealt with our emotions. We easily became numb or had to find ways to distract ourselves and run away from what we were truly feeling. When we take Step Ten, though, we get to establish a new pattern of self honesty and accountability to become present with whatever we are experiencing at the time. We can create a mini inventory to further understand which emotions we are dealing with in the present moment, and we can expound further on our day right before bed. We seek balance in the process of honestly recognizing when we have been the cause of hurt in a relationship while becoming equally willing to forgive others. We feel grateful for the things we've done well and we ask for guidance and strength in the areas where we need continued growth, patience and love for others and ourselves. We no longer need excuses to justify our behavior, for we have learned to take a loving, yet honest look at ourselves.

We often associate the word relapse with those suffering from addiction. We as family members are not immune to relapse, though and we can easily fall back into destructive thinking patterns that create feelings of self-doubt, inadequacy, and fear. However, relapses provide us with an opportunity to "relearn" something. Our own relapses can teach us principles that help us improve our daily life patterns.

We often associate the word relapse with those suffering from addiction. However, we as family members can easily relapse back into patterns of fear, control, anger and despair. It is helpful to look at a relapse as a need to "relearn" something. Our own relapses can teach us principles that can help us improve our daily life patterns. As part of our daily review, we evaluate what feelings and thoughts brought us into a negative place and apply our new awareness to keep us on the healing path.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton taught, "A truly wise person will constantly move forward, striving for self-improvement, knowing that daily repentance is needed for progress."<sup>1</sup> Some have found success by reviewing their actions each day with

their Heavenly Father in their personal evening prayers. As we involve Heavenly Father in the process of creating our inventory, He lovingly helps us to see the good in our daily lives and to recognize our own righteous desires. He affirms our personal worth and potential, at the same time encouraging us to grow as we correct our mistakes. We can learn to give the same positive feedback to ourselves as well.

We remember our daily observation should focus on our own lives, not on the actions of others. We daily sweep our side of the street. As we seek to develop a more Christ like character, we wisely remember to focus on progression, not perfection.

### **Daily Weeding of our Lives**

Those who have become successful at gardening have learned the principle of daily weeding. When weeds are small they are quickly and easily removed. The same principle can be applied to our own lives. Many thoughts go through our minds every day. By choosing how we focus our attention, we are nourishing either positive or negative thoughts or seeds. Those seeds will, in turn, produce sweet or bitter fruit in our lives. President Harold B. Lee taught the principle of daily weeding as follows: "To be truly righteous there is required a daily pruning of the evil growth of our characters by daily repentance from sin."<sup>2</sup>

Elder F Enzo Busche reminded us: "A disciple of Christ is therefore constantly, even in the midst of all regular activities, striving all day long through silent prayer and contemplation to be in the depth of self-awareness to keep him in the state of meekness and lowliness of heart."<sup>3</sup> As we become more self-aware, we develop greater meekness and gentleness of character. This, in turn, opens the door to experience the gift and power of the Holy Ghost more fully in our lives. As we apply this step, we come to recognize that practicing immediate repentance has the power to transform our lives. Sister Anne C. Pingree encouraged us, "[The] will to go forward toward our Savior sometimes requires on-the-spot repentance. It's recognizing we've made mistakes or haven't done what we could to encourage or help someone. These personal [daily] course corrections in thought, action, or word are essential for all who desire to come unto Christ. They represent individual choices about how we will touch each other literally and figuratively."<sup>4</sup>

One woman shared the benefits she received from applying this Step: "[Step 10] is a tool that allows me to continue to be aware of myself, instead of focusing on others...I am free to take care of myself in a healthy way with others—admitting I did wrong and apologizing...[And] to identify when I have become angry at myself again or begun to neglect myself—my feelings and needs. It allows me to release my anger and move forward into nurturing self-love...This Step also means that I am free to take a few moments each day and focus on and enjoy what I have

<sup>2</sup> Harold B. Lee, "Successful Sinners," *Ensign*, July 1971 [Link](#)

<sup>3</sup> F. Enzo Busche, "Truth Is the Issue," *Ensign*, Nov 1993 [Link](#)

<sup>4</sup> Anne C. Pingree, "To Look, Reach, and Come unto Christ," *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, [Link](#)

<sup>1</sup> Marvin J. Ashton, "'Shake Off the Chains with Which Ye Are Bound,'" *Ensign*, Nov 1986 [Link](#)

done right—then feel good about that.”<sup>5</sup> We do not become obsessed in our focus, instead we desire to seek progress and change in our lives. The intention of Step Ten is to sincerely live in true honesty of heart each day, examining ourselves instead of blaming or condemning others for any unhappiness we may feel.

### ***At the End of the Day***

One spouse kept the following “Reviewing My Day” list beside her bed—and used it at the end of each day. She made plans to take corrective measures the upcoming day and to seek reconciliation in a timely manner where needed. She then reflected upon her thoughts with her Heavenly Father in her bedtime prayers and asked for His help to have the courage to follow through.

#### **Reviewing My Day**

1. What am I grateful for today?
2. What good things did I do today?
3. In what ways was I kind and loving today?
4. Did I have times where I was able to “let go and let God”?
5. Did I give into anger or resentments?
6. Were there times I was selfish or inconsiderate?
7. Was I dishonest with myself or others?
8. Did I allow fear or worries to control my thoughts?
9. What character weaknesses surfaced today?
10. What could I have done better?
11. Is there someone I need to apologize to?
12. For what do I need to ask forgiveness for from God or others?
13. What corrective measures should I take?

### ***Negative Feelings Can Be a Warning***

Negative feelings can be an alarm signal, alerting us that we have strayed from the path of progression. Instead of dwelling on our negative feelings, we can allow these feelings to awaken us to self-examination and an awareness of the true motives behind our actions. “At its heart, Step Ten is a process of noticing the motives behind our thoughts, words and actions. Our physical state can also give us information. Is the tenseness in our neck perhaps a sign of some anger we are not acknowledging? Is the tight feeling in our stomach possibly a result of shame over slipping into some old behavior that we had hoped to avoid? Is the lightness in our step related to the accomplishment of finally setting a long-needed boundary? Trusting that our [Heavenly Father] is guiding us, we make observations and reflections such as these, looking deeply for the real causes and motivations for our actions. If we see that we have harmed ourselves or others, we promptly make amends. If we discover a character defect, we can ask God to remove it. Through Step Ten we observe the daily nitty-gritty of our lives, making on-going, mid-course corrections and letting our lapses be lessons for growth. Done regularly, Step Ten keeps us in balance, free from unnecessary burdens and helps ‘make our lives more serene and fulfilling.’”<sup>6</sup> The blessing of this Step is that we do not allow negative feelings to continue and grow in our hearts. We honestly become aware of them, take correct measures as soon as possible to resolve

them, and then release them to God before they can control our thoughts and actions. This is the process of reconciling our hearts. It cleanses our thoughts and feelings and sets the stage for making reconciliation with others, when possible.

### ***Healing Words***

What is the best way to promptly take care of wrongs? “Often, I’ve found that simply taking responsibility, then apologizing for my conduct, is sufficient to clear away issues that arise. The words, ‘I was wrong and I’m sorry’ are so healing. To be able to give or receive those words, then let go of an incident, is one of the many gifts I’ve been given in this process called recovery....I’m learning how to accept and give apologies, then let things go. I also understand that this always, always means dealing with—feeling—my feelings and accepting reality.”<sup>7</sup> Learning to deal with our feelings in a healthy and responsible manner can begin to truly remove a lot of pain from our lives.

How do we handle the feelings of hurt we receive as a result of the behaviors and actions of others? When we choose to relive those memories every day, we are nurturing the negative emotions in our lives. Daily forgiveness quickly resolves the potential growth of resentments and brings peace into our lives.

As we develop the habit of quickly recognizing and resolving our mistakes, we will experience great personal growth and peace. “We don’t work this Step to punish or demean ourselves. We do it to maintain harmony in our relationships with ourselves and others....My self-esteem and self-love come back when I promptly address the wrongs I do to others and myself. This Step gives me permission to be me and to be imperfect. It gives me permission to love and nurture myself and focus on what’s right with my life. It allows me to be a vulnerable human being in relationships with other vulnerable human beings. It allows me to forgive myself. And it has taught me much about forgiving others, too”<sup>8</sup>

President Henry B. Eyring lovingly spoke about visiting with his seriously ill father who was near death. “[My father] spoke of joyous reunions that were coming soon in the spirit world. At one point I asked him if he had some repenting to do. He smiled. He chuckled softly as he said, ‘No, Hal, I’ve been repenting as I went along.’”<sup>9</sup> That is an example of the spiritual principle of Step Ten.

<sup>5</sup>Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 158

<sup>6</sup>S-Anon *International Family Groups*, 122

<sup>7</sup>Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 161-162

<sup>8</sup>Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 170-171

<sup>9</sup>Henry B. Eyring, “Teaching True Doctrine,” *Ensign*, Apr 2009 [Link](#)

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND ANSWER

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“This Step tells us that making mistakes is expected and anticipated. My finest and most important lessons have all come from my less-than-perfect behaviors. I am slowly learning that perfection is allowing myself, without judgment, to be who and where I am today, and then responding to myself in a responsible, but nurturing and nonshaming way: self-acceptance rendered with a huge dose of self-love.”<sup>10</sup>

- 1) What can I do each day to remember to do a Step Ten review?
- 2) What form of personal inventory works best for me? (Journaling, meditating, reading the “Reviewing My Day list, etc.)
- 3) What is my body telling me today? Do I have discomfort about any lack of action on my part or any negative interaction with others?
- 4) How can I give myself credit and acceptance for the good that I have done today?
- 5) How does that acknowledgement help me to recognize and improve my feelings of self worth?
- 6) How have I seen positive progress in my daily interactions since regularly apply a Step Ten review?

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<sup>10</sup> Melody Beattie, Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps, 164

## STEP 11 - PERSONAL REVELATION

**KEY PRINCIPLE:** *Seek through prayer and meditation to know the Lord's will and to have the power to carry it out.*

*After reading each section, briefly discuss the information*

### **Daily Spiritual Connection**

Step Eleven is the dedicated application of Step Three. Day by day we seek to follow Heavenly Father's will by establishing a foundation of connecting with Him through prayer and meditation. As we do so, we come to recognize the power of taking time to strengthen ourselves in the Lord. When we turn to Him first, He will help us to "bear up [our] burdens with ease."<sup>1</sup> Our daily spiritual connection sustains healthy emotions and upholds our hope and faith that Heavenly Father is constantly watching over us. Our daily lives will become more heaven-directed and endowed with joy and peace. As we continue to follow this pattern, we will come to an even greater knowledge of His will for us and His plan for our lives.

In the LDS Bible Dictionary we read the following concerning prayer: "The object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our *asking* for them."<sup>2</sup>

Our mind and desires become the same as Christ's as we seek His will in all things and become willing to follow His plan. By following the principles taught in the Steps, we have reached a place of humility where we desire to seek guidance for those areas of our lives where we do not know what to do. We follow the scriptural advice: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" ([James 1: 5](#)). When we seek prayerful contact with our Heavenly Father, we receive personal revelation and direction. No longer are our lives controlled by emotions of doubt and fear. Heavenly Father has assured us: "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" ([D&C 6: 36](#)).

President Thomas S. Monson counseled: "To those within the sound of my voice who are struggling with challenges and difficulties large and small, prayer is the provider of spiritual strength; it is the *passport to peace*. Prayer is the means by which we approach our Father in Heaven, who loves us. Speak to Him in prayer and then listen for the answer. Miracles are wrought through prayer."<sup>3</sup> As we continue to daily follow His will, our eyes are opened to see evidence of His love and grace. We are filled with hope, faith and courage to move forward in our lives.

### **Knowing and Accepting God's Will**

Elder David A. Bednar provided this insight: "Discerning and accepting the will of God in our lives are fundamental elements of asking in faith in meaningful prayer. However, simply saying the

words 'Thy will be done' is not enough. Each of us needs God's help in surrendering our will to Him. 'Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other.'<sup>4</sup> Humble, earnest, and persistent prayer enables us to recognize and align ourselves with the will of our Heavenly Father. And in this the Savior provided the perfect example as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, saying, 'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.'<sup>5</sup>

Each day we can pray, "Father, what is thy will for me right now, this very day?" As we cultivate an attitude of humility, we become more open and willing to follow the Spirit's subtle impressions and thoughts throughout our day. The Lord has promised us, "I will tell you in your mind and in your heart" ([D&C 8: 2-3](#)). Rather than feeling fear for the future, we focus on God's will for us today. We come to understand that what we do today can powerfully influence our future for good if we will daily follow His will. We gratefully live in the present and trust an *unknown* future to our *known* God.

### **Spiritually Creating Our Day through Meaningful Prayer**

Arising early in our day provides quiet time free from the demands of our schedule, the phone, and the needs of our family members. We seek holy refuge from our storms and challenges. We kneel in humble prayer, seeking our Father's inspiration and His spirit to be with us. Elder David A. Bednar encouraged us in our daily preparations: "Meaningful morning prayer is an important element in the spiritual creation of each day—and precedes the temporal creation or the actual execution of the day . . . morning and evening prayers are linked to and are a continuation of each other."<sup>6</sup>

### **Daily Scripture Study**

As we study the scriptures each morning, the Holy Ghost often provides direction and insights for the day ahead and teaches us about principles we need to understand right now. We learn from our own experience that "the Holy Ghost will show unto [us] all things" ([2 Ne. 32: 5](#)). As part of our daily preparation, it is also valuable to review the current Step we are working on.

### **Daily Meditation**

After prayer and study, we begin our meditation by finding a quiet place where we can sit or lay down and let our minds become still—free from concerns and stressful thoughts. This can be any place that is free from distraction. A spouse shared her experience with meditation: "Meditating is how God talks to us . . . we quiet ourselves and our thoughts, relax, become centered and peaceful, and tune into God . . . we rid ourselves of the chaos, tension, and fear that so often accompany living. We let go of it all and be still. I used to think meditation was a waste of valuable time. I have learned differently. Meditation, I've discovered, is no more a waste of time than stopping to put gas in the car. . . . [It] is how [we] rejuvenate and renew. . . . [It] is one way that we rid ourselves of negative energy and open [ourselves] to a positive flow of good. . . opening our minds and our spirits to [Heavenly Father]."<sup>7</sup> As we seek to surround ourselves with the positive flow of the Spirit, we find the strength to

<sup>1</sup> [Mosiah 24: 15](#)

<sup>2</sup> Bible Dictionary, "Prayer," 752-53

<sup>3</sup> Thomas S. Monson, "Be Your Best Self," *Ensign*, May 2009 [Link](#)

<sup>4</sup> Bible Dictionary, "Prayer," 752-53

<sup>5</sup> David A. Bednar, "Ask in Faith," *Ensign*, May 2008 [Link](#)

<sup>6</sup> David A. Bednar, "Pray Always," *Ensign* Nov 2008 [Link](#)

<sup>7</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 179-180

peacefully move forward through whatever challenges we may face each day.

As part of our meditation, we can “consider our plans for the day...Here we ask God for inspiration...we relax and take it easy. We don’t struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while.”<sup>8</sup> Meditation is also a time when we can ponder on our lives and the gospel—either general or particular aspects. Elder Marvin J. Ashton explained: “By pondering, we give the Spirit an opportunity to impress and direct. Pondering is a powerful link between the heart and the mind.”<sup>9</sup> The peace and stillness that come from meditation will cut through the chaos and crisis that can sometimes encircle us. As we develop an inner stillness, it will be easier to be in tune with the Spirit. As the scriptures teach, “The Lord speaks in a still small voice,” 1 Kgs. 19: 12

President Hinckley reminded us, “We all need...the opportunity to meditate and reflect on the things of God and to listen to words that inspire and help.”<sup>10</sup> When we make time to be still and listen, this provides an opportunity for the Lord to heal us. We are open to the quiet whisperings and comforting guidance of the Spirit. “Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning [your situation]; for all flesh [including you and your loved ones are] in mine hands; be still and know that I am God” (D&C 101: 16).

We may choose to conclude our meditation with prayer, asking for the Lord to guide us throughout our day. If we later have difficulty during the day, we can stop and ask for the direction, comfort or strength we need to handle the challenges before us. We always seek to remember that we have chosen to no longer be self-directed in our lives. Rather, we desire to know and do our Heavenly Father’s will in all things. We find that we have less frustrating and painful days. We accomplish more and suffer less. We become confident in the guidance of the Spirit.

### ***Patience with the Process***

As we apply this Step in our lives, we come to recognize that “meditation and prayer are powerful recovery behaviors that work. [But] we need to be patient. It is not reasonable to expect that the moment we meditate, we will get our answer, our insight, or inspiration, or our healing. It is not reasonable to expect on-site, instantaneous answer to prayer. But the answer is coming. It is already on the way, if we have done our part by meditating and praying...We can relax and go with the flow, even when the flow hurts, even when we’re not certain where it’s taking us. The hard times will not last forever. The confusion will not last forever. Clarity will come. The answer will come. The darkness of our soul will leave, and daylight will come....The answer will come, but not by holding on and usually not instantly. The answer will come by letting go and allowing the flow of life to move us forward. The answer will come when we let go of our fear”<sup>11</sup> It is through this Step that we learn to ask God to guide us to know what we should do and for the strength and courage to do it. Through the comforting guidance of the Holy Ghost, our understanding and acceptance of

our challenges expand, and we learn to not let our earthly expectations interrupt our faith and hope in our future happiness.

### ***Take Time to be Holy***

If we struggle with this process at first, do not despair. We seek for help from the Lord to apply these principles in our daily lives as best as we can. President Harold B. Lee gave this wise counsel: “We develop our spiritual selves by practice...We must train our spiritual selves with the same care...as we train our physical bodies. We must have daily exercise for our spirits by prayer....We must feed our spirits daily by studying the scriptures every day....And so I beg of you...to live each day so that you might receive from the fountain of light [the] nourishment and strength sufficient to every day’s need. Take time to be holy each day of your lives.”<sup>12</sup> Throughout the demands of our day, we can continue to pray, ponder and receive guidance wherever we find ourselves. Even the car or the doctor’s office can become a house of prayer if we choose to use the quiet moments provided us.

Many spouses ask, “How can I stay in a spiritual and emotional place of faith, hope and peace?” One of the key solutions to this challenge is following Step Eleven every day. We can pray, as did the Psalmist, “Forsake me not when my strength faileth” (Ps. 71: 9, 18). At times we may feel overwhelmed by discouragement and other negative emotions; we need the rescuing power of our Father in Heaven to restore us. When we use prayer and meditation on a daily basis, Heavenly Father helps us to walk in faith as we are willing to daily take counsel not from our fears, but from the heavenly source of our peace. Elder Todd Christofferson reminded us: “It is the Holy Ghost that reveals how you may clear the next seemingly insurmountable hurdle. . . Then you can ask in faith, nothing wavering, according to your need, and God will answer. He will sustain you as you work and watch. In His own time and way He will stretch forth his hand to you, saying, ‘Here am I.’ ”<sup>13</sup>

Sister Anne C. Pingree shared her witness of this principle: “My...lesson was that in order to “boldly go forward,” I needed to rely completely on the Lord and seek earnestly for personal revelation.”<sup>14</sup> Sometimes the guidance we receive may require courage, determination and deep trust in God’s plan. It is at this point that we apply the second part of Step Eleven, which is praying for the strength to follow God’s will. Then we truly come to understand that: “When man listens, God speaks. When man obeys, God acts.”<sup>15</sup> As we listen to the voice of the Spirit and obey its counsel, we become witness to His power and His miracles in all aspects of our lives.

<sup>8</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, *Big Book*, 86-88

<sup>9</sup> Marvin J. Ashton, “‘There Are Many Gifts’,” *Ensign*, Nov 1987 [Link](#)

<sup>10</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, “Let Us Live the Gospel More Fully,” *Ensign*, Nov 2003 [Link](#)

<sup>11</sup> Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 180-182

<sup>12</sup> “Chapter 19: Take Time to Be Holy,” *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee*, 175 [Link](#)

<sup>13</sup> D. Todd Christofferson, “The Power of Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 2009 [Link](#)

<sup>14</sup> Anne C. Pingree, “Knowing the Lord’s Will for You,” *Ensign*, Nov 2005 [Link](#)

<sup>15</sup> The Oxford Group & A.A., Dick B., Paradise Research Publications, 1998, 227

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND ANSWER

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“Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings and he will direct thee for good.” (Alma 37: 37 )

1) How can I plan my day so that I have time to say my prayers and meditate each day?

2) Do I truly believe that God’s will and direction in my life each day will be a blessing to me?

3) In addition to prayer and meditation, when can I take time throughout the day to be still and hear the guidance and comfort of the spirit?

4) When confronted with serious problems and fears in my day, how can I remember to stop, pray and immediately turn my concern, anger, or fear over to God?

5) What areas of my life do I have the greatest need for guidance and direction from my Father in Heaven?

6) How can I remember and record the experiences I receive as the spirit strengthens and guides my life?

7) Ponder the difference between *expecting* blessings from our Father in Heaven and *demanding* blessings.

8) As I review the Serenity Prayer, how can I better apply its wisdom in my daily life?

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom [and inspiration from God] to know the difference. Living one day at a time . . . Trusting that He will make all things right, if I surrender to His will.”  
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<sup>16</sup> Dr.Reinhold Niebuhr

## STEP 12 - SERVICE

**KEY PRINCIPLE:** *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, share this message of hope and healing with others and practice these principles in all we do.*

*After reading each section, briefly discuss the information*

### Witnessing the Healing Path

We have witnessed great changes within our own lives after faithfully applying Steps One through Eleven. We gratefully choose to live the principles of the 12 Steps the rest of our lives. Through this process, we are empowered to face *all* of life's challenges. We have learned for ourselves that God can give us the power to do what we could never do on our own. It is through Him that we are able to overcome all that life's trials may bring. We have come to understand that great blessings and wisdom come from all that we face in mortality. Our faith has become strong in the knowledge that we are never alone. God will never, never forsake us. ([Heb. 13: 5](#))

As we are awakened to the Lord's healing blessings and power in our lives, we are also awakened to our responsibility to share our message of hope with others. Spouses in recovery write: "We see that in order to keep the spiritual life and serenity we now have, we must make a practice of 'giving it away' through our words and actions. We carry the message of hope found in our own story: how our lives have changed as the result of working the Twelve Steps."<sup>1</sup>

Family members who have found healing share: "Carrying the message means personal one-to-one sharing with one another. It means giving moral support, standing by and listening, without criticizing or condemning, to the troubles and misfortunes of another person and helping . . . her to find the path we have found."<sup>2</sup>

### By Love Serve Ye One Another

We serve others by witnessing of Christ's atoning power and how we have found His healing power. Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught, "In latter-day revelation the Lord has commanded that we 'succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees' ([D&C 81:5](#))." <sup>3</sup> President Henry B. Eyring reminded us to be a witness: "We daily live our lives as a witness of Jesus Christ's redeeming power. We are His disciples, we love as He loves and we serve as He would have us serve. . . . We faithfully demonstrate loving mercy and support to all those who are struggling with any test or trial or who are in any need of help. 'By love serve one another,' ([Gal. 5: 13](#)) always remembering to 'Pray for your welfare [that ye may remain strong in Christ] and for the welfare of those around you.' ([Alma 34: 27-28](#)) Now, your responsibility to touch lives might seem overwhelming. . . . You will need to love the people you serve. You will need to be humble and full of hope. You will need to have the Holy Ghost as your companion to know when to speak and what to say and how to testify."<sup>4</sup>

Elder Carlos Amado taught about the power of service, "I testify that through serving our fellowmen we come to know the Lord. It teaches us to think of the needs of others, which allows us to develop the virtues that the Savior possesses. . . Kindness, love, patience, understanding, and unity will increase as we serve, while intolerance, jealousy, envy, greed, and selfishness decrease or disappear. . . Those who serve will strive to ennoble, build, and lift their fellowmen; therefore, they will find the good in others, and they will not find reason or have time to become offended. . . . They don't expect recognition or reward. They possess the love of Christ. Those who serve will always be willing to share what they possess and what they know at all times, in all places, and with all people. Those who serve even in adversity will maintain a living hope of a better future. They will continue to be firm in the midst of a crisis because their hope is in Christ. Those who serve will accept their assignments with humility, recognizing their limitations but convinced that two people can do all things they propose to do as long as one of the two people is God. . . Those who serve with devotion, even when things don't turn out the way they would like, are not easily discouraged, fatigued, or frustrated because the promise of peace of mind and the companionship of the Holy Spirit will never abandon them."<sup>5</sup>

### Be Willing to Give Support

It is important to remember that we are best able to serve others when we have applied the 12 Steps in our own lives first. We cannot bear witness of that which we do not know or understand for ourselves. "I have to have strength before I can use it, and I've found that the more I develop within myself, the more I have to give to others; the fuller my own cup, the greater becomes my natural desire to serve and to share."<sup>6</sup>

We must first succeed in obtaining His word and becoming truly converted ourselves ([D & C 11:21](#)). Then we have the opportunity to strengthen our sisters ([Luke 22:32](#)) Spouses using the Steps explained: "Working Step Twelve is 'gratitude in action' for what we have received. Our reward is the satisfaction of seeing lives changed. We know that our experience, though painful, has been transformed and can benefit others."<sup>7</sup>

Our understanding and experience are especially needed by sisters who are facing the same challenges we have faced. As Elder James E. Faust taught so well, "To whom do we look, in days of grief and disaster, for help and consolation? . . . They are men and women who have suffered, and out of their experience in suffering they bring forth the riches of their sympathy and condolences as a blessing to those now in need. Could they do this had they not suffered themselves?"<sup>8</sup>

### Approaching Others

How do we carry our message of hope and healing to others? Our support group meetings provide an opportunity for us to reach out in love and understanding. In addition to interacting with the sisters in our support groups, we may be given the opportunity to talk to others who are facing the challenge of having a loved one suffering from sexual addiction. They may not be aware of the

<sup>1</sup> *S-Anon International Family Groups*, p. 151

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Anon's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p.76

<sup>3</sup> Dallin H. Oaks, "Why Do We Serve?," *Ensign*, Nov 1984 [Link](#)

<sup>4</sup> Henry B. Eyring, "To Touch a Life with Faith," *Ensign*, Nov 1995 [Link](#)

<sup>5</sup> Carlos H. Amado, "Service, a Divine Quality," *Ensign*, May 2008 [Link](#)

<sup>6</sup> Louise Brown, "Learning to Love Myself," *Ensign*, Mar 1982 [Link](#)

<sup>7</sup> *S-Anon International Family Groups*, p. 152

<sup>8</sup> James E. Faust, "Refined in our Trials" *Ensign*, Feb. 2006 [Link](#)

helpful principles taught in 12 Step recovery groups. A bishop or Relief Society president may invite us to reach out to someone in our ward or neighborhood. We may also come into contact with sisters through extended family, school, work or other social situations. Whatever our situation may be, we always seek to be prayerful while we help, love and encourage.

### ***What We Share***

We can offer friendship and support through personal visits or telephone calls. The greatest gift we can provide to anyone who is suffering is the witness of hope, healing, and faith that we have discovered by the grace of God. We share our knowledge that our Heavenly Father, our brother Jesus Christ and our comforter the Holy Ghost will never fail to help us, if we are willing to turn to them in faith.

We are careful to protect our loved ones' anonymity as we share our own experiences without revealing personal details regarding ourselves or our spouses. We share with others what we have learned from applying the 12 Steps, and we also provide information about locations, dates and times of our own support group meetings. We lovingly extend an invitation to come and start on a healing path in the 12 Step program.

Those who have supported others in recovery counsel: "My role...is not to do things for the person I am trying to help but to *be* things; not to try to control and change [her] actions but, through understanding and awareness, to change my reactions. I will change my negatives to positives; fear to faith; contempt for what [she] does to respect for the potential within [her]; hostility to understanding; and manipulation or over protectiveness to release with love, not trying to make [her] fit a standard of image, but giving [her] an opportunity to pursue [her] own destiny, regardless of what [her] choice may be. I will change my dominance to encouragement; panic to serenity....despair to the energy of my own personal growth; and self-justification to self-understanding....I will have no thought for the future actions of others, neither expecting them to be better or worse as time goes on.... I will love and let be. All people are always changing. If I try to judge them, I do so only on what I think I know of them, failing to realize there is much I do not know. I will give others credit for attempts at progress and for having had many victories which are unknown. I, too, am always changing, and I can make that change a constructive one, if I am willing. I CAN CHANGE MYSELF. Others, I can only love."<sup>9</sup> May the Lord help us to bless the lives of all those who are willing to seek understanding concerning the powerful spiritual principles of the 12 Step program.

### **Guidelines for Giving Support**

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1. Each time we offer support, we prayerfully ask the Lord which principles, scriptures or practices of the 12-step program will be most helpful in our conversations with the person we are working with.
2. We encourage and provide empathy but we are careful to avoid participating in continual conversations that involve negative venting or blaming.
3. We witness of the powerful principles we have discovered as we have sought the guidance of our Father in Heaven and stayed on the back of the tandem bike (see Step 3). We respect the agency of others, for our role is not to fix or rescue but to guide them toward Christ.
4. As a support person we embrace humility. We encourage others rather than criticize them and we are honest without being hurtful or judgmental.
5. We ask questions rather than give directives. Such as:
  - a. When you feel that emotion or think that thought, where do you think that it is coming from? (our own fears, anger, shame, etc. or from the adversary, or the expressed doubts and fears of others)
  - b. What could you do to help yourself in those moments? (Pray, call your support person, read step materials, etc.)
  - c. What Step might benefit you in this situation?
6. We do the best we can to be patient. Others may repeat unhealthy behaviors and be slow to adopt the principles and practices of recovery. We remember that the journey of recovery is unique for every individual, including the support person and to those we give support. We resist the temptation to point out the weaknesses in others, for it simply is not our job.
7. We celebrate others' success through affirmation, kindness and gentle encouragement.
8. We respect ourselves by honoring our personal commitments to our family, the Church, professional endeavors, personal time and our own recovery. Our agreement to act as a support person does not entitle our sponsee to unlimited access to our time and resources.
9. We give freely and remember that service is selfless, not selfish. We do not seek rewards through praise from others. We simply give out of the desire to help others obtain their own recoveries.
10. We discern when our ability to help a sponsee is beyond the capacity of our knowledge or experience. Sometimes people we work with are emotionally and physically at risk or may even be suicidal. *When we have concerns we strongly encourage those we are working with seek professional counseling from a qualified therapist.*
11. We are careful to continue our own recovery while not giving in to the temptation to relapse into codependent behaviors with those we are helping. These behaviors may include rescuing, controlling, condemning or judging them. We remain aware that we can also become codependent through feelings of fear, impatience, anger, resentment, etc. towards those we are supporting. If and when we feel these things, we return to Step One to remind ourselves of our proper role.

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<sup>9</sup>Melody Beattie, *Codependents Guide to the Twelve Steps*, 192-193

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND ANSWER

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- 1) How has living the 12 Steps blessed my life? Has it been a gradual change or did it come quickly?
- 2) Have I skipped over some steps and not applied them fully? If so, how can I commit to work them more completely in my life?
- 3) In helping others, how can I maintain a wise balance and put first my own recovery and my commitment to my marriage and family?
- 4) In helping others how am I encouraging them to not become dependent upon me but encouraging them to learn to depend upon God?
- 5) Am I a living example of the 12 steps? Do I apply the principles of the 12 steps in all areas of my life?