

**“Caring for One Another”**  
Romans 8:35-37-39, John 1:1-5

One of my colleagues once said, “If you want to meet God, go to A.A. meetings.” Our church hosts 12 Step programs five evenings a week for those who are in the recovery process from substance abuse, mostly drugs and alcohol. The 12 Step program they use for recovery is truly spiritual.

The Preface to The Recovery Bible, which is often used in the recovery process, says: “Many of us are just waking up to the fact that recovery is an essential part of life for everyone. It is the simple but challenging process of daily seeking God’s will for our life instead of demanding to go our own way. Recovery is letting God do for us what we cannot do for ourselves while also taking the steps necessary to draw closer to our Creator and Redeemer. It is allowing God to heal our wounded soul so we can help others in the process of healing. All of us need to take part in this process; it is an inherent part of being human.”

There are many groups that use 12 Step program born out of Alcoholic Anonymous: Adult Children of Alcoholics, Al-Anon for friends and families of alcoholics, Gamblers Anonymous, Co-Dependents Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Nar-Anon for friends and family members of addicts, Clutterers Anonymous, Debtors Anonymous, Food Addicts Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Smokers Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Workaholics Anonymous, just to name some.

Somewhere along the way, I think we are, if not all but most of us are, qualified to belong to one of those groups. Some of you may be familiar with 12 Step principles, but let me share with you the recovery process this program offers to all who would like to recover from various addictive or compulsive behaviors or other behavioral issues.

1. We **admitted** that we were **powerless** over our dependencies - that our life had become unmanageable.

It always starts with admitting, doesn’t it? Admitting gives us room to turn around and to make changes in our lives.

The next word that stands out here is “powerless.” It’s not helplessness, but admitting that we are powerless over certain challenges in our lives. We cannot do it alone. We cannot make things happen, however we want them to happen, and we want to make changes in our lives.

Do you recall the words of the Apostle Paul in the book of Romans?

*<sup>15</sup> For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>18</sup>... For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. (Romans 7:15, 18-19)*

I bet Paul felt powerless over some of his behaviors. Changes in our lives begin with our coming terms with admitting our flaws and our own powerlessness over them.

2. We came to **believe** that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

This is a stage of believing that God can help us. We cannot, but God can. This is the stage of starting to see light ahead. As John 1: 5 says, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

3. We made a **decision** to turn our will and our life over to the care of God.

Not just believing that God can change our lives, this third step is making a conscious decision on our part to turn our will and control of our lives to God. Now life starts to take a different direction - from one of powerlessness and hopelessness to one that is hopeful and trusts in an all-powerful God.

Steps 4 to 9 are house cleaning steps, a time to utilize the power of God in the cleansing process of one’s inner self. With God’s forgiveness over our unhealthy behaviors, it is time to forgive ourselves and to forgive others - a time for healing to take place in relationships - with God, with ourselves and with others.

4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. We **admitted** to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Admitting is confession, isn’t it? Telling someone we trust the nature of our wrongs or the behaviors we would like to change or need to change is another step in the recovery process. We can unburden ourselves - there are no longer secrets! What a relief unburdening is!

6. We were entirely **ready** to have God remove all these defects of character. Now we are ready and set to have God's power to come in to help us, to change us, to have our lives move to a different direction. Ready and set. "Go" is the seventh step.
7. We **humbly asked God** to remove our shortcomings. This is "humble surrender" before God.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. It is now time to roll up our sleeves to make amends to those who we have hurt.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Steps 10 to 12 get us on a continual process of healing, peace and growth.

10. We continue to take **personal inventory** and when we were wrong, promptly **admitted** it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of **God's will for us and the power to carry it out.**
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to **carry this message to others and to practice** these principles in all our affairs.

Recently I felt that I had experienced some of those steps in my life. As most of you know, my husband has been suffering from a serious lung disease. He is now receiving a special treatment in Ohio.

When my grief became unmanageable, I admitted before God that I was totally powerless over our future. All the plans we had made about our future- immediate and in the long run—were crushed one after another. (p.p. Sep 1)

I admitted before God that God had won and I had lost. I do not mean that God caused the lung disease in my husband. It means that my control of my life and his is over. God has our future in God's hands and it is not in our hands. We didn't have

our future in our hands to begin with, but I thought we did. I sensed deeply that God is the Creator of our lives and the Potter; and we are the clay in God's hands. I experienced deeper surrendering of our lives to God.

Then something shifted in me. Instead feeling defeated, I experienced peace—probably it is the peace that passes human understanding, which only God can give to us. (P.P. Step 2 and 3)

So my recovery process, healing process, continues, taking each day at a time. The recovery process continues for all who attend various 12 Step programs. The recovery process and empowerment process continues with all who desire to have a healthier life and healing in body, mind, soul and in relationships.

God heals us. God restores us. God empowers us to move forward as we surrender our lives to God. For “nothing, in God's creation, can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.”

Since we are not perfect and only God is perfect, in one way or another, we are all in recovery - letting God do for us what we cannot do for ourselves while also taking the steps necessary to draw closer to our creator and Redeemer.

So as fellow travelers in recovery, let's extend our kindness to those who are in 12 Step programs, those who are struggling with substance abuse or any kind of abuse. Let's stand with those who are suffering from their loved one's substance abuse.

Together, we will not be overcome by darkness but we will let the light of Christ shine among us. Amen.