



Turning to God

*From Addiction to Recovery –
Finding a Spritual Path*

GOOD NEWS TRANSLATION



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Turning to God

GOOD NEWS TRANSLATION

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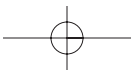
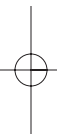
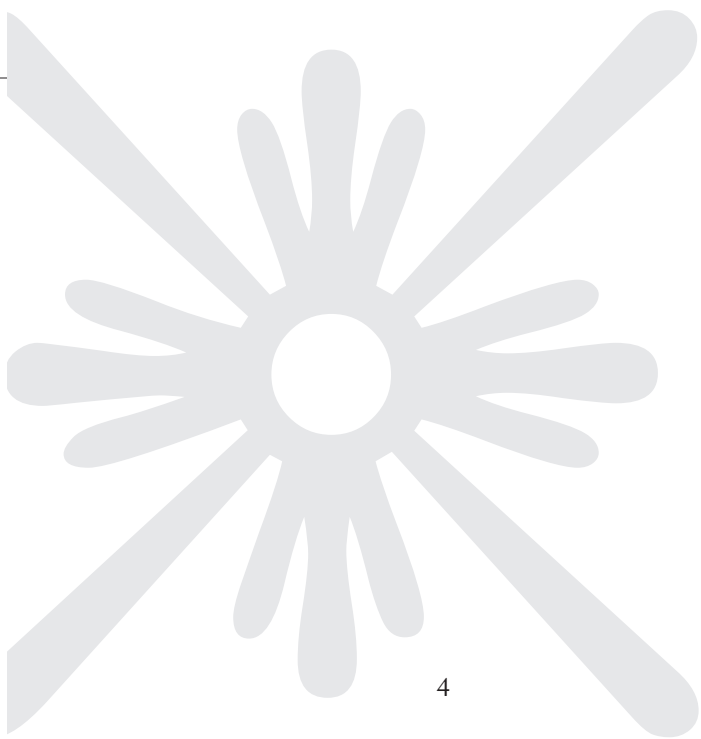
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Introduction

If you are struggling with a substance abuse problem—alcohol abuse, drug abuse—or if your life is ruled by an out-of-control behavior problem such as compulsive gambling or spending, an eating disorder, or an unhealthy emotional or sexual dependency, you may be in despair because the problem has gone beyond your ability to control it.

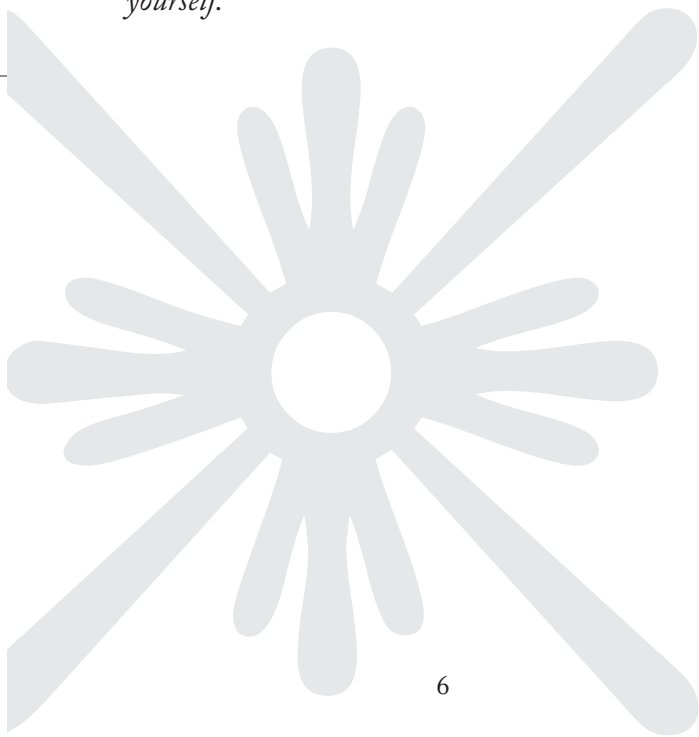
Many people who have felt this same despair, have turned to God for help, and have found freedom, hope, and joy in their lives.

They discovered that no matter how great the amount of will power they possessed, believing in their own power to solve their problem was not the answer. Believing that there is one greater than themselves, and turning their lives over to that higher power was the only way to begin a life-long walk to full recovery, one day at a time.

This Scripture booklet will help to guide you on a spiritual path that leads to knowing God, trusting God, inviting God into your life and moving

forward under God's direction and care. The four sections of this booklet mark four important phases on your path toward spiritual fulfillment and fellowship with God.

Take time to read each section carefully, absorb its message, and discuss what you've learned with others who are earnestly seeking to recover from painful addictions. As you do this, seek the special guidance of individuals you feel you can trust and whose spiritual walk with God you admire. Pray for God's help in putting these lessons into practice, and trust that God can do for you what you cannot do for yourself.





Surrender to God

It is a frightening experience to be powerless over something—to be unable to break free of a compulsion that enslaves you. You have tried, time and again, to use your own strength to overcome your addiction and shame. But using sheer will power hasn't brought you freedom or recovery. You have faced the fact that you cannot manage your life or control your addictive behavior. But believe that what you cannot do, God can.

If you feel far away from God, you may be asking yourself, "Who is God, and why should I put my trust in God?"

God is the powerful creator who made you and knows all about you. At the same time, God is patient and concerned, and loves you just as you are. God created all things and possesses power and love which are unlimited. Though infinite in power and grace, God is not far off. God seeks a personal relationship with you and is happy to have you know him.

And, God wants you to recover and offers you the faith and strength you need to begin a lifetime practice of trusting and relying upon him. As you pray to learn God's will for your life and begin to carry it out, you will see your life improve—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

God Sees Your Suffering

Since the creation of humankind, people have struggled with destructive compulsions. Thousands of years ago, an Old Testament writer described, possibly from personal experience, what it feels like to be in the grips of a powerful addiction. You may be experiencing that same feeling today.

Show me people who drink too much, who have to try out fancy drinks, and I will show you people who are miserable and sorry for themselves, always causing trouble and always complaining. Their eyes are bloodshot, and they have bruises that could have been avoided. Don't let wine tempt you, even though it is rich red, and it sparkles in the cup, and it goes down smoothly. The next morning you will feel as if you had been bitten by a poisonous snake. Weird sights will

appear before your eyes, and you will not be able to think or speak clearly. You will feel as if you were out on the ocean, seasick, swinging high up in the rigging of a tossing ship. "I must have been hit," you will say; "I must have been beaten up, but I don't remember it. Why can't I wake up? I need another drink."

Proverbs 23.29-35

God Will Hear You

Many people who have felt this same despair have called out to God, who has answered, though God's answer has not always been recognized and accepted. Believe that you are valuable in God's eyes. Know that God is waiting for you to call out, and that God will hear you.

I love the LORD, because he hears me;
 he listens to my prayers.
He listens to me
 every time I call to him.
The danger of death was all around me;
 the horrors of the grave closed in on me;
 I was filled with fear and anxiety.
Then I called to the LORD,
 "I beg you, LORD, save me!"

The LORD is merciful and good;
our God is compassionate.
The LORD protects the helpless;
when I was in danger, he saved me.
Be confident, my heart,
because the LORD has been good to me.

Psalm 116.1-7

God Will Help You

When you call on the Almighty, God will come to your aid. No matter how dangerous a situation may seem, God can rescue you, turn your life around and lead you to joy and peace.

I waited patiently for the LORD's help;
then he listened to me and heard my cry.
He pulled me out of a dangerous pit,
out of the deadly quicksand.
He set me safely on a rock
and made me secure.
He taught me to sing a new song,
a song of praise to our God.
Many who see this will take warning
and will put their trust in the LORD.

Happy are those who trust the LORD,
who do not turn to idols
or join those who worship false gods.
You have done many things for us, O LORD
our God;
there is no one like you!
You have made many wonderful plans
for us.
I could never speak of them all—
their number is so great!

. . .

LORD, I know you will never stop being
merciful to me.
Your love and loyalty will always keep
me safe.

I am surrounded by many troubles—
too many to count!
My sins have caught up with me,
and I can no longer see;
they are more than the hairs of my head,
and I have lost my courage.
Save me, LORD! Help me now!
May those who try to kill me
be completely defeated and confused.
May those who are happy because of my
troubles
be turned back and disgraced.
May those who make fun of me
be dismayed by their defeat.

May all who come to you
be glad and joyful.
May all who are thankful for your salvation
always say,
“How great is the LORD!”

I am weak and poor, O LORD,
but you have not forgotten me.
You are my savior and my God—
hurry to my aid!

Psalm 40.1-5, 11-17

God Will Free You from Blame and Punishment

Do not put off seeking God's help because you feel unworthy or deserving of punishment, or because you blame yourself for your sickness. In the Bible's account of Jesus' healing a man born blind, Jesus makes it clear that illness is not a punishment for wrongdoings, but an occasion for God's power to work in human lives.

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been born blind. His disciples asked him, “Teacher, whose sin caused him to be born blind? Was it his own or his parents' sin?”

Jesus answered, "His blindness has nothing to do with his sins or his parents' sins. He is blind so that God's power might be seen at work in him. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light for the world."

After he said this, Jesus spat on the ground and made some mud with the spittle; he rubbed the mud on the man's eyes and told him, "Go and wash your face in the Pool of Siloam." (This name means "Sent.") So the man went, washed his face, and came back seeing.

His neighbors, then, and the people who had seen him begging before this, asked, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?"

Some said, "He is the one," but others said, "No he isn't; he just looks like him."

So the man himself said, "I am the man."

"How is it that you can now see?" they asked him.

He answered, "The man called Jesus made some mud, rubbed it on my eyes, and told me to go to Siloam and wash my face. So I went, and as soon as I washed, I could see."

John 9.1-11

God Loves You and Forgives You

God is love, and acts lovingly. In this Psalm, God's loving and forgiving nature is revealed so that you can know that God will accept you completely, if you put your trust in him.

Praise the LORD, my soul!
All my being, praise his holy name!
Praise the LORD, my soul,
and do not forget how kind he is.
He forgives all my sins
and heals all my diseases.
He keeps me from the grave
and blesses me with love and mercy.
He fills my life with good things,
so that I stay young and strong like
an eagle.

The LORD judges in favor of the oppressed
and gives them their rights.
He revealed his plans to Moses
and let the people of Israel see his
mighty deeds.
The LORD is merciful and loving,
slow to become angry and full of
constant love.
He does not keep on rebuking;
he is not angry forever.

He does not punish us as we deserve
or repay us according to our sins
and wrongs.

As high as the sky is above the earth,
so great is his love for those who
honor him.

As far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our sins from us.

As a father is kind to his children,
so the LORD is kind to those who
honor him.

Psalm 103.1-13

In the parable of the returning son, Jesus helps you to understand that God is always waiting to welcome and forgive those who have been lost.

Jesus went on to say, “There was once a man who had two sons. The younger one said to him, ‘Father, give me my share of the property now.’ So the man divided his property between his two sons. After a few days the younger son sold his part of the property and left home with the money. He went to a country far away, where he wasted his money in reckless living. He spent everything he had. Then a severe famine spread over that

country, and he was left without a thing. So he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him out to his farm to take care of the pigs. He wished he could fill himself with the bean pods the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything to eat. At last he came to his senses and said, 'All my father's hired workers have more than they can eat, and here I am about to starve! I will get up and go to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired workers."' So he got up and started back to his father.

"He was still a long way from home when his father saw him; his heart was filled with pity, and he ran, threw his arms around his son, and kissed him. 'Father,' the son said, 'I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.' But the father called to his servants. 'Hurry!' he said. 'Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Then go and get the prize calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast! For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.' And so the feasting began.

"In the meantime the older son was out in the field. On his way back, when he came

close to the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him, 'What's going on?' 'Your brother has come back home,' the servant answered, 'and your father has killed the prize calf, because he got him back safe and sound.' The older brother was so angry that he would not go into the house; so his father came out and begged him to come in. But he spoke back to his father, 'Look, all these years I have worked for you like a slave, and I have never disobeyed your orders. What have you given me? Not even a goat for me to have a feast with my friends! But this son of yours wasted all your property on prostitutes, and when he comes back home, you kill the prize calf for him!' 'My son,' the father answered, 'you are always here with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be happy, because your brother was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.'"

Luke 15.11-32

God's readiness to forgive is emphasized in one of Jesus' last acts before his death when he forgave a criminal on the cross.

One of the criminals hanging there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

The other one, however, rebuked him, saying, “Don’t you fear God? You received the same sentence he did. Ours, however, is only right, because we are getting what we deserve for what we did; but he has done no wrong.” And he said to Jesus, “Remember me, Jesus, when you come as King!”

Jesus said to him, “I promise you that today you will be in Paradise with me.”

Luke 23.39-43

God Will Help You Increase Your Faith

Do you find it difficult to trust anyone? Have you been disappointed when you trusted others, or even yourself? Know that God is truly trustworthy and faith in God is what makes all things possible. Use the faith you have, no matter how little you feel it is.

The apostles said to the Lord, “Make our faith greater.”

The Lord answered, “If you had faith as big as a mustard seed, you could say to this

mulberry tree, 'Pull yourself up by the roots and plant yourself in the sea!' and it would obey you."

Luke 17.5,6

God Responds to Our Faith with Miracles

Time and again God has shown the great things that faith can do. Live each day in faith and know that God will bring about great things in your life.

To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see. It was by their faith that people of ancient times won God's approval.

It is by faith that we understand that the universe was created by God's word, so that what can be seen was made out of what cannot be seen.

. . .

It was faith that made Abraham obey when God called him to go out to a country which God had promised to give him. He left his own country without knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as a foreigner

in the country that God had promised him. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who received the same promise from God. For Abraham was waiting for the city which God has designed and built, the city with permanent foundations.

It was faith that made Abraham able to become a father, even though he was too old and Sarah herself could not have children. He trusted God to keep his promise. Though Abraham was practically dead, from this one man came as many descendants as there are stars in the sky, as many as the numberless grains of sand on the seashore.

It was in faith that all these persons died. They did not receive the things God had promised, but from a long way off they saw them and welcomed them, and admitted openly that they were foreigners and refugees on earth. Those who say such things make it clear that they are looking for a country of their own. They did not keep thinking about the country they had left; if they had, they would have had the chance to return. Instead, it was a better country they longed for, the heavenly country. And so God is not ashamed for them to call him their God, because he has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 11.1-3, 8-16

God Will Transform You

Surrendering to God is an act of faith. If you are willing to make this commitment to rely only on God, you will begin to see your life turn around.

So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

Romans 12.1,2

God Will Give You Power to Begin a New Life

The power and love that is God's gift through Jesus Christ is beyond any you have known. It will prepare you for all of the challenges that you will face in recovery.

For this reason I fall on my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its true name. I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you power through his Spirit to be strong in your inner selves, and I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, so that you, together with all God's people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love. Yes, may you come to know his love—although it can never be fully known—and so be completely filled with the very nature of God.

To him who by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of: to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all time, forever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3.14-21



Walk with God

Once you have turned your life over to God, your path to spiritual fulfillment becomes a matter of a daily walk with him. As you strive each day to know and do God's will, you will be able to live according to the standards and conduct God desires for you.

Walking hand in hand with God as you move forward in life requires spiritual work every day: honest self-examination, a hard look at all your strengths and weaknesses, the admission to God of your wrongdoings and deepest fears. This confession will free you from the secrets and shame which have kept you isolated and alone.

Seeking the Lord humbly and simply through daily prayer will bring you closer to God and increase your willingness to let go of all those things which are destroying you.

Together with God, all things are possible. With God you will discover new direction and new meaning in your life.

Striving to Obey God's Laws

God has shown us time and again how to live. God has given us standards to live by and has shown us great love. The Ten Commandments were given to the Israelites to help them live peacefully together as God wanted them to. Throughout the centuries, the Ten Commandments have become a universal standard for moral conduct and fairness, a measuring stick against which all people can judge themselves.

God spoke, and these were his words: "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, where you were slaves.

"Worship no god but me.

"Do not make for yourselves images of anything in heaven or on earth or in the water under the earth. Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am the LORD your God and I tolerate no rivals. I bring punishment on those who hate me and on their descendants down to the third and fourth generation. But I show my love to thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my laws.

"Do not use my name for evil purposes,

for I, the LORD your God, will punish anyone who misuses my name.

“Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. You have six days in which to do your work, but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to me. On that day no one is to work—neither you, your children, your slaves, your animals, nor the foreigners who live in your country. In six days I, the LORD, made the earth, the sky, the seas, and everything in them, but on the seventh day I rested. That is why I, the LORD, blessed the Sabbath and made it holy.

“Respect your father and your mother, so that you may live a long time in the land that I am giving you.

“Do not commit murder.

“Do not commit adultery.

“Do not steal.

“Do not accuse anyone falsely.

“Do not desire another man’s house; do not desire his wife, his slaves, his cattle, his donkeys, or anything else that he owns.”

Exodus 20.1-17

Setting Your Priorities

Jesus defines even more clearly what is most important. His commandment to love sets a standard for all of your dealings with other people.

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they came together, and one of them, a teacher of the Law, tried to trap him with a question. “Teacher,” he asked, “which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22.34-40

Discovering the Joy of Being Honest with God

Nothing can be hidden from God. God knows you and is ready to forgive your wrongdoings if you are willing to confess them. By seeking God's forgiveness each day, you are welcoming the opportunity to make a new start.

You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins. Confess them and give them up; then God will show mercy to you.

Proverbs 28.13

Happy are those whose sins are forgiven,
whose wrongs are pardoned.
Happy is the one whom the LORD does not
accuse of doing wrong
and who is free from all deceit.

When I did not confess my sins,
I was worn out from crying all day long.
Day and night you punished me, LORD;
my strength was completely drained,
as moisture is dried up by the
summer heat.

Then I confessed my sins to you;
I did not conceal my wrongdoings.
I decided to confess them to you,
and you forgave all my sins.

. . .

The LORD says, "I will teach you the way
you should go;
I will instruct you and advise you.
Don't be stupid like a horse or a mule,
which must be controlled with a bit and
bridle
to make it submit."

The wicked will have to suffer,
but those who trust in the LORD
are protected by his constant love.
You that are righteous, be glad and rejoice
because of what the LORD has done.
You that obey him, shout for joy!

Psalm 32.1-5, 8-11

Overcoming the Obstacles

*If you are willing to free yourself, God can
remove the shortcomings that block your path
to recovery. But you must be ready to allow
God to take them a way.*

As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses around us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right side of God's throne.

Hebrews 12.1,2

Counting the Cost of Putting God First

Look realistically at the challenge you face every day. Your spiritual well-being must be the most important thing in your life. But putting God first is not easy. It means giving up the things which you've depended on and which have seemed to be so comfortable. Remember, as you count the costs, that with God at your side, you can walk through the most difficult circumstances.

Once when large crowds of people were going along with Jesus, he turned and said to them, “Those who come to me cannot be my disciples unless they love me more than they love father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and themselves as well. Those who do not carry their own cross and come after me cannot be my disciples. If one of you is planning to build a tower, you sit down first and figure out what it will cost, to see if you have enough money to finish the job. If you don’t, you will not be able to finish the tower after laying the foundation; and all who see what happened will make fun of you. ‘You began to build but can’t finish the job!’ they will say. If a king goes out with ten thousand men to fight another king who comes against him with twenty thousand men, he will sit down first and decide if he is strong enough to face that other king. If he isn’t, he will send messengers to meet the other king to ask for terms of peace while he is still a long way off. In the same way,” concluded Jesus, “none of you can be my disciple unless you give up everything you have.”

Luke 14.25-33

Learning to Talk with God

Prayer is an essential part of your relationship with God. Turn to God by praying as Jesus taught.

Our Father in heaven:

May your holy name be honored;
may your Kingdom come;
may your will be done on earth as it is in
heaven.

Give us today the food we need.

Forgive us the wrongs we have done,
as we forgive the wrongs that others
have done to us.

Do not bring us to hard testing,
but keep us safe from the Evil One.

Matthew 6.9b-13

Discovering the Power of Prayer

*Praying to God will strengthen your faith
and give you the power to forgive others.*

Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. I assure you that whoever tells this hill to get up and throw itself in the sea and does not

doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. For this reason I tell you: When you pray and ask for something, believe that you have received it, and you will be given whatever you ask for. And when you stand and pray, forgive anything you may have against anyone, so that your Father in heaven will forgive the wrongs you have done.”

Mark 11.22-25

Praying to Do God's Will

Jesus knew he could speak honestly to God about his fears. Even so, his greatest desire was to do his Father's will.

Jesus left the city and went, as he usually did, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples went with him. When he arrived at the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”

Then he went off from them about the distance of a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed. “Father,” he said, “if you will, take this cup of suffering away from me. Not my will, however, but your will be done.” An angel from heaven appeared to him and

strengthened him. In great anguish he prayed even more fervently; his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Rising from his prayer, he went back to the disciples and found them asleep, worn out by their grief. He said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you will not fall into temptation.”

Luke 22.39-46

Approaching God with a Humble Spirit

Recovering from addiction and acknowledging your own shortcomings is a humbling experience. The task is easier when you know God delights in your coming with a humble heart.

Jesus also told this parable to people who were sure of their own goodness and despised everybody else. “Once there were two men who went up to the Temple to pray: one was a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood apart by himself and prayed, ‘I thank you, God, that I am not greedy, dishonest, or an adulterer, like everybody else. I thank you that I am not like that tax collector over there. I fast two days a week, and

I give you one tenth of all my income.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance and would not even raise his face to heaven, but beat on his breast and said, ‘God, have pity on me, a sinner!’ I tell you,” said Jesus, “the tax collector, and not the Pharisee, was in the right with God when he went home. For those who make themselves great will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be made great.”

Luke 18.9-14

Knowing What God Wants from You

Your relationship with God is based on sincerity, truth, and humility.

Sincerity and truth are what you require;
fill my mind with your wisdom.
Remove my sin, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear the sounds of joy and gladness;
and though you have crushed me and
broken me,
I will be happy once again.
Close your eyes to my sins
and wipe out all my evil.

Create a pure heart in me, O God,
and put a new and loyal spirit in me.

Do not banish me from your presence;
do not take your holy spirit away
from me.

Give me again the joy that comes from your
salvation,

and make me willing to obey you.

Then I will teach sinners your commands,
and they will turn back to you.

Spare my life, O God, and save me,
and I will gladly proclaim your
righteousness.

Help me to speak, Lord,
and I will praise you.

You do not want sacrifices,
or I would offer them;
you are not pleased with burnt offerings.
My sacrifice is a humble spirit, O God;
you will not reject a humble and
repentant heart.

Psalm 51.6-17

Living As God Requires

When your recovery seems difficult and complicated, reflect on the simplicity of what God desires of you.

What shall I bring to the LORD, the God of heaven, when I come to worship him? Shall I bring the best calves to burn as offerings to him? Will the LORD be pleased if I bring him thousands of sheep or endless streams of olive oil? Shall I offer him my first-born child to pay for my sins? No, the LORD has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.

Micah 6.6-8



Grow with God

With God in your life you are well on your way to recovery. But remember, recovery unfolds one day at a time. Continue your growth by monitoring your spiritual condition each day, noting the good you do as well as the wrong you do. Ask yourself how you can serve God, let go of selfish desires and help others.

Maintain a vibrant and sustaining relationship with God. Connecting with God through prayer and meditation will deepen that relationship, help you to understand God's will for your life, and give you the power to carry it out.

Finally, experience, as a result of your recovery, the satisfaction of passing on to others the knowledge and hope you've received from God. Because you have experienced the miracle of a new life, you can offer strength and hope to those who are still suffering from painful addictions. By sharing your experience, you will be able to rejoice as you see the miracle of their spiritual renewal, and, in helping them, you will strengthen your own recovery.

Let the Holy Spirit Direct Your Life

Rely on the Holy Spirit, rather than on your own weak human nature, for guidance.

Allow the Holy Spirit to work through you to bring good into the world.

What I say is this: let the Spirit direct your lives, and you will not satisfy the desires of the human nature. For what our human nature wants is opposed to what the Spirit wants, and what the Spirit wants is opposed to what our human nature wants. These two are enemies, and this means that you cannot do what you want to do. If the Spirit leads you, then you are not subject to the Law.

What human nature does is quite plain. It shows itself in immoral, filthy, and indecent actions; in worship of idols and witchcraft. People become enemies and they fight; they become jealous, angry, and ambitious. They separate into parties and groups; they are envious, get drunk, have orgies, and do other things like these. I warn you now as I have before: those who do these things will not possess the Kingdom of God.

But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. There is no law

against such things as these. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death their human nature with all its passions and desires. The Spirit has given us life; he must also control our lives. We must not be proud or irritate one another or be jealous of one another.

Galatians 5.16-26

Put Your Faith into Practice

Let your life be an example of your faith, through submission to God's will and service to others.

Remember this, my dear friends! Everyone must be quick to listen, but slow to speak and slow to become angry. Human anger does not achieve God's righteous purpose. So get rid of every filthy habit and all wicked conduct. Submit to God and accept the word that he plants in your hearts, which is able to save you.

Do not deceive yourselves by just listening to his word; instead, put it into practice. If you listen to the word, but do not put it into practice you are like people who look in a mirror and see themselves as they are. They

take a good look at themselves and then go away and at once forget what they look like. But if you look closely into the perfect law that sets people free, and keep on paying attention to it and do not simply listen and then forget it, but put it into practice—you will be blessed by God in what you do.

Do any of you think you are religious? If you do not control your tongue, your religion is worthless and you deceive yourself. What God the Father considers to be pure and genuine religion is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their suffering and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world.

James 1.19-27

Love God Above All

As you continue to grow spiritually, you will find yourself less determined to have your own way and less resentful of others. Strive for a life in which your actions match your beliefs.

My dear friends, this command I am writing you is not new; it is the old command, the one you have had from the very

beginning. The old command is the message you have already heard. However, the command I now write you is new, because its truth is seen in Christ and also in you. For the darkness is passing away, and the real light is already shining.

If we say that we are in the light, yet hate others, we are in the darkness to this very hour. If we love others, we live in the light, and so there is nothing in us that will cause someone else to sin. But if we hate others, we are in the darkness; we walk in it and do not know where we are going, because the darkness has made us blind.

Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world, you do not love the Father. Everything that belongs to the world—what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of—none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world. The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but those who do the will of God live forever.

1 John 2.7-11, 15-17

Aspire to a New Standard

As you learn to relate to the people around you, strive to treat everyone fairly and be willing to pursue God's standard of fairness.

Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too. And if someone takes you to court to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. And if one of the occupation troops forces you to carry his pack one mile, carry it two miles. When someone asks you for something, give it to him; when someone wants to borrow something, lend it to him."

Matthew 5.38-42

Look for Ways You Can Help Others

Plant a field of good deeds and kind acts and your harvest will be rich.

My friends, if someone is caught in any kind of wrongdoing, those of you who are spiritual should set him right; but you must do it in a gentle way. And keep an eye on yourselves, so that you will not be tempted, too. Help carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will obey the law of Christ. If it is good, then you can be proud of what you yourself have done, without having to compare it with what someone else has done. For each of you has to carry your own load.

If you are being taught the Christian message, you should share all the good things you have with your teacher.

Do not deceive yourselves; no one makes a fool of God. You will reap exactly what you plant. If you plant in the field of your natural desires, from it you will gather the harvest of death; if you plant in the field of the Spirit, from the Spirit you will gather the harvest of eternal life. So let us not become tired of doing good; for if we do not give up, the time will come when we will reap the harvest. So then, as often as we have the chance, we should do good to everyone, and especially to those who belong to our family in the faith.

Galatians 6.1-10

Guard Against Hurting Others

Treat others with tender-hearted concern.

No more lying, then! Each of you must tell the truth to the other believer, because we are all members together in the body of Christ. If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin, and do not stay angry all day. Don't give the Devil a chance. If you used to rob, you must stop robbing and start working, in order to earn an honest living for yourself and to be able to help the poor. Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you. And do not make God's Holy Spirit sad; for the Spirit is God's mark of ownership on you, a guarantee that the Day will come when God will set you free. Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ.

Ephesians 4.25-32

Avoid Judging Others

When you feel the need to judge someone else's life, first, take a look at your own thoughts and actions.

Jesus said, "Do not judge others, and God will not judge you; do not condemn others, and God will not condemn you; forgive others, and God will forgive you. Give to others, and God will give to you. Indeed, you will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands—all that you can hold. The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you."

And Jesus told them this parable: "One blind man cannot lead another one; if he does, both will fall into a ditch. No pupils are greater than their teacher; but all pupils, when they have completed their training, will be like their teacher.

"Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but pay no attention to the log in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Please, brother, let me take that speck out of your eye,' yet cannot even see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite! First take the log out of your own eye, and then you

will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”

Luke 6.37-42

Forgive as You Have Been Forgiven

Forgiving others is an important part of your service to God. Remember the message of Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant and be ready at all times to forgive others, because so much has been forgiven you.

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?”

“No, not seven times,” answered Jesus, “but seventy times seven, because the Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a king who decided to check on his servants' accounts. He had just begun to do so when one of them was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. The servant did not have enough to pay his debt, so the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, with his wife and his children and all that he had, in order to pay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before the king. ‘Be patient with me,’

he begged, 'and I will pay you everything!' The king felt sorry for him, so he forgave him the debt and let him go.

"Then the man went out and met one of his fellow servants who owed him a few dollars. He grabbed him and started choking him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he said. His fellow servant fell down and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back!' But he refused; instead, he had him thrown into jail until he should pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were very upset and went to the king and told him everything. So he called the servant in. 'You worthless slave!' he said. 'I forgave you the whole amount you owed me, just because you asked me to. You should have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you.' The king was very angry, and he sent the servant to jail to be punished until he should pay back the whole amount."

And Jesus concluded, "That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Matthew 18.21-35

Learn to Serve with Humility

Do not be overly proud of your accomplishments and success. Recovery is never completed. You are engaged in a life-long process. Continue each day to love and serve God with humility.

Do your work, not for mere pay, but from a real desire to serve. Do not try to rule over those who have been put in your care, but be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the glorious crown which will never lose its brightness.

In the same way you younger people must submit yourselves to your elders. And all of you must put on the apron of humility, to serve one another; for the scripture says, "God resists the proud, but shows favor to the humble." Humble yourselves, then, under God's mighty hand, so that he will lift you up in his own good time. Leave all your worries with him, because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5.2b-7

Find Joy in Service

You know that pursuit of worldly things does

not bring contentment. Find satisfaction in becoming a worker among the Lord's workers. As a member of God's family, demonstrate caring responsibility for others.

We beg you, our friends, to pay proper respect to those who work among you, who guide and instruct you in the Christian life. Treat them with the greatest respect and love because of the work they do. Be at peace among yourselves.

Be joyful always, pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5.12,13,16-18

Let Love Guide All You Do

I may be able to speak the languages of human beings and even of angels, but if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell. I may have the gift of inspired preaching; I may have all knowledge and understand all secrets; I may have all the faith needed to move mountains—but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may give away everything I have,

and even give up my body to be burned—but if I have no love, this does me no good.

Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail.

Love is eternal. There are inspired messages, but they are temporary; there are gifts of speaking in strange tongues, but they will cease; there is knowledge, but it will pass. For our gifts of knowledge and of inspired messages are only partial; but when what is perfect comes, then what is partial will disappear.

When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child; now that I am an adult, I have no more use for childish ways. What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror; then we shall see face-to-face. What I know now is only partial; then it will be complete—as complete as God's knowledge of me.

Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13



Stay with God

The Bible has much more to say about how turning to God on a daily basis can enrich your spiritual life and keep you on the path to recovery.

Begin today to make daily Bible reading an important spiritual exercise. Choose a Bible in a translation you can easily understand and appreciate, and make a commitment to read it each morning.

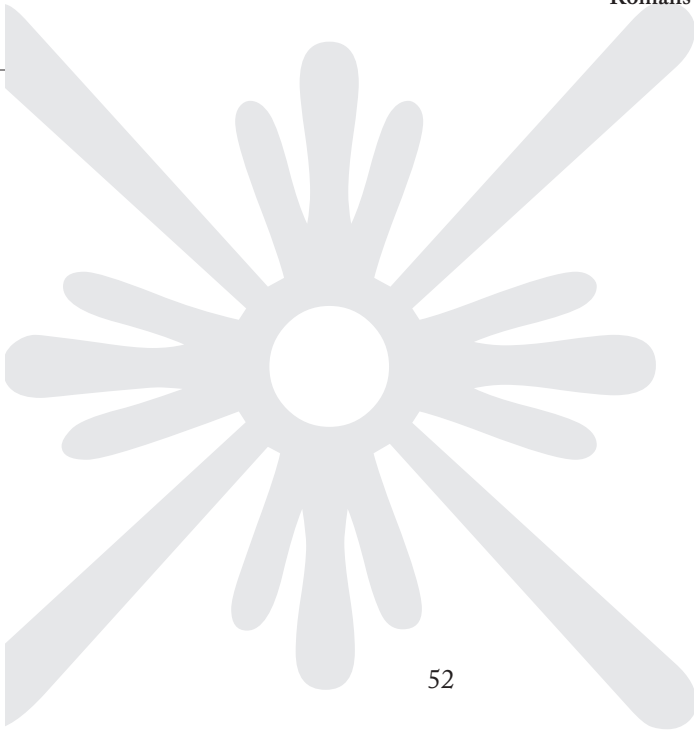
As you read through it, mark the passages that have a lot to say to you personally and which tell you something about God's nature. Many people have found that keeping a private journal is helpful. Record your thoughts, fears, hopes, and prayers. The more time you spend with God, the more you'll learn about his love and care.

And finally, as you grow in your knowledge and understanding, share what you've learned with others who are just beginning their own journey to

recovery, remembering as you do, what the apostle Paul taught:

Everything written in the Scriptures was written to teach us, in order that we might have hope through the patience and encouragement which the Scriptures give us. And may God, the source of patience and encouragement, enable you to have the same point of view among yourselves by following the example of Christ Jesus, so that all of you together may praise with one voice the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 15.4-6





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