

RISE

12 STEPS WITH JESUS

Justin LaRosa

WELCOME TO RISE, 12 STEPS WITH JESUS!

The 12 Steps can change your life, deepen your relationship with God, and allow you to practice resurrection in this life as we wait for the next. It's a fairly simple, straight-forward process. Yet, it is anything but easy.

Everyone experiences being powerless in life; it's unavoidable. Often when we think of being powerless, we imagine those struggling with addictions—drugs, alcohol, food, sex, pornography, relationships and gambling. Yet, the wisdom and power of the 12 steps are not just for those suffering with addictions, they are for you! Everyone has past or current hurts, hang-ups, habits or addictions, all of which create problems.

Hurts (past or present), hang-ups that we can't shake, mistakes we've made, or problematic habits that plague us do things like: hinder forgiveness, fill us with resentment, and keep us stuck in shame, melancholy or hurt. They negatively impact our relationship with God, others, and with ourselves.

In other words, they fracture relationships and disrupt peace. That's one definition of sin. Sin fractures relationship in four directions: between us and God; between us and ourselves; between us and others; and between us and the whole creation.

The Christian world understands that sin is both behavior and an orientation within us known as the sinful nature (Paul calls it the flesh.) The 12-step community names it a "disease" of the body and mind that manifests through fears, instinctual desires that are out of whack, or character defects. Christian belief teaches us that the antidote to sin is a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ that will save us, give us salvation (now and later), and help us live out the Greatest Commandment ("Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."). This is also known as atonement, which gives us peace with God, ourselves and others.

For 86 years, 12-Step communities have been offering hope and recovery. In fact, the 12 steps came from a Christian group called the Oxford Group. They had six steps, which the early founders of Alcoholics Anonymous altered and expanded upon.. The Oxford Group's steps were:

- Complete deflation
- Dependence on God
- A Moral Inventory
- Confession
- Restitution
- Work with others in need

This booklet, the sermon series, and a small group or partner experience will be a guide to witness the power and wisdom of the 12 Steps. It will outline the 12 Steps in a way that will cultivate your faith in Jesus Christ, deepening your love for God, neighbors and your enemies.

I often would jokingly remark to our previous senior pastor that, "The 12 steps often make better disciples of Jesus Christ than church." How could I make such a claim? They teach you to surrender, confess, make things right and guide others into relationship with God so that they can have faith in God. The 12 steps systematically guide a person to:

- Acknowledge the areas of your life in which you are powerless and ways that your life is a mess.
- Surrender to God, which paradoxically allows you to more deeply rely upon God.
- Turn your life over to Jesus Christ.
- Examine your sins, fears, character flaws, bad behavior and sexual conduct.
- Confess your sins and faults to God, yourself and another human being so that they don't hide in the shadows.
- Discern appropriate ways to make amends and atonement.
- Take daily inventory of your strengths and missteps, and promptly address them.
- Pray and meditate to increase your conscious contact with Jesus Christ.
- Guide others to experience the power of Jesus Christ.

These are Christian practices that equip us to "believe" and tangibly live a resurrected life of peace.

The 12 Steps as found in Alcoholics Anonymous. Notice that alcohol is only mentioned once:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

In this booklet, each of the 12 steps will be listed with the associated spiritual principle, scripture readings, a short overview, how it connects to following Jesus and living a resurrected life, and how to do each step. Have your Bible and a notebook available.

Creating peace means we must examine, uncover and discard the parts of our past, our character flaws, and our erroneous beliefs that block us from God and are the root of our habits, hang ups and hurts. This process will provide some practical ways to create:

- Peace with God (Steps 1-3)
- Peace with self (Steps 4-7)
- Peace with others (Steps 8-10)
- Keeping, growing and sharing the peace (Steps 11-12)

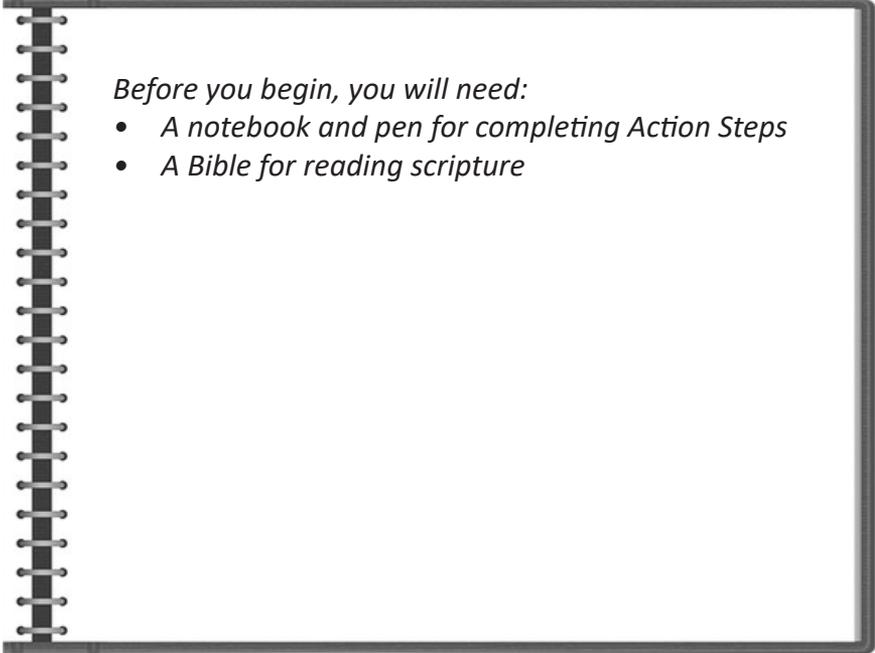
This journey is not an easy one. Like most challenging journeys, it is better when it's done together. Watch the sermons, use the guide, work with a person you trust, and if possible, do it with a small group community. If you're seeking to grow in your relationship with God, revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, come and invite a friend.

Let's allow the power of the Risen Christ to resurrect us. Let's rise together, practice resurrection, and be disciples of Jesus who make other disciples and make God's love real.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin LaRosa". The script is fluid and cursive.

Rev. Justin LaRosa

A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a black cover and silver spiral binding on the left side. The notebook is open to a blank white page.

Before you begin, you will need:

- *A notebook and pen for completing Action Steps*
- *A Bible for reading scripture*

Step 1

I admitted I am powerless over _____
and all or part of my life is unmanageable.

Spiritual Principle

Surrender/Acceptance

Overview

I can't fix it (whatever it is.)
I am waving the white flag of
surrender.

We all struggle with something—a past hurt that haunts us, a habit we can't shake, or an ongoing addiction to a person, place or thing. This first step is done when we hit bottom, meaning we deeply recognize that we can't change the situation. We've tried and failed. Our resources - financial, emotional and spiritual - aren't enough to solve the problem.

The younger son in the Prodigal story below "came to himself." He realized that the way he was living wasn't working anymore. He hit bottom. The Romans text also illustrates the "I can't" posture well, highlighting the power of our sinful nature. **We keep doing things we don't want to do, and expect things to change.** They don't. In most movies, it's the moment when the protagonist hits bottom and doesn't see a way out.

This is the deep realization that I am powerless over _____ and parts or all of my life are unmanageable. Defining that our life is unmanageable can sometimes be tricky. Another way to say this is you're attempting to control something, whatever it is that you're powerless over, and isn't working. Insanity is doing the same thing over and expecting different results. Your hurt, habit, hang up, or addiction is taking time, thought and emotional energy, and other resources. But you keep doing it anyway. When we accept it and surrender to the reality of our inability to fix our problem, and that our problem has made our life a mess, we have completed Step 1.

Read Scriptures NRSV: Luke 15:13-17, Romans 7:15-19

Romans 7:15-19 15 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. 17 But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.

Why it matters: Everyone who follows Jesus must acknowledge their need for God and God's grace.

Your dependency, hurts, habits and hang ups can block you from God and peace. They are sinful and disrupt your relationship with God, yourself and others. As a result, you have probably negatively impacted others. Naming the places in your life where you are powerless, the unmanageability, and what you have lost is important. Writing yourself a letter of forgiveness allows you to begin the process of letting go of regret and shame.

You will know in a deeper way the powerlessness of the cross of Christ. Jesus is also with you in that pain—he is Immanuel—God with us.

Action Step 1: Name it and claim it.

Claim that by your own effort you are powerless to quit your dependency. In your notebook, create a list using the examples of dependency below.

Alcohol and/or drugs	Food	Power/Control
Sex	Money	Overspending
Approval of others	Your intellect	Religion
Gambling, hoarding	Exercise/conditioning	Pornography
Addicted family member	Overworking	Romantic relationships
Other _____	Other _____	Other _____

Action Step 2: Review the unmanageability and losses.

Part of naming and claiming is putting down what is unmanageable and what you have lost as result.

In your notebook, list the areas of your life that are unmanageable. For example, "My checkbook never seems to balance.", "My wife and I fight all the time." "I can't keep a relationship." "I give all my time and money away to my addicted family member."

Now review and acknowledge your losses. Ponder what your dependency on the things in Action Step 1 have cost you. Have you chosen these things over relationships? Have you used these things to comfort yourself when you are hurting? What has been the effect of using _____ to bring you a sense of being "ok" with yourself or others (including God)?

In your notebook, list the effects of your dependency.

Action Step 3: Pray to Jesus Christ.

Write a short statement in your notebook that embodies Action Steps 1 and 2. This will be the foundation of your prayer to Jesus Christ.

For example, "I acknowledge that I, by my individual human effort alone, am powerless over my dependence on _____. As a consequence of this addiction/compulsion to _____, my life has become painful and unmanageable."

Action Step 4: Write a forgiveness letter to yourself.

Write a letter to yourself expressing forgiveness and compassion.

1. Express understanding to yourself about who you are in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)
2. Express empathy about the pain of your unsuccessful efforts to live well in the face of heartache, success, challenge or disappointment.
3. Recognize that in the practice of all your harmful addictions/behaviors you were doing the best you knew how, considering your resources and your background.

Adapted from: Hemfelt, Fowler, Minirth Meirer (1991). *The Path to Serenity*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. P31-37

This prayer is developed from the chapter, *More About Alcoholism* and has Justin LaRosa's additions

Step 2

Come to believe that a power greater than myself (God, Jesus Christ) could restore my spirit.

Spiritual Principle

Hope

Overview

I am willing to believe that God can fix it. This takes hope.

Step 1 asserts the notion of “I can’t.” Step 2 is coming to the realization and hope that “God can.” Step 1 acknowledges and surrenders you to the truth that you can’t fix it. When you’ve become honest about naming your powerlessness and that part or all of your life is a mess, that there were negative outcomes as a result, and that you can’t fix it and maybe God can, then you’re ready for Step 2.

Not much hope is required. Even a smidgen of hope that God can help you navigate the mess, the behavior, and your hurt, habit, and hang-up will suffice. Said differently, it is believing that Jesus Christ can help restore your mind and your heart to right thinking and living. In the scripture below, the father of the sick boy needed to discover hope to believe. “I believe Jesus; help my unbelief.”

Read Scriptures NRSV: Luke 15:18-19, Philippians 2:13, Mark 9:17-24

Mark 9: 17-24 17 Someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; 18 and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so.” 19 He answered them, “You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.” 20 And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. 21 Jesus asked the father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. 22 It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us.” 23 Jesus said to him, “If you are able!—**All things can be done for the one who believes.**” 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!”

When you've lost control, or something isn't working, all that is required is just a bit of hope. That's what the father had in the Mark scripture, he asked for help with hope/belief. In Luke's story, the younger son had a bit of hope that his dad would take him back, even though he had been terrible to him. Little did he know how much God rejoices when we turn, acknowledge and believe.

Why it matters: Being a follower of Jesus means that you believe that a relationship with God matters and will aid you in any situation, including whatever you have lost and whatever is making parts of your life unmanageable.

With regard to your hurt, habit, or hang up, it might be, that belief is being tested in real life and in real time. You must have hope, or be willing to have hope, that God will restore you to right mind and spirit.

Action Step: Believe that Jesus Christ/God/your higher power can help you; even if you have doubt. Invite God into it, by praying the prayer below on your knees.

Prayer: God, I recognize that I can't fix _____ (it). I want to hope that you can because you tell us that you will never leave us. I am at the bottom, I have lost control, filled with fear, and can't experience joy. I believe, or I am willing to believe, that you can restore me to sanity if I just stop doubting your power and love, just like the father in Mark's story and the sons in the Prodigal story. I humbly ask that you help me to understand that it is more powerful to believe than not to believe, and that you are either everything or nothing.

Step 3

Make a decision to turn your will and your life over to the care of God as you understand God.

Spiritual Principle

Faith

Overview

I have decided to let God fix it and do the rest of the steps. This takes faith.

Most people don't realize a profound fact in both the 12-Step community and the church: The first three steps of the 12 steps are basically the Salvation prayer in the Christian tradition. Step 1 asserts I am broken; Step 2 says God can save me; and Step 3 says I believe Jesus Christ can save me and I turn myself over to God.

The first three steps are mostly done in your head and heart. Most of the rest require actual action out in the world.

Believing in Jesus Christ and that God raised him from the dead isn't just about heaven and what happens after we die. In reality, it's just as much (or maybe even more), about living a resurrected life, daily. The Bible declares that every human is made in the image of God and called to the likeness of Jesus (which means reflecting love). But sin prevents that. Your _____ is blocking you from love. Having faith in God changes that. This step is about trusting and letting God have you, your life, your challenges, your hurts, habits and hang ups. It is about having faith that God's got it. In this step, the phrase "turn your will and life" means you're turning your thoughts and actions over to the care of God.

Read Scriptures NRSV: Romans 12:1, Psalm 34:17-18, Galatians 2:20, Luke 15:20-21

Luke 15:20-21 So, he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

Why it matters: Faith is fundamental to following Jesus Christ.

You may have heard the saying, “Even demons know and believe in Jesus.” Here’s the truth: Many people believe in Jesus; but few trust and actively decide to live all parts of their lives trusting in the power of Jesus. Justification by faith means that we rely upon God, that Jesus’ life, death and resurrection restores us. Nothing else. When you combine steps 1, 2, and 3 it embodies the doctrine of justification. Maybe that’s why Jesus often told the religious folks that sinners and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God first. They knew they needed grace, didn’t deserve it and sought out forgiveness and the life that Jesus offered.

Jesus’ powerlessness on the cross was transformed into powerful love. Yours can be too.

NOTE to Christians/followers of Jesus Christ: If you’re a new or longtime Christian, you might wonder why you would need to do this. You’ve already been saved, baptized, given your life to Jesus, and justified by the cross of Christ. That’s excellent! John Wesley said, “I have been saved once but converted many times.” This is an opportunity for you to deepen your faith in Jesus and allow God into your own powerlessness.

NOTE to people who haven’t ever decided to follow Jesus Christ: Some of you have not formally “decided” to offer your life over to the care of God found in Jesus, but you have previously done steps 1 through 3 in a recovery community, praying to the God of your understanding. That’s excellent! Perhaps your Higher Power is inviting you to explore more about who Jesus is. We encourage you to reach out to one of the pastors or request a 30-day reading plan on the life of Jesus.

Action Step: Get on your knees. Pray the prayer below or use your own words that convey that you can’t do what God can do, and that you have decided to let God. Consider praying this with a pastor, spiritual advisor or a friend.

God, I can’t fix my life and everything that’s wrong. I need you. I give all of myself to You. Save me from me, so I can love you and others more fully. Remove those things that block me so that the world can see Your Power, Love, and Your Way of Life. Amen.

Step 4

Make a fearless and moral inventory of ourselves.

Spiritual Principle

Honesty

Overview

I examine what keeps me connected to my hurts, habits, hang ups or addictions. This takes honesty.

This step requires deep honesty. Step 4 is designed to have us examine our ways and test them like the scripture says. It cleans out the things that block us from being of maximum service to God and others and our neighbors. It raises our self-awareness which aids in the disconnect from our hurts, hang ups, habits or addictions.

If you prayed the 3rd Step prayer to Jesus Christ, you are raised with Christ. In Christian language, you have experienced justification by faith. You are saved, you have experienced salvation. But salvation is a life-long journey. This is the beginning, not the end. God's grace calls us to draw nearer to Jesus and to a deeper love. In other words, to become like Jesus. That's known as sanctification or sanctifying grace. The 4th step is a good beginning on the lifelong journey.

Read Scriptures NRSV: Psalm 139:23-24, Colossians 3:1-5, Lamentations 3:40
Lamentations 3:40 Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD.

Why it matters: Justification by faith is the beginning of the lifelong journey of loving God, others and enemies. It is beginning to follow along the narrow path.

A thorough examination of our thoughts and actions is a Christian practice, and when done honestly, provides a foundation from which to build so that we can journey to becoming more like Jesus Christ. **It brings things you want to hide in the darkness out into the light.** While it will list the things that others have done, its focus is you.

Sanctifying Grace is the grace that molds us into deeper love. Saying yes to Jesus Christ justifies us to God and atones for the separation. It restores our relationship with God through the cross and resurrection. Examination of the persistent patterns of thought and behavior invites God to do sanctifying work in us.

Action Step 1: Read Colossians 3:1-5.

If we are to make God's love real, we must seek the things above and set our minds on them. But before we can do that, we must put to death whatever is in us that is earthly. So, we take an inventory of our life, character, fears, sexual conduct, weaknesses and our patterns of behavior that hinder love (our sins). The 4th step helps us see it clearly by putting it in black and white when we commit pen to paper. This initiative (steps 4-7) reveals parts of your shadow, hidden intentions and character flaws. Your shadow is the part of your personality that is hidden in plain sight from you (since it often is closely aligned with the things you are good at) or what you don't want others to see. This process shines light on your skewed motivations, weaknesses and/or flawed intentions that are blocking you from deeper love.

Our God-given instinctual desires are good, but are out of whack. Our human nature causes us trouble (hurts, hang ups and habits/addictions). That's why it's referred to as the sinful nature or the flesh. When we are at odds with others—or vice versa—usually it has to do with our instincts colliding.

"A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself about values."

Action Step 2: Make an inventory of yourself

Get paper and a pen. It is best to write it with your own hand.

Pray the pre-inventory prayer in advance of starting.

There are three main parts to a 4th Step:

1. Examination of resentments
2. Fears list
3. Sexual conduct

SOME TIPS:

- You need to find a trusted person to share the entirety of this inventory with (and not anyone who made it onto your list!). Some people share with a pastor, therapist, a spiritual director or a sponsor* who is walking them through this process. Be thorough. Be gentle. The inventory's purpose is freedom not punishment. It is not intended to create a negative understanding of yourself. It is rather to look the sinful nature in the eye and not be scared.
- God can handle it. With God's help, so can you.

*In 12 Step communities a sponsor is someone who has completed the steps and walks a new person through them. They make themselves available and are “asked” by the new person.

Pray the pre-inventory prayer before you start.

God, please help me to honestly take stock. Help me to search out the flaws in my make-up which caused my failure. Help me to see where resentment has plagued me and resulted in spiritual malady, but more importantly help me to understand my part in these resentments. Help me to resolutely look for my own mistakes and to understand where I had been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened. Please help me to be searching and fearless in my endeavor to write my inventory. (p. 64:2, 64:3, 67:2)

PART 1: Resentment Examination: In your notebook, divide the paper into 5 columns with the following titles from left to right: (1) Resentment/Who; (2) The Origin/Why; (3) Impacts/What it affects in me; (4) What am I really afraid of? /Fears; (5) My Part/Role in creating it.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Resentment/Who	The Origin/Why	Impacts/What it affects in me	What am I really afraid of/Fears	My part/role in creating it

Starting with column 1, make a list; do nothing with the other columns until this one is complete. When you are finished with column 1, move on to column 2. Finish each column before you move on to the next (work vertically, not horizontally.)

[Column 1] List the who: people, groups and institutions that you have had a resentment toward, whom you are angry, or who have hurt you in some way. It is suggested that you go back throughout the entirety of your life, even if you don't feel angry or resentful in the moment. The reason is that often you will notice a pattern. You will see defects of character that keep showing up and possibly fears.

[Column 2] Write why. After completing the list of people/groups, write why you have the resentment. When did it start? How did it happen? Why do you resent them?

[Column 3] List What it Affects /Impacts in Me. Here we reflect upon and write about the part of us that was hurt or threatened, and the exact nature of our shortcoming that prevents us from letting go of this resentment.

There are six resentment attributes. Often more than one of the six attributes is activated in resentments. They are: pride, self-esteem, ambitions/status, sexual relations, finances and personal relationships.

- Pride - How I think others view me
- Self Esteem - How I think of myself (self-concept) and how I feel about myself (self-worth)
- Ambition/status - Our goals, plans and designs for the future
- Sexual Relations - Basic drive for intimacy
- Finances - Basic desire for money, property, possessions, etc.
- Personal Relationships - Our relations with other people

[Column 4] Answer the question, “What am I really afraid of? What is my fear?” Dig deep here. Try to see below the anger and see what the fear really is.

[Column 5] What was your role in creating the resentment? What was your part?

This often is the hardest column to complete. It is easier to focus on the wrongs done to us. Many situations aren’t entirely our fault, but if we pray and open ourselves, we can usually discover places where we contributed to the problem. Reviewing each person/group/institution on our list, we ask where we retaliated; where we were fearful, jealous or greedy; or when we participated in any of the other sins (pride, envy, gluttony, deceit, lust or sloth). Writing down the ways we failed in these relationships gives us humility and understanding. When we skip this crucial part we tend to focus more on the splinter in others’ eyes, rather than the log in our own. Where were we to blame? This inventory is ours, not the other persons.

***If you were abused, it is never your fault.** While the 5th column of “my part” might be harder to discern, one possibility of your part could be not seeking support and healing as an adult.

PART 2: Fears list

On another piece of paper in your notebook, write out all of your fears. This will be a part of offering your fears to God. Some examples are:

Fear of Sin	Authority	Poverty	Being Alone
Loneliness	Self-Expression	Fear	Physical Pain
Drowning	Rejection	Death	Stealing
Creditors	Responsibility	Insecurity	Sex
Parents	Jail	Success	Insanity
Diseases	Employment	Police	Failure
Dying	Relapse	God	Alcohol/Drugs
Heights	People	Races	Crying
The Unknown	Abandonment	Intimacy	Disapproval
Rejection	Confrontation	Hospitals	Violence
Feelings	Getting Old	Gossip	Government
Writing Inventory	Change	Guns	Hurting Others
Responsibility	Losing A Loved One	Death	Unemployment

PART 3: Sexual Conduct

This part of the inventory is both difficult and important. Important because most people have had issues with sexual relationships. Difficult because we don't want anyone knowing about it. Yet to get to freedom, we have to shine the Light of Christ on all areas.

There are 5 columns in this part too. On a piece of paper in your notebook, divide the paper into 5 columns with the following titles from left to right: (1) Whom did I Hurt, (2) What did I go to them, (3) Did I unjustifiably arouse, (4) Where was I at fault, (5) What should I have done instead?

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Whom did I hurt?	What I did to them?	Did I unjustifiably arouse?	Where was I fault?	What should I have done instead?

In a similar way to the resentment inventory, do an exhaustive list and work vertically in your chart (and not horizontally).

[Column 1] List the people you harmed. These are the people you have hurt with your sexual conduct. Go back as far as you can remember.

[Column 2] What did you do to them. List the things you did to them that harmed them. Be specific.

[Column 3] Did I unjustifiably arouse? Write the names of those you aroused. You will list for each person the following qualifier/motivation/feeling: jealousy, suspicion and/or bitterness.

[Column 4] Where was I at fault? You will list for each person, where you were selfish, dishonest, and/or inconsiderate.

[Column 5] What should I have done instead? Write what you should have done differently in the situation.

After completing the 3 parts of the inventory, you have probably written a lot and shined light on parts of your life that were difficult. **Know that God was and is with you.** The inventory is what you will share in Step 5 when you confess.

Prayer: God, thank you for making me see more clearly, for increasing my self-knowledge, and for making me aware of everything that is holding me back. Help me to continue so that I can Rise, live free from my past, and love more deeply. I pray this in the power of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Step 5

Confess to God, ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Spiritual Principle

Courage

Overview

I will confess my character defects to Jesus Christ, myself and another human. This takes courage.

Confession is a salve to the soul, but it will take courage to become vulnerable. It takes courage to walk through our fear and to share this inventory truthfully. It illuminates the parts of my life and character I'd rather not see or share with anyone else. Most of us have a fear of being judged.

Confessing sheds light on what I have kept—or wanted to keep—in the dark. By sharing it, you will be free from its bondage and my secrets. God will cleanse you. Many people feel a burden lifted. It is imperative that you wisely select a trusted person to meet with, so that you can share your inventory freely without the fear of judgment. By so doing, you will allow God to begin the work of unlocking the cage of unforgiveness that we have for others and for ourselves and build a bridge to freedom from our hurts, hang ups, habits and addictions.

Read Scriptures NRSV: Romans 14:10-12, James 5:16

James 5:16 16 Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

Why it matters: Confession keeps a person humble, reminding us that we need Jesus Christ, forgiveness and God's grace. Confession can often lead to change because we become vulnerable with God and another trusted person. James confirms this truth and says that it heals. He declares that we are to confess to each other and not just to God! This time-tested practice of confessing out loud to another person is quite powerful. It grinds the ego.

Confession has largely been lost in the church. Protestant churches largely lost the tradition of reconciliation and confessing systematically long ago. In the sacrament of communion, confession and assurance of pardon are a part of the liturgy (words spoken during communion.) Many Christians are out of practice of grinding their egos down by confessing, like James 5:16 suggests.

Christians should come regularly to God to acknowledge the sins they have committed (by omission or commission) toward God and neighbor, so that they remind themselves of their need for God, and so that they receive pardon.

Most Christians' confession practice can be summed up as this, "I'll tell God and I'll be forgiven." And it's true, **God forgives.** When we keep all of our wrongs to ourselves, when we don't name our unwillingness to forgive, or tuck away our faults in the shadows, they can remain with us. Our egos can stay largely in control and our behavior doesn't usually change.[1] And James would suggest that maybe we don't experience the kind of healing we could if we confessed to another person. **Sin that stays in the dark, tends to grow in the dark.**

Action Step 1: Pray about who you should ask to hear your confession (but not so long that it delays you actually doing it). Make sure it is a trusted person. In 12-step communities, a person who walks through the 12 steps is recommended to have a "sponsor." A sponsor is a person who has already been through the steps. He/she guides another person through the process and usually hears a person's 5th Step. It is helpful if someone understands the steps so they can show you the pattern of your sin/behavior and help you identify your character flaws. NOTE: Usually the sponsor and sponsee are the same gender. But doing it with a sponsor is not required. It can be done with a pastor, priest, therapist, spiritual director or trusted friend.

Action Step 2: Set up the meeting and ensure that you budget adequate time. Bring all three parts of your written inventory work to share (resentments, fears, sexual conduct.)

Notice the pattern of your flaws that get activated in your anger, resentment, and judgment of others and yourself. What do you seem to see over and over? Ask the person you are telling if they see a pattern and what they think are your character flaws that get activated. This will help you in the next step.

Prayer: "Most merciful God, I confess that I have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what I have done, and by what I have left undone. I have not loved you with my whole heart; and I have not loved my neighbors as myself. I am truly sorry and I humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who has mercy on and forgives me; I delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen."

[1] Adapted from The Jesus Challenge: 21 Days of Loving God and Neighbor (LaRosa).

Step 6

I am entirely ready for God to take all these defects of character.

Spiritual Principle

Willingness

Overview

I am ready for God to change me. This takes willingness.

If we did a searching and fearless moral inventory through the 4th step, our pattern of sin, defects, and hurts have been illuminated and brought into full view. We've reviewed and confessed them to God, ourselves, and another human being. Hopefully, we have a deepened self-awareness. Step 6 is preparing to give our character flaws, our persistent patterns of sin, and all of our current and past hurts to Jesus Christ. It requires willingness to offer the things in our character that block us from love (no matter how much we like some of them). Without change and having God remove them, we will repeat the behaviors and patterns.

Read Scriptures NRSV: 1 Peter 1:13-14, Romans 6:11-12, 1 John 5:14-15, James 4:6-8

1 John 5:14-15 14 And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him.

Why it matters: To become more like Jesus Christ, or said another way, to love God, neighbor and ourselves more deeply, we have to change parts of ourselves. But the truth is that we can't do that without becoming vulnerable and submitting to the power of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Awareness of our defects and hurts is important, and being ready to have God remove them is what Step 6 is all about. Pain usually drives us to change; and is often the pathway to spiritual growth. This step has us recognize that our persistent flaws and hurts can't and won't be removed through our own resources, no matter what they are or how hard we try to do it by ourselves. We need help or we will repeat the past

In this step we are ready for God to take away character flaws, hurts, fears or power given to others in resentment and/or unforgiveness; we are ready to move past them, to let them go. We are done with allowing them to weigh us down anymore. **Willingness as a virtue means you are ready for God to take it all. This will allow you to move forward without looking back.**

Action Step 1: Review the list below. In your notebook, write the ones that are a part of your character and that have contributed to your habit/addictions and your troubles. Which of the following on this list keep showing up in you?

Selfish and Self-seeking	Prideful	Dishonest	Fearful Greedy
Self-importance	Lustful Angry	Envious	Slothful
Gluttonous	Impatient	Intolerant	Resentful
Hateful	Unforgiving	Aggressive	Self-pity
Suspicious	Justification	Skeptical	Covetousness
Disrespectful	Inconsiderate	Self condemnation	

Action Step 2: Identify and list the hurts that are holding you back.

Prayer: Dear God, I am ready for you to remove my defects of character and hurts that hold me back from my recovery/sanctification/salvation. There may even be some that I am not aware of, that I like, or ones that are so closely connected to my gifts that I don't see them. If that's the case, help me to continue to be honest with myself and you. Guide me toward spiritual and mental health. In Christ's Name, Amen.

Step 7

Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

Spiritual Principle

Humility

Overview

I will let God change me, I can't do it alone. This requires humility.

Steps 6 and 7 are usually done together and in short order immediately after sharing your inventory. In step 4, you made a catalog of your past, in step 5 you confessed and were released from guilt and shame. In step 6, you admitted that there are things that block you from love. Step 7 is when each person humbly asks for Jesus Christ to remove the things that prevent further growth. What can be difficult about this is that sometimes we like our personality flaws. They are closely related to our gifts.

Read Scriptures NRSV: Matthew 5:48, Matthew 23:12, 1 John 1:9, Psalm 51:10-12, James 4:10

James 4:10 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Why it matters: We are made in the image of God and called to the likeness of Jesus. To continue to grow toward becoming a reflection of Jesus' love, there are things in us that need to change. You've named your defects and hurts. These things are a heavy weight. God can remove them. Now it's time to invite Jesus Christ into your powerlessness which takes humility. It is a critical step because if we don't ask for them to be removed, we are destined to repeat them.

In the Christian tradition, our call is to grow toward perfect love of God and neighbor. John Wesley called that phenomenon Christian perfection. **We don't ever become perfect but we strive to get there more and more.** We can't grow when our hurts, habits, addictions, hang-ups and flaws keep weighing us down. Being willing to be released from our past and our current flaws, we humbly ask God to create in us a pure heart. And God will do it with his sanctifying grace, sometimes quickly, other times slowly.

Action Step: It's simple. Name the things you need God to remove from you. (See Step 6, Actions Step 1) Be specific about the character defects/flaws and hurts that weigh you down. Note: they are usually the darker side of your positive attributes. Humbly pray for God to remove them and believe that God will.

After you do your 5th Step confession, set aside time to do 6 and 7 and then pray the prayer below.

Prayer: My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Specifically, remove the following _____, so that I can more deeply grow in love for you, my neighbor and myself. Grant me strength, as I go out from here to do your bidding. Amen[1]

[1] 7th Step prayer in Alcoholics Anonymous and addition by Justin LaRosa.

Step 8

Make a list of all persons I have harmed and be willing to make amends to them all.

Spiritual Principle

Integrity

Overview

List all of the people I've negatively impacted and harmed. This takes integrity.

In essence, Step 8 comprises of two things: (1) a list, and (2) a willingness to make right with others. Step 8 connects you back to the fearless inventory and confession you made in steps 4 and 5.

But you weren't ready to make amends after step 5. Why? Because your flaws are still present; and your motives might still be skewed. They might be skewed and not as pure because you haven't reflected upon and named the persistent pattern of your sin/character flaws which caused the harm in the first place.

Now that you've identified those things in Step 6, and humbly asked God to remove them in Step 7, you are now ready to do the difficult work of making amends.

With guidance and clarity, you will determine who are the people, groups or institutions that you are to make amends to in Step 8. Our preference is to blame others and seek retribution. A key component to this step is to recognize our part—however significant or small—in the harm that has been done to others.

Don't worry yet about "how." That's Step 9.

Read Scriptures NRSV: Luke 6:31, Ephesians 4:32, Matthew 7:3-4

Matthew 7:3-4 Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye?

Why it matters: We need to make things right. Forgiveness is a key part of step 8 and what it means to follow Jesus. Often when we think of the list of the people we have harmed, our mind goes to how they have harmed us. Yet, we need to forgive because our forgiveness depends on it according to Jesus' own words. Step 8 moves us forward with forgiving others and ourselves through being willing to make amends to everyone whom we hurt/negatively impacted. Amends means repairing the damage of the past.

We must remember that forgiveness is a decision and not a feeling.

God will work to change our heart.

Action Step: The good news is that you already have a good beginning on your list! You start with your 4th step inventory. Every person, group, and/or institution that was listed on your Step 4 inventory should be on your 8th Step list.

Go to a clean page in your notebook. Divide the paper into 5 columns with the following titles from left to right: (1) Person, (2) Relationship, (3) My Wrongdoing, (4) Effects on person, (5) Effects on me.

Column 1
Person

Column 2
Relationship

Column 3
My Wrongdoing

Column 4
Effects on person

Column 5
Effects on me

[Column 1] List the who: people, groups, and institutions from your 4th Step. Do an exhaustive list in this column and work vertically in your chart (not horizontally). Do nothing with the other columns until this one is complete.

*In addition to your 4th Step list, name anyone else whom you have hurt who is not on the 4th Step list by your hurt, hang up, habit/addiction.

[Column 2] Relationship. List the relationship of the person listed in column 1.

[Column 3] My wrongdoing. List what you did (not what they did).

[Column 4] Effects on the person. Write how your behavior impacted the person and categorize the harm caused: It is either physical, psychological, financial, or spiritual harm.

[Column 5] Effects on me. Write how your wrongdoing negatively impacted you.

Prayer: God, show me the deep and troubling truth of my behavior and its harm on others. If I've missed anyone, help me remember and add them. Infuse in me a willing spirit to make amends, so that as I grow in love, you will be glorified and others will come know you. Give me willingness to go to any length to heal from _____ including making amends to people I don't want to.

Step 9

Make direct amends to people wherever possible, except when doing so would injure them or others.

Spiritual Principle

Restitution / Atonement

Overview

I will make amends to all people I've negatively impacted. It takes atonement.

There are 3 types of amends: (1) Direct, (2) Indirect/living amends and (3) Amends to self.

Direct: Amends that we make personally to those we have harmed.

Indirect/living amends: Indirect amends are non-personal amends made to those we have harmed. These are people who are deceased, or are inaccessible. These are also "living amends," meaning that we don't repeat the kind of harm to them or anyone else. These amends, may be because by making contact, we would injure them or ourselves. We can write unsent letters to them, pray to God, or by doing some kindness or act for someone else.

Amends to Self: So often we are the ones who we hurt with our behavior. We need to make things right with ourselves. [1]

The principle of restitution/atonement says, "You break it you fix it." Making things right is more than saying "I'm sorry." A simple metaphor: If someone breaks a possession of another, saying you're sorry doesn't make it right. We must fix it, or replace it if possible. That's what it means to make it right.

This step takes wisdom, discernment and clarity. For each person, you need to determine what type of amends to make. And each of those decisions shouldn't be made by you alone. Having the assistance and guidance of a pastor, spiritual advisor or trusted friend is key.

Here's another important component of this step and perhaps it is why some say that step 9 is one of the most difficult. **You do not enter this step expecting anything from the other person.** In other words, the person may not accept your amends/apology. The olive branch may not be taken, well received, nor lead to reconciliation or peace. It doesn't matter. You are cleaning your side of the street.

The other difficult aspect of Step 9 is that often the other person has hurt you too and isn't repentant. That isn't the point of the work of Step 9. This is connected to your relationship with God. You are repairing it and you don't need their approval. Of course, that's the hope, but not the expectation. If you hurt them regardless of whether they hurt you, you have to make amends.

Read Scriptures NRSV: Matthew 5:23-24, Matthew 5:43-44, Romans 12:17-18, Romans 13:8, Luke 19:1-10

Luke 19:1-10 He entered Jericho and was passing through it. 2 A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. 3 He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. 5 When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." 6 So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. 7 All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." 8 Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." 9 Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

Why it matters: This is about love. When we make amends, we are striving to live peaceably with all. In Matthew it says we must leave our gifts to God at the altar if our brother or sister has something against us. It doesn't say qualify it. Jesus says we must first be reconciled. This is a practice of reconciliation.

Action step: Pull out your 8th step list. Devote time to prayer and ask God to give you a proper attitude for each person. Go through and list and name what type of amends you should make: direct or indirect. Schedule a time with a trusted friend, pastor or spiritual advisor to review and discuss. Be sure you have the proper motives and won't cause more harm by making contact. Make a plan for each person on your list including yourself.

Suggestions:

- Ask God to have a forgiving heart toward the person (and yourself).
- Delay the amend if you are angry or can't communicate without blaming the person.
- Resist wanting a specific response.
- Be willing to accept the consequences.
- Don't begin amends without consultation.

Prayer: God, give me strength and courage to do the right thing no matter what. Remind me that I need to consult with a guide so that we can rightly discern when to approach people and when approaching people for amends would injure them more. Assist me in not repeating my same behaviors and mistakes. As you have given me patience, tolerance, kindness and love, may I grant it to others.

[1] The Twelve Steps – A spiritual journey, page 162. Adapted.

Step 10

Continue to take a daily inventory and when wrong, promptly admit it.

Spiritual Principle

Perseverance

Overview

I will continue to maintain peace with God, myself and others by reviewing my days. This takes perseverance.

The Step 10 personal inventory is similar to the 4th Step but occurs frequently and doesn't take a lot of time.

This is the lifelong journey to keep the peace. If you don't do this, you'll end up having to make amends to people you harm; sometimes, harming the same people you made amends to—those same people who you committed to not harming anymore. Steps 4-9 helps you determine which defects have been activated and separate you from God/others. Now that Step 9 is complete, you have made amazing progress of following Jesus. You have cleaned out the hurts and the wrongs you've committed in your life. The channel between you and God is clean. You've created peace with God and peace with others. Step 10 is about keeping the peace, so that you don't continue to hurt yourself or others.

NOTE: It's also important to note the good parts of your day. Some people have a hard time being positive about themselves and this practice can balance that out.

Types of inventories: (1) Spot Check Inventory and (2) Daily Inventory.[1]

Spot Check Inventory: This is when you stop throughout the day to assess your actions, thoughts and motives. If we make a mistake, we go to the person right away and make it right. If you are angry or resentful, do a "mini-4th step" thinking about who, the why, how it affects you and what you are afraid of.

Daily Inventory: This is generally done at the beginning or the end of the day. Ask God to illuminate the good things you did and anything in which you fell short. If at night, you review the day—thinking of the day's events and interactions. If in the morning, review the previous day. Reflect upon where you were wrong and promptly admit it so that things don't build up.

Read Scriptures NRSV: Matthew 5:25-26, Ephesians 4:25-28, 1 Corinthians 10:12
1 Corinthians 10:12 So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall.

Why it matters: Following Jesus is about keeping the peace with God, ourselves and others. This daily step maintains relationships as we journey the winding road of life. Ephesians says, “Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil.” We aren’t to let our anger go unaddressed. We need to address it before the day ends.

That doesn’t mean we don’t feel it, anger is natural. But we can’t let it infest our soul as it allows room for temptation, moral superiority and hate—all of which can lead us astray. **Unresolved anger is a spiritual disease.**

Doing this daily, you keep peace and decrease the likelihood that long-term harm will happen.

Action Step: set aside at least five minutes to do the daily inventory. Ask yourself these questions:

- What have I done well today? Name your strengths and what you’ve done well.
- Is there anyone I am angry with or whom I had an awkward, aggressive or passive aggressive interaction with? What was triggered in me (one of the 6 things in Step 4: pride, sex relations, etc.)?
- Was one of my reoccurring defects of character activated? What was I afraid of?
- Am I angry at someone? Did I do harm?
- What do I need to do to clean it up? Again, it’s just my side of the street that I need to attend to and make right.
- If so, I will promptly admit it and make it right.

During the day: Stop during the day if something goes wrong. Assess your actions, thoughts and motives. If we make a mistake, we go to the person right away and make it right. If you are angry or resentful, do a “mini-4th step” thinking about who, the why, what it affects in you, what you are afraid of and your part.

Prayer: Dear God, I want to keep the peace. Help me to grow.
Show me my own defects including when I am selfish, resentful, fearful or dishonest. Help me to be willing to offer them to you;
And go to anyone I've harmed, making amends quickly.
When I go, release my expectations of how they will receive it and make my motives and delivery pure. Love and tolerance are the way to live a resurrected life.
Resurrect me today.
In Christ, Amen.

[1] The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey, pages 169-173 adapted.

Step 11

Seek through prayer and meditation to improve conscious contact with God, as we understand God, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry it out.

Spiritual Principle

Spirituality

Overview

To increase my connection with Jesus Christ, I will pray and meditate. This will cultivate connection with God and spirituality.

Notice the placement of the prayer and meditation in this step. It is intentionally left until the final steps. Why? Because your hurts, habits, hang ups, addictions and past mess ups have you filled with regret, anger and sin, thereby blocking your ability to hear God and to know what you should pray for. The great mystic St. Theresa of Avila talks about a veil that covers our eyes and ears making seeing and hearing God difficult. In other words, your conscious contact with God is inhibited. You have been clogged with gunk.

Another way to think of it is: You've just had the viruses that were infecting your computer removed because you have completed Steps 1-10. Now you have the opportunity to upgrade your software through prayer and meditation. Not just once in a while, but regularly. Your engagement with prayer and meditation will lead to more clarity. Daily scanning for viruses keeps your computer functioning properly. Daily prayer and meditation keep your soul and heart functioning properly.

In the Christian tradition there are two types of prayer: Kataphatic and Apophatic. Kataphatic prayer is often referred to as the "Way of Revelation," and Apophatic prayer is referred to as the "Way of Mystery."

Kataphatic prayer is praying with thoughts, symbols, concepts and images. This type of prayer is what you are most familiar with: you think thoughts about others, you intentionally name and say the things you hope happen, healing, etc. These types of prayer methods use your mental faculties, your will, intellect, imagination and memory—employing the motion faculties of your mind. Prayers like petition, supplication, confession, thanksgiving, adoration and reflection fall into this category of prayer.

Apophatic prayer (aka contemplative prayer) is praying by detaching from thoughts, symbols, concepts and images so that we can commune with God. It doesn't mean thoughts aren't there, but the practice is to detach from engaging with them. This prayer transcends thought and enters through love, into God's mystery. It is believed that the 16th Century mystic, St. John of the Cross said that "Silence is God's first language," which makes the root of all prayer interior to silence. Evagrius, the 4th Century monk said that "prayer" is the laying aside of thoughts. Contemplative prayer is a way of making oneself aware of the presence of God who is always there. It is not the absence of thought, but the detachment from them. The methods often used are Centering Prayer, The Jesus Prayer or Breath Prayer.

These prayer practices help us abide with Jesus Christ.

Read Scriptures NRSV: Psalm 46:10, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 3:16, Matthew 6:5-13

Matthew 6:5-13 "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 6 But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. "When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father, knows what you need before you ask him. "Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

Why it matters: Jesus Christ desires a deep, intimate relationship with us. Prayer and meditation facilitate that relationship, growing us in love. It is one of the essential spiritual practices along with scripture reflection, worship, small groups, financial giving, serving and sharing our faith. **God rewires our hearts and purifies our instinctual desires.**

Action Step: The old Nike slogan, "Just do it," applies. Do it daily in ways that work for you. This is also the place to do the daily 10th Step inventory. Below are some suggestions from *The Jesus Challenge*.^[1]

- **Place & Time:** Decide in advance when and where. Remember, this practice is about increasing your conscious contact with God. Be intentional and

consistent with the practice and over time, you will come to see that it has increased. That's why you are doing the work even when it doesn't feel like it. Feel free to pray all throughout the day, but set aside intentional time alone in a designated time and place. Wherever possible, select a time and location where distractions are minimal.

- **Knees:** If you are physically able, start your prayer time on your knees. Getting on your knees before God serves as both **we worship and rely upon a God who is greater than ourselves.** Each day that **we worship and rely upon a God who is greater than ourselves.**
- **In Your Own Voice:** Talk to God out loud in your own voice. Hear yourself speak to God. It will help you focus (except when doing apophatic/contemplative prayer!).
- **Prayers:**
 - Pray for the people in your life—loved ones, friends, co-workers and those closest to you.
 - Speak to God about the day, including any struggles or fears you have.
 - Thank God aloud for your blessings. Name at least 3 things for which you are grateful.
 - Confess attitudes or behaviors that has or is separating you from God or others.
- **Scripture:** Read the daily scripture from Hyde Park (hydeparkumc.org/daily) or use another daily scripture plan. Reflect upon its meaning.
- **Centering Prayer (meditation):** Spend 2 minutes (or more) detaching from your thoughts by silently repeating the word “Love” to keep your mind from drifting.
 - Build up the number of minutes over time after learning more about the centering prayer method which strengthens your relationship with Jesus Christ.
- **Lord's Prayer:** End with the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

[1] This outline/pattern was taken from The Jesus Challenge: 21 Days of Loving God and Neighbor (LaRosa).

Step 12

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we carry the message to someone we know who suffers (from _____) and practice these principles in all of our affairs.

Spiritual Principle

Service

Overview

My awakening is to be shared with others who are suffering. This will mean serving.

To keep it, you have to give it away. Your hurts, hang ups, habits, addictions and character flaws don't have the power over you they once did. This realization is that we can trust Jesus Christ with all of our lives. To experience gratitude in our lives requires action on our part.

The 12th step carries the good news about how God and the steps helped you overcome sin and death; and allows you to serve others (only for those who want to hear). Your own journey and experience have equipped you to now walk others through the steps process. This will allow them to cultivate a relationship with God found in Jesus Christ and have peace with God, themselves and others.

This is ministry. This is service. And not only that... it connects to our mission that is Making God's Love Real, teaching others to follow Jesus by loving God and loving all. We teach people to love God and love all. That's what the steps do.

If somebody helped you during this process and had already completed the steps, you are ready to do the same. In a way, they were acting as your guide/ rabbi/minister. Do the things they taught you, share what you found in Christ Jesus with others. And by working with others, you will grow. Furthermore, it actually doesn't matter if the other person gets all the way through, totally recovers from their habit or addiction or makes progress. You are being a servant. Shake off the dust and find the next person. What matters is that you're carrying the message of the cross, the resurrection and you are actually showing people how to live it.

Do the work, leaving the results and outcomes to God. Salvation has come to you. God has and will continue to sanctify you (grow you in love). You are living a resurrected life and you are called to help others live one too.

Read Scriptures NRSV: Philippians 4:8-9, Luke 8:16-17, Galatians 6:1

Galatians 6:1 My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted.

Why it matters: You now understand on an even deeper level what it means to be “saved.” Notice Step 12 says, “Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps.” It’s hard to effectively carry the message of the cross and resurrection that you haven’t experienced in real time. You’ve seen your own powerlessness. You’ve invited God and others in; and God’s sanctifying grace and love have given you power.

I’ll say it again... Do the work, and leave the results up to God. Salvation has come to you. Live a resurrected life and help others too. Carry the message. But to keep it, you have to give it away. **This is what it means to rise.**

Action Step: If you feel called, be a part of the recovery community. You can join a group at The Portico or find previously established recovery communities like Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Al-Anon, etc. Many of you will not feel led to participate in a recovery community. Yet, you can continue to invite God into your powerlessness, practice these 12 principles, point others to the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ and methodically accessible in the 12 Steps of recovery. Lead others to the power of God who transforms hurts, habits and addictions. Share this booklet and the Rise sermons with others. Ask your guide about how you can help others. Pray for God’s direction.

Prayer: God, thank you for this journey. As my awakening unfolds, help me to carry the message and stay diligent. Help me to focus on my own progress and inner strength. Show me the people to help and the people to help me. May I practice the spiritual principles in each step boldly yet gently. Help me to forgive and be forgiven, and to discern your will. Thy will, not mine, be done. Amen.