

Jonah is Powerless

STEP 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.

*I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. **Romans 7:18***

God called Jonah to warn the people of Nineveh that they faced destruction if they refused to repent of their sins, but Jonah wanted God to destroy the wicked Assyrian capital. Jonah didn't want to give the people an opportunity to repent so he boarded a boat and sailed in the opposite direction of Nineveh.

When Jonah made this choice, he was not the only person to suffer. The life of every other person on Jonah's ship was threatened by the great storm that God sent. Terrified, the sailors sought the guilty party, and Jonah quickly suggested that he be thrown overboard. It seems Jonah would rather risk his life than to obey God and do as He commanded. God had to put Jonah in the belly of a great fish for three days to get his attention. In the end, Jonah finally admitted that he was helpless and asked God for deliverance. Even though Jonah refused to obey God, God never gave up on Jonah.

How much is this story like us when we are wrapped up in our addictions or compulsive behaviors? We know what God wants us to do, but instead we continue to tell ourselves our way is right, that we can handle it, and continue in our unmanageable and destructive ways. God may have even sent a storm or other consequences our way in an effort to get us to reconsider and yet so many times we chose to stay stuck in our unhealthy rebellion—even possibly risking our lives. Just like with Jonah, these choices not only hurt us, but the people around us as well.

None of us likes to be powerless; however, it is only when we acknowledge our powerlessness that recovery can begin. In the darkness inside the fish, Jonah realized how helpless he was. It was there that he finally turned to God and received his help. As we recognize our helplessness, we too can receive the help God offers. Only he can redeem and deliver us from our addiction, dependency or compulsion. If we try to go it alone, relying only on our own will, we are headed for disaster.

Jonah's Key Verse for Step 1

I cried out to the Lord in my great trouble, and he answered me. I called to you from the land of the dead, and Lord, you heard me. Jonah 2:2 (NTL)

Examine Your Heart

1. Has God ever brought a storm to your life in an effort to get you to reconsider your choices? Do you look back on this and consider it a beneficial experience?
2. Like the sailors in Jonah's story, who are some of the people your addiction or compulsive behaviors affected?
3. Do you find strength in admitting your powerlessness? Why or why not?

Learn More

This story comes from the first three chapters of Jonah. The book of Jonah is located on page 1132 of the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible. The book of Jonah offers the following recovery themes: God Delivers the Powerless, Keeping God's Priorities, God's Patience, and Forgiveness of Everyone.



Saul Comes to Believe

STEP 2: We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Philippians 2:13

There are important moments in life that can change our destiny. These are often times when we are confronted with how powerless we are over the events of our life. These moments can forever set the course of our life in a much better direction.

Saul of Tarsus (later called Paul; see Acts 13:9) came from a devout Jewish family in the city of Tarsus. In his letters that comprise much of the New Testament, Saul would rely heavily on the training he receive concerning the Hebrew law and the prophets of the Old Testament, but after Jesus' ascension, Saul took it upon himself to rid the world of Christians.

As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?'

'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked. And the voice replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.' (Acts 9:3-6 NTL)

When Saul picked himself up off the ground, he was blind. It wasn't until he followed Christ's directions and was healed by another believer that the scales left Saul's eyes so he could see again. Although Saul had always believed in God, in that moment, he came to believe that Jesus Christ was his Lord and Savior.

Saul's story is like the addict or co-dependent in recovery whose program does not yet include Jesus. We worked the steps and stayed committed to a healthier path, but until Christ is the center of our recovery, it's almost as if we are just going through the motions. Just like Saul, once we come to believe that following Jesus' is the only path to sanity, the blinders fall off—we can see clearly and the road for our recovery is so much brighter!

Saul's Key Verse for Step 2

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized. Acts 9:17-18 (NIV)

Examine your heart

1. Is your faith story anything like Paul's (Saul)? Why or why not?
2. Paul (Saul) encountered a bright light, he was blind, and then he could see. Which of those three situations best describes where you are at right now?
3. What are some examples of how your faith in a higher power or Jesus Christ has begun to restore your sanity?

Learn More

Paul went on to write many of the books of the New Testament: Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews. This story comes is found in Acts chapter 9. The book of Acts contains powerful stories of the new church shortly after Christ's death and can be found on page 1393 of the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible.



Three Boys on the Third Step



STEP 3: We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Romans 12:1

In Daniel Chapter 3, King Nebuchadnezzar made a ninety foot tall gold statue of himself and ordered that all people bow down to worship it. Those that disobeyed this command would be thrown in to a fiery furnace. This was a problem for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; three young Hebrew men brought into captivity and forced to live in Babylon. They believed in the one true God—our God whose commandants tell us to put no false gods before him.

When Nebuchadnezzar learned these young men would not serve his gods and worship this statue, he flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. He offered them one last chance, but was very clear, if they refused, they would be immediately thrown into the fiery furnace.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." **Daniel 3:16-18 (NIV)**

What a bold third step! Regardless of the outcome, these three boys put their faith and trust in God. They knew one of three things could happen:

1. God could save them from the fire. God could change Nebuchadnezzar's heart and remove the threat that they would be placed in harm's way.
2. God could bring them through the fire. Even if placed in the fiery furnace, God could deliver them safely.
3. God could bring a blessing from the fire. Even if they didn't survive, they knew that God would honor their choice to stand with Him.

In this case, God brought them through the fire and delivered them safely. This is so much like us as we commit ourselves to God's will. There is peace in knowing it's in his hands and whatever choice he makes for us, there will be protection and blessings. Our addictions and compulsive behaviors take the focus from God and create false idols in our lives. Step 3 puts our focus back on God who can deliver us.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego Key Verse for Step 3

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him...There is no other god who can rescue like this!" Daniel 3:28-29 NLT

Examine your heart

1. Everyone else including other Hebrews in captivity were willing to bow down, yet 3 boys stood alone. Are there struggles in your life like this where you feel alone?
2. God doesn't always deliver us from harm, but he promises to be there. Is there something you are having a hard time turning over?
3. Their faith changed Nebuchadnezzar's heart. Is your faith having an impact on others?

Learn More—This story is found in Daniel chapter 3. The book of Daniel can be found on page 1078 of the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible.

Ester's Fearless Inventory



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

Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord. Lamentations 3:40

Most of us hesitate at the idea of making a searching and fearless moral inventory. Rationalizations and excuses for avoiding this step abound. The bottom line is that we know there is an enormous amount of fear facing the emotions that this step will bring, but through this step we can build strong character and grow closer to becoming the person God wants us to be.

When Ester was probably no more than a teen she was selected to join the King's harem and be his queen, but her cousin, Mordecai, instructed her not to tell anyone of her Jewish descent. King Xerxes was hardly an ideal husband. He was known to dispose or kill the people close to him at a mere whim. Ester, as one of God's chosen people, must have often wondered why she had become queen.

A man named Haman rose to the position of prime minister, and Mordecai enraged Haman by not bowing down to him. To get revenge, Haman sought the destruction of all the Jews in the Persian Empire. Ester faced an important choice and sought God as she took stock of her personal inventory. Her first choice was to avoid the situation. She knew that people who arrived to talk to the King unannounced faced certain death, but Mordecai told her that she still would not be safe if she did not step forward in faith and consider what God wanted her to do. Even then, Ester could have justified the situation, wanting someone else to take responsibility, but in the end, after much prayer and consideration, she took the fearless step of talking to the King about her Hebrew descent.

Ester's soul searching is like the steps of a truly fearless 4th Step. Ester sought direction from her trusted cousin much the same as we might seek support from our sponsor, but Ester still could have denied her role in this situation. She could have rationalized that someone else should take the responsibility, but she chose to step forward in faith, and before doing so, she prayed. Prayers to God for guidance, strength and protection are pivotal to searching fearlessly in our moral inventory.

Ester's Key Verse for Step 4

"Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for these days, not night or day. My maids and I will do the same." Ester 4:16

Examine your heart

1. Mordecai acted like a good sponsor encouraging Ester to focus in on her part and continue with a moral inventory. Do you have a sponsor you can count on to help guide you through the steps?
2. When considering Step 4, have there been times you've wanted to put the responsibility on others and not accept your part of the inventory?
3. How has your prayer life affected your 4th Step and your program?

Learn More

This story comes from the first five chapters of Ester. The book of Ester is located on page 632 of the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible. The book of Ester offers the following recovery themes: Hope for the Helpless, God's Faithfulness, The Emptiness of Hatred, and Dealing with Pressures.

David Admits His Wrongs

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

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. James 5:16

When we find David in 2 Samuel chapter 11, he is hardly behaving like a man after God's own heart. (See 1 Samuel 13:14.) David is having an affair with Bathsheba and in an effort to keep it secret, he also arranges to have her husband Uriah killed while off at war.

The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. ²The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, ³but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. ⁴"Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him." **2 Samuel 12:1-4 (NIV)**

David being a just king becomes enraged and decrees that the rich man must make good to the poor man. That is when Nathan points out that David is the rich man and the story was used to illustrate his transgressions against Uriah. It is then that David confesses his sin to Nathan and to God just like a Fifth Step.

We all sin and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) To begin the healing process, we first must be forgiven and to do so, we must admit our wrongs. When we acknowledge those wrongs in the presence of a trusted advisor, like David did with Nathan, it brings our sins into the light so that God can deal with them.

David still had to deal with the repercussions of his sin. God was clear with David that he would still have consequences for his wrongs. Admitting our bad choices and asking for forgiveness does not mean that we escape the fallout of our sin. It is through these consequences we can grow deeper in our faith, build our character, teach us humility, and strengthen our commitment to lead a healthier life. It's through Step 5 that we can see firsthand God's grace and love for us in action.

David's Key Verse for Step 5

Then David exclaimed to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord!" Nathan replied to David, "Yes, and the Lord has forgiven your sin. You are not going to die." 2 Samuel 12:13 NET

Examine your heart

1. God brought Nathan forward for David's admission. Was it easy or difficult for you to locate a person for your Fifth Step?
2. God did not remove the consequences of David's sin. Looking back on some of your wrongs, do you believe the repercussions of your choices were important in the healing process?
3. Admitting the exact nature of our wrongs is a humbling process that can deepen our faith. Why is admitting this to God so important?

Learn More

This story comes from the chapter 11 and 12 of 2 Samuel. The book of 2 Samuel is located on page 387 of the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible. The book of 2 Samuel tells many powerful stories of King David and offers the following recovery themes: Justice with Mercy, Recovery Follows Failure, Accepting Reality, and The Seriousness of Sin.



Samson's Character Defect Makes Him Weak



STEP 6: We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

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

We find Samson in the book of Judges—a period of time in the Bible where God would send a leader (or judge) to deliver the people of Israel from their sin and oppression. Samson was one of Israel's judges. As a child, he had been dedicated to God, and God had given him with supernatural strength, but Samson had a lifelong weakness—the way he related to women. Samson was especially blinded to the dangers he faced in his relationship with Delilah. His enemies were paying her to discover the secret of his strength. Three times she begged Samson to tell her his secret. Each time she set him up and tried to hand him over to the enemy. Three times Samson lied to her and was able to escape, but each time he got closer to telling her the truth. Finally, Samson revealed his secret and was taken captive. In the end, Samson humbled himself before the Lord and asked that his strength be restored one last time. In that moment, God gave Samson the strength to tear down the temple.

The story of Samson shows what happens to a person when they refuse to learn from their past mistakes and become ready to have God remove our defects of character. Doing things our way still leads to enslavement and suffering; following God's will and allowing him to remove our defects of character is our only path to freedom.

Samson's real problem was pride and inability to recognize his weakness to women. Had Samson been willing to have God remove these defects of character, he could have remained strong and acted according to God's will. We are often victimized in our own life by thoughts of what might have been. Samson shows us that as long as we have life, we have hope. It is never too late to turn our life over to God and allow him to redeem us and restore what has been lost. In spite of his failures, Samson is listed as a champion of faith in Hebrews chapter 11. In spite of our failures, we too can be champions of faith as we continue to rely on God and allow him to remove our defects of character.

Samson's Key Verses for Step 6

Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "Sovereign Lord, remember me again. O God, please strengthen me just one more time. With one blow, please let me pay back the Philistines for the loss of my two eyes." Judges 16:28 NLT

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Hebrews 11:32-34

Examine your heart

1. Samson's strength brought him pride and part of our old life was holding on to defenses in an attempt to protect our addiction and compulsive behaviors. How can we let go of those character defects and still feel safe?
2. As Hebrew 11 shows us, Samson had a weakness, but also had character assets as he was still strong for God. Are there some character assets you can find within yourself?
3. Samson's relationship with Delilah shows us how destructive and harmful some situations in our lives can be. As we become willing to have God remove our defects of character, are there some relationship changes we might consider as well?

Learn More—The complete story of Samson is found in Judges Chapter 13 through 16. The book of Judges can be found on page 301 of the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible.

King Nebuchadnezzar is Humbled

STEP 7: We humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

God did a tremendous work in King Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4 of the book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar was one of the greatest conquerors in the history of the world. He dominated the people of many nations, including Judah. He possessed power, fame, wealth, and influence. Nebuchadnezzar continued to brag about his greatness and claimed that he alone was responsible for the great city of Babylon. He refused to recognize that all power—even his power—was granted by God.

So God sent Nebuchadnezzar a dream. God’s message of humility: “King Nebuchadnezzar, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past and be merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper.” Daniel 4:27 NLT

Nebuchadnezzar did not humble himself to the Lord and twelve months later as he overlooked Babylon he claimed, “Look at this great city. By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.” Daniel 4:30 NLT

Before Nebuchadnezzar could complete his prideful statement, God bellowed from heaven, “Oh King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you!” He then removed Nebuchadnezzar’s power and his sanity forcing him to live in the fields like a wild animal for a period of seven years. When Nebuchadnezzar’s sanity was finally restored, he humbly offered praise and glory to God.

Without humility, God cannot do the work necessary to remove our shortcomings. Just like Nebuchadnezzar, while we were stuck in a pattern of addiction and compulsive behaviors, life was crazy and it isn’t until we humble ourselves to God’s almighty power that we can begin a true restoration process. Purification can only come through humbly asking God to help us heal and remove the shortcomings that have kept us stuck in our own grandiose way of thinking.

Nebuchadnezzar’s Key Verse for Step 7

At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. Daniel 4:34 NLT

Examine your heart

1. Even after God had warned Nebuchadnezzar, he still didn’t turn from his prideful ways. Did God provide you with similar warnings to change your life? What did you do about them?
2. Because many of us have been hurt, trust is difficult and as a result, humility is not the norm. What do you do to stay focused on being humble and open to God’s will for your life?
3. Removing all shortcomings is a big task. Are there some of them that are more difficult for you to ask for removal? And what can this group do to help you in that process?

Learn More—This story is found in Daniel Chapter 4. The book of Daniel is located on page 1078 of the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible.



Jacob Makes a List

STEP 8: We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Do to others as you would have them do to you. Luke 6:31

Jacob always wanted to be first and he made a long list of persons he had harmed while stealing this birth right and the ancient blessing of it from his older brother, Esau. Esau and Jacob were twins. Even in the womb they fought terribly and at their birth, Jacob was still trying to get ahead.

²⁶Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. **Genesis 25:26 ESV**

Jacob in Hebrew means *He takes by the heel, or He cheats*. When Isaac, their father was very ill and possibly dying, he called for Esau to offer him the blessing. In ancient Hebrew times, this blessing was the right of the first born son. While Esau was away hunting to get the meat for his father's favorite dish as Isaac requested, Jacob snuck in and tricked his blinded father into giving him the blessing. (Genesis chapter 27)

When Esau learned of this, he was furious and vowed to kill his brother Jacob. So Jacob fled to Paddan-aram and stayed away for almost 40 years. During that time, Jacob was blessed with much financial wealth and a large healthy family. He also grew older and wiser as God taught Jacob some humbling lessons through life experience. It was during this time that Jacob made his list of all the persons he had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. He packed up his large family and all his belongings to begin the trek back to Canaan, the land of his father Isaac.

This was a large risk for Jacob. His brother had vowed to kill him and Jacob knew that Esau had prospered over this time too. Also, Esau was a strong and mighty hunter. Jacob was sure he was still a formidable opponent; however, Jacob knew he had to try to mend his relationship with his brother and father. With a humble heart, Jacob makes peace with Esau in Genesis chapter 33.

As we make our list and become willing to make amends, we realize that those we have harmed may not be as graciously forgiving as Jacob's brother Esau. It is difficult to face the wrongs of our past, and even harder to consider that not every relationship can be mended. However, with God's help, He can offer us the strength and courage to step forward so we can work to repair the wrongs of the past. Keep praying—over time, God will help you become willing.

Jacob's Key Verse for Step 8

³He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. ⁴But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. Genesis 33:3-4 (ESV)

Examine your heart

1. It took Jacob 40 years to become willing to make amends. Is there someone on your list you are struggling with becoming willing?
2. Making a list is more than a mental note. Are you working with your sponsor to begin to write these down?
3. If you are newer to the program, have you started, or are you ready, for a 4th Step which is the starting point for the 8th Step?

Learn More

This story of Jacob can be found in chapter 25 to 33 in Genesis. The book of Genesis is located on page 3 of the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible. The story of Jacob continues through chapter 49 and also includes valuable recovery lessons for Step 9 and 10.

Peter Makes Amends

STEP 9: We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you; leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24

Simon Peter was a strong and faithful follower of Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus prophesized, “I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” Matthew 16:18 (NIV) Just like us, Peter still faltered, broke his promises, and needed to make amends.

In the book of Mark chapter 14 verses 29-31 (NLT) ²⁹ Peter said to Jesus, “Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will.” ³⁰ Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, Peter—this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me.” ³¹ “No!” Peter declared emphatically. “Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!”

Later that same night, just as Jesus predicted, Peter denied Jesus three times. Upon realizing the betrayal of our Lord and Savior, Peter broke down and wept. (Mark 14:66-72) Peter was repentant, but he didn’t just stay there weeping with regret and asking for forgiveness. Peter got up and began making a difference for Christ. As you read through the book of Acts, you will find that Peter faced many perils including crucifixion to build the church just as Jesus said.

Amends is an action. It requires we do something to make things better or to improve the situation—to mend or repair the wrongs we committed. Peter could have simply wept bitterly, asked to be forgiven, and then moved on with peace, but without the action of trying to fix the failing he had created, where would the church be today? To truly make amends, Peter needed to uphold his promises and in a real way, show his commitment to Jesus. The same is true of us.

We should acknowledge our wrongs and ask for forgiveness, but also to work on mending relationships and repairing our wrongs. We need to show those around us that we are committed to a better life and our promises will now be kept. One of the primary ways we can do this is to stay sober and/or work on our compulsive behaviors, work the steps, stay committed to God, and continue on the path to a healthier life.

Peter’s Key Verse for Step 9

Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows twice^(b) you will disown me three times.” And he broke down and wept. Mark 14:72 (NIV)

Examine your heart

1. What are some real ways you are making amends to those around you?
2. We’ve all heard the saying, “Actions speak louder than words.” What are your actions telling people?
3. Is there anyone with whom you are struggling to make amends? Is there anything this group can do to help or support you in this process?

Learn More

This story of Peter can be found in chapter 14 in Mark. The book of Mark is located on page 1249 of the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible. We also recommend you read the book of Acts to witness Peter’s real amends in action. The book of Acts is located on page 1379 of the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible and contains the following recovery themes: The Power of the Holy Spirit, Commitment That Overcomes Opposition, Living Beyond Circumstances, and Sharing the Message.



A Wise Assessment of a Tenth Step

STEP 10: We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 1 Corinthians 10:12

When we were in the midst of our addictions and compulsive behaviors, dysfunctional thinking and toxic relationships became the norm and it can be difficult to break that cycle of “stinking thinking”. Stinking thinking is a phrase that originated from Alcoholics Anonymous phrase that describes the negative thought patterns that keep us trapped in destructive patterns of addiction or compulsive behaviors. Even in recovery, these thoughts can hinder us in a true inventory because we might easily filter our actions through blinders like denial, rationalization, and justification. The reason we take a personal inventory is to take an assessment of ourselves each day: how we acted, reacted, treated others, and perhaps how we treated ourselves. Taking this inventory allows us to identify our negative thoughts and behaviors, reflect on how we could have handled things differently, and admit when we were wrong. Practicing Step 10 every day will help us to break the cycle of stinking thinking.

As we continue to take our personal inventory, we also need to surround ourselves with dependable and wise counselors. These people might be our sponsor, a pastor, or even a person God brings into our life through a small group and our 12 steps or volunteer work. God speaks to us through the other people in our lives. We also need to stay focused on God's word—The Bible. Here we find the guidelines of how Christ wants us to live.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Proverbs 3:5-6 New Living Translation (NLT)

One of the wisest counselors in The Bible was Solomon. Solomon is the primary author of the book of Proverbs and uniquely qualified to serve as the principal author of these wise sayings. In 1 Kings 3:5–9 Solomon asks God for wisdom in his reign over Israel, a request God eventually granted in 1 Kings 4:29–31. Solomon had the distinct privilege and opportunity to be king over the 12 united tribes of Israel. His wisdom and understanding quickly became known worldwide and his wealth exceeded all kings of the world.

Solomon is still considered one of the wisest men to have ever lived and, through God's hand; we are uniquely blessed to have the book of Proverbs to help guide us in our daily lives. As you continue to assess your standing with God and others through your 10th Step, consider Solomon's writings found in Proverbs—words of wisdom that may keep you growing in your faith and your walk in recovery.

Solomon's Key Verse for Step 10

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. Proverbs 3:13-17 (NIV)

Examine your heart

1. What are some “stinking thinking” patterns you sometimes get stuck in?
2. Who are some wise people you can rely on to help guide you in your 10th Step?
3. Take some time this week and read through some of Proverbs—share some words of wisdom with another.

Learn More

Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs, the book of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. The book of Proverbs is located on page 785 of the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible and contains the following recovery themes: The Importance of Common Sense, The Power of Priorities, The Role of Boundaries, and Building Healthy Relationships.

Strength in Weakness

STEP 11: We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and power to carry that out.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Colossians 3:16

The apostle Paul has a very special place in Biblical history. Having been credited with writing most of the New Testament and being one of the most influential people in spreading the message of Christ to the new church, he definitely had a very special connection to the Holy Spirit. In 2 Corinthians 12, he even speaks of special visions from the Lord of which were revelations of paradise and heaven.

Even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God, to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. ¹⁰ That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NLT)

What a powerful testament to the 11th Step! Paul sought God—in fact, he begged God three times to remove his difficulty, yet three times God denied his request. Paul didn't get what he wanted, but he realized what he received was the best.

God knows so much better than we do of what we truly need and what is best for us. We might think that our addictions or compulsive behaviors make us weak or less than other people who have not been through the trials that we have, but God tells us just the opposite. His grace is all we need, and when we humble ourselves, His power works best in our weakness. When we were using or caught up in our compulsive behaviors, we made many bad choices. We found that our way didn't work. Through the program, we turned our will over to God. Step 11 keeps us focused on God's true reign over our lives. When we pray only for knowledge of his will for us, and the power to carry that out, we find peace, comfort and strength just like Paul did.

Paul's Key Verse for Step 11

Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. Philippians 4:11-13 (NLT)

THOUGHT TO CONSIDER: Just like the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), Jesus taught us the best way to pray an 11th Step prayer. On the Mount of Olives the night before his crucifixion, "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." **Luke 22:42 (NLT)**

Examine your heart

1. Are you struggling with being content with where God has you right now?
2. What are some ways you fit prayer and meditation into your daily routine?
3. There are times it is difficult to pray only for God's will in our lives. Is there anything you are having a difficult time accepting or turning over?

Learn More

There are two powerful Step 11 stories in the Bible that are referenced in this teaching. The first is about Paul's difficulty in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. The second is Jesus' emotional prayer during his last day in Luke chapter 22. The book of 2 Corinthians is located on page 1479 and the book of Luke is found on page 1285 in the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible.

Moses has a Spiritual Experience

STEP 12. Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore them gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Galatians 6:1

Moses had quite the spiritual experience. He was just tending to a flock of sheep when God appeared to him in a burning bush.

“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Exodus 3:5 (NIV)

God had a very important mission for Moses. He wanted Moses to lead the Israeli people out of slavery and bring them to the promised land, but Moses was afraid and didn't believe he was worthy for such a task. God finally convinced Moses that he was the right person. Moses not only accomplished this mission for God, but he led the Israeli people for many decades and is considered one of the most important prophets as well as a founding principle of the Jewish and Christian faith.

This can be so much like us and our 12th Step. Our spiritual experiences might be a bit more subtle than a burning bush, but God is calling us to spread our experience, strength, and hope with others who are suffering from addiction or compulsive behaviors and their family members. Like Moses, sometimes we might not think we are worthy of this task, but God has created us to be uniquely qualified to help others. There is power in sharing the message and God can give us the strength. Just like Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt, we can lead other addicts and their family members out of suffering with the 12th Step.

There are some in the program who believe that you must work all the other steps first before you will have the spiritual experience necessary to work this step, but look at Moses. God touched his life before Moses was even ready to take the other steps. His spiritual experience came first. This is so much like one of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill W., who had a spiritual experience before his recovery even began. Many have said they too have had a spiritual experience in the first three steps. Realizing God can save us from our unmanageable life and turning it all over to Him is very spiritually moving!

Moses' Key Verse for Step 12

And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.” (NIV)

Examine your heart

1. What spiritual experiences have you had that reinforce your faith in God?
2. Are there times you feel unworthy to carry this message to others? How can God and this group help you?
3. What are some 12 Step activities you have done? Where have you shared this message to others?

Learn More

This story of Moses is contained in Chapter 3 of Exodus and continues throughout the remainder of that book. The book of Exodus is located on page 77 in the second edition of The Life Recovery Bible and contains valuable recovery themes such as Deliverance from Slavery; God Hears the Helpless, God Uses Broken People, and God's Program. We also recommend you read the first chapter of The Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous. This is Bill's Story and includes his first spiritual experience as well as other recovery insights from one of the founders of the 12 Step Program.