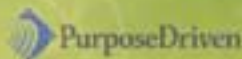


New International Version



# Celebrate Recovery *Bible*

## Sampler

**Find freedom from life's hurts,  
hang-ups, and habits**

- Emphasis on eight recovery principles and related Christ-centered twelve steps
- Recovery themes traced through stories offer hope and healing
- Recovery reference system, 30-day devotional track, and more

New International Version



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Celebrate  
Recovery  
*Bible*

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For those of us who struggle with life's difficult circumstances or with addictive, dysfunctional or compulsive behaviors, God's Word offers a way out. The *Celebrate Recovery Bible* provides special features highlighting aspects of Scripture that speak directly to our need to break free from life's hurts, habits and hang-ups, making this Bible a powerful, positive ally that you'll turn to again and again.

The *Celebrate Recovery Bible* is based on the eight principles, found in the Beatitudes, and the underlying Christ-centered twelve recovery steps of the proven Celebrate Recovery program. It's a perfect companion to the Celebrate Recovery program, which is now offered in thousands of churches worldwide. This Bible is also intentionally designed for use apart from the program.

Wherever people long for a way out ... wherever broken hearts need hope ... this Bible will lift readers up and show them how to walk, step by attainable step, on a path of healing and liberty from the hurts, hang-ups and habits that hold them back.

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~ FEATURES INCLUDE ~

- Articles explaining eight recovery principles and their accompanying Christ-centered twelve steps
- 112 lessons unpacking eight recovery principles in practical terms
- Recovery testimonies of changed lives, offering encouragement and hope
- Over 50 full-page biblical character studies illustrating recovery principles
- 30 days of devotional readings
- Complete NIV text

# THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

BASED ON THE BEATITUDES

PASTOR RICK WARREN

**Principle One:** Realize I'm not God; I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable (Step One).

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3).*

**Principle Two:** Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to him and that he has the power to help me recover (Step Two).

*"Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).*

**Principle Three:** Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control (Step Three).

*"Blessed are the meek" (Matthew 5:5).*

**Principle Four:** Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God and to someone I trust (Steps Four and Five)

*"Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8).*

**Principle Five:** Voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask him to remove my character defects (Steps Six and Seven).

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst  
for righteousness" (Matthew 5:6).*

**Principle Six:** Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others (Steps Eight and Nine).

*"Blessed are the merciful" (Matthew 5:7).*

*"Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9).*

**Principle Seven:** Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading, and prayer in order to know God and his will for my life and to gain the power to follow his will (Steps Ten and Eleven).

**Principle Eight:** Yield myself to God to be used to bring this good news to others, both by my example and by my words (Step Twelve).

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted  
because of righteousness" (Matthew 5:10).*

# Genesis

**THEME:** God desires to relate to his creation on an intimate level.

**AUTHOR:** Genesis doesn't identify its author, but Scripture and church tradition ascribe authorship to Moses.

**DATE OF WRITING:** Genesis was probably written between 1446 and 1406 B.C.

**CHALLENGE FROM GENESIS:** "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it" (4:7).

Genesis is a book of beginnings that sets the stage for all of history. In Genesis we're invited as insiders to witness the heavenly council in action, creating our world and universe. We view the pristine earth as God envisioned and created it, a world so perfect that God saw fit repeatedly throughout the creative process to pronounce it "good." Adam and Eve were able to speak freely with God, to enjoy an intimate, open, healthy relationship with their Maker—until sin entered the picture. The book of Genesis sets the scene for the rest of the Bible, for the ongoing story of a loving God desiring to reinstate a relationship with the creatures he created to mirror himself.

Part of our recovery is our acceptance of this world as it currently is: fallen, broken and sinful. Yet when we put our faith in Christ, things begin to get better. As we focus the lens of our souls, more beauty and goodness pop into the picture. In Genesis we face the realities of this world and the origins of the hardships we endure. Even more important, in Genesis we discover God's plan to bring blessing to all humankind through the seed of Abraham.

## The Beginning

**1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>Now the earth was<sup>a</sup> formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

<sup>3</sup>And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup>God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light "day," and the darkness he called

"night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." <sup>7</sup>So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Or possibly *became*

may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

<sup>4</sup>“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup>“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup>When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining

wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. <sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

<sup>8</sup>Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

<sup>10</sup>He answered, “I heard you in the gar-

## DENIAL LESSON [ Principle One ]

For the previous entry in the DENIAL lesson, go to Psalm 107:13–14 (page XXXX).

For a discussion of Principles One through Eight and a listing of their related lessons, go to pages XXXX–XXXX.

*“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”*

GENESIS 3:7–8

The power to change comes only through God’s grace. Principle One states: “Realize I’m not God. I admit that I’m powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life has become unmanageable.” If we admit that we’re powerless, we recognize our need for a power greater than ourselves to restore us. That power is our Higher Power, the one and only true Higher Power, Jesus Christ.

In Principle One we discover that we’ve been in DENIAL of our habits. The next letter in DENIAL is *I*. Denial ISOLATES US FROM GOD. Adam and Eve are an unforgettable example of how secrets and denial separate us from true fellowship with God. After they sinned, the first couple’s secret alienated them from God. Verse 7 tells us how they tried to isolate themselves from God because they were naked and felt ashamed. In verse 12 Adam tried to rationalize his sin. First he attempted to transfer the responsibility to God: “The woman you put here with me . . .” Then he tried to push the blame onto Eve: “. . . she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

But God’s light shines on the truth, even while our denial keeps us in the darkness of isolation: “If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:6–7).

The next letter in DENIAL is *A*. Go to Ephesians 4:25 (page XXXX).

den, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

<sup>11</sup>And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

<sup>12</sup>The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

<sup>13</sup>Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

<sup>14</sup>So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

“Cursed are you above all the livestock  
and all the wild animals!  
You will crawl on your belly  
and you will eat dust  
all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup>And I will put enmity  
between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring<sup>a</sup> and hers;  
he will crush<sup>b</sup> your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”

<sup>16</sup>To the woman he said,

“I will greatly increase your pains in  
childbearing;  
with pain you will give birth to  
children.

Your desire will be for your husband,  
and he will rule over you.”

<sup>17</sup>To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’

“Cursed is the ground because of you;  
through painful toil you will eat of it  
all the days of your life.

<sup>18</sup>It will produce thorns and thistles for  
you,  
and you will eat the plants of the field.

<sup>19</sup>By the sweat of your brow  
you will eat your food

until you return to the ground,  
since from it you were taken;  
for dust you are  
and to dust you will return.”

<sup>20</sup>Adam<sup>c</sup> named his wife Eve,<sup>d</sup> because she would become the mother of all the living.

<sup>21</sup>The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. <sup>22</sup>And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” <sup>23</sup>So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. <sup>24</sup>After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side<sup>e</sup> of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

### **Cain and Abel**

**4** Adam<sup>c</sup> lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.<sup>f</sup> She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth<sup>g</sup> a man.” <sup>2</sup>Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. <sup>3</sup>In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. <sup>4</sup>But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup>but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

<sup>6</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? <sup>7</sup>If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.”

<sup>8</sup>Now Cain said to his brother Abel,

<sup>a</sup> 15 Or seed <sup>b</sup> 15 Or strike <sup>c</sup> 20,1 Or The man <sup>d</sup> 20 Eve probably means living. <sup>e</sup> 24 Or placed in front  
<sup>e</sup> 1 Cain sounds like the Hebrew for brought forth or acquired. <sup>g</sup> 1 Or have acquired

# My Name Is Carl

I'M A BELIEVER WHO STRUGGLES WITH FEAR, SEXUAL ADDICTION AND ALCOHOLISM

Please read the story of Abram's fear-based deception of Pharaoh, as well as of God's future blessings, in Genesis 12:10—13:2.

I've spent most of my life hampered by feelings of insecurity, worthlessness, panic, anxiety and downright terror.

I was raised in the 1950s by an alcoholic father and a controlling mother. There was no physical abuse, but my parents used rage and fear to intimidate me into submission. When I was six years old, my family was returning home one evening from visiting my grandparents when I offered a stick of gum to one of my siblings. Dad, immediately realizing that I'd stolen the gum from my grandparents, confronted me. I admitted my transgression, fully expecting a spanking when we got home. Instead, Dad pulled over and asked curtly, "Do you know what happens to thieves?" I responded in the negative, and he replied, "They go to prison." He pointed to a dark, scary building we were just passing and informed me that this was the very prison where I'd be staying for the next 20 years. He instructed me to hand over all of my possessions and beg God for his forgiveness. My brother, sisters and I were all screaming in fear. My spirit was broken. After that harrowing experience I gradually learned to anticipate my parents' moods and to feed them the appropriate responses. Instead of becoming resentful, I tried all the harder to please them. I craved love and affection but felt absolutely unworthy.

My experiences were reinforced by my religious upbringing. Salvation, according to my parents' theology, was based on an impossible-to-achieve degree of perfection. I truly thought that if I committed a mortal sin and died without confessing it, God would send me to hell for all eternity. I learned to put on a mask of piety, while inside I was consumed by terror and guilt. As my faith was pushed aside by my fears, I was left to my own strategies to establish some semblance of security.

I was married for 19 years before divorcing. My wife and I fought often; after token resistance, my pattern was to feel guilty and give in. We were miserable, but, afraid of losing her, I started going to prostitutes and was eventually found out. After the divorce I decided to live for myself, without regard for anyone else's approval. The illusion of control brought

a measure of comfort. I partied for the next four years, but the price tag was steep. I became addicted to prostitution, pornography and alcohol, and began experimenting with drugs. But no matter what I did I couldn't escape the childlike fear that still gripped me. I began working as a bouncer at a local bar, smuggled steroids across the border for my personal use, took karate and got tattooed. Gradually I came to realize, though, that I had simply traded in one form of bondage for another.

At this point God reached out to me. I began attending church and for the first time in my life heard who Jesus really is. I'd been taught that he was a victim; only now did I learn that he'd *chosen* to die, and that he'd done it for me!

It took a DUI to get me into recovery. Pastor Rick Warren began a series of sermons on recovery, and the following Friday the Lord introduced me to Celebrate Recovery. I knew right away that I had found my promised land. No one there enabled, judged or attempted to fix me. Instead, they offered me the one thing I'd always craved: unconditional love. I can relate to Abram and am especially amazed at how graciously, in spite of Abram's failure, God increased his wealth. After Abram was forced out of his denial, he began a journey of recovery.

As time passed, I was blessed with the complete restoration of my relationship with my parents. I shared Christ with my mom, and God gave me the words and the loving heart to meet her where she was. She accepted the Lord, as did my dad shortly thereafter. One month later Dad went home to be with Christ.

Like Abram, I went from being a man of fear to becoming a man of faith. The Lord did for me what I could never have done for myself: He loved me enough to empower me with the gift that was to transform my life. He enabled me to choose not to be held hostage to my feelings, but instead to live by faith, despite my feelings. God regularly helps me combat the old lies through the study of Biblical truth.

Today I'm celebrating 15 years of sobriety. I'm so grateful to the Lord for the principles and steps of Celebrate Recovery, as well as for my accountability partners. His power and unconditional love have endowed me with a passion to be used by him to serve others, which I do especially as a coleader of the Adult Children of Alcoholics group and as an encourager-coach for the Men's Recovery groups.

As 1 John 4:18 so aptly reminds me, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear."

Carl





## MY NAME IS JACOB

GENESIS 25:19 — 32:32

Jacob was given a name predictive of his personality—its meaning: trickster. Early in life he set out to live up to that forecast, cheating his “older” twin brother, Esau, out of both his birthright and his blessing (25:27–34; 27:1–29). Esau’s not unexpected anger meant that Jacob had to flee for his life (27:41—28:9). But as we know, it’s impossible for any of us to run away from our issues. Wherever we go, we find that they’ve accompanied us. Seeking first shelter and ultimately a wife from his uncle Laban, the scam artist found himself cruelly scammed. Jacob ended up in virtual bondage to Laban, burdened with two wives and all the complications that can come with a “blended family” fueled by jealousy and resentment (29:15—30:24). Once again, Jacob sought to solve his problems through deceit and manipulation (30:25–42). And for a while success seemed to be his (30:43).

Scheming and jockeying for position put us in a position of having to plot to keep what we’ve won. Sooner or later, when our past catches up with us, the only viable course of action is to run from the consequences.

Laban’s sons complained that Jacob had grown rich at their expense. Jacob got wind of their grumbling and noted a deterioration in Laban’s attitude (31:1–2). But fleeing could only mean going home. And going home—and facing Esau.

Being a schemer, Jacob still hoped to control his circumstances. But hearing that Esau was riding in his direction, accompanied by 400 men, filled Jacob with fear. He divided his own people and flocks into two groups, hoping that one of the groups would survive the force of Esau’s wrath (32:3–8). Finally, as a last resort, Jacob turned to God for deliverance. How did he begin his path to recovery?

He took his problems to God (32:9); prayed in accordance with God’s promises (32:9); took a spiritual inventory (32:10); sought God’s strength at his own point of weakness (32:11); confidently claimed God’s promises (32:12).

After that the going got easy, right? Not! Jacob was still a deceiver, and there’s no such thing as instant recovery. He planned to bribe Esau (32:13–21), but God had a better idea. Jacob ended up in a wrestling match with God (32:22–31). He held on, even when it hurt, until he’d received God’s blessing (32:25–29). There will be steps along the recovery road we don’t understand, and others we may resist. That’s okay—as long as we hold tightly to God.

In the process of seeking healing, Jacob discovered God’s purpose for his life: to become the father of a nation destined to bless all people. The trickster’s new destiny called for a new name: Israel, meaning “he struggles with God.” Celebrate Recovery is a path traveled both in the footsteps and company of Jesus. Given these criteria, we know immediately that it won’t be a self-serving road. It will always be a way that passionately pursues God’s purposes and glory.

Along the road will come unexpected blessings, as well as freedom and reconciliation, both with God and with others. Touched powerfully by God, but still afraid, Jacob confronted the brother he had robbed of birthright and blessing. The result was a pure product of God’s grace (33:4).

At the end of the journey, following your struggle to cling desperately to God, there is for you, as for Jacob, the promise of a new name: “To him who overcomes, I will give . . . a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it” (Revelation 2:17).

He thought, “The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.”

<sup>8</sup>When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. <sup>9</sup>So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, “She is really your wife! Why did you say, ‘She is my sister?’”

Isaac answered him, “Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her.”

<sup>10</sup>Then Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.”

<sup>11</sup>So Abimelech gave orders to all the people: “Anyone who molests this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

<sup>12</sup>Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him. <sup>13</sup>The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. <sup>14</sup>He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. <sup>15</sup>So all the wells that his father’s servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth.

<sup>16</sup>Then Abimelech said to Isaac, “Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us.”

<sup>17</sup>So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. <sup>18</sup>Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them.

<sup>19</sup>Isaac’s servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. <sup>20</sup>But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herdsmen and said, “The water is ours!” So he named the well Esek,<sup>a</sup> because they disputed with him. <sup>21</sup>Then they dug another well, but they quarreled

over that one also; so he named it Sitnah.<sup>b</sup> <sup>22</sup>He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth,<sup>c</sup> saying, “Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish in the land.”

<sup>23</sup>From there he went up to Beersheba. <sup>24</sup>That night the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham.”

<sup>25</sup>Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.

<sup>26</sup>Meanwhile, Abimelech had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces. <sup>27</sup>Isaac asked them, “Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?”

<sup>28</sup>They answered, “We saw clearly that the LORD was with you; so we said, ‘There ought to be a sworn agreement between us’—between us and you. Let us make a treaty with you <sup>29</sup>that you will do us no harm, just as we did not molest you but always treated you well and sent you away in peace. And now you are blessed by the LORD.”

<sup>30</sup>Isaac then made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. <sup>31</sup>Early the next morning the men swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they left him in peace.

<sup>32</sup>That day Isaac’s servants came and told him about the well they had dug. They said, “We’ve found water!” <sup>33</sup>He called it Shibah,<sup>d</sup> and to this day the name of the town has been Beersheba.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>34</sup>When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. <sup>35</sup>They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

<sup>a</sup> 20 Esek means *dispute*. <sup>b</sup> 21 Sitnah means *opposition*. <sup>c</sup> 22 Rehoboth means *room*. <sup>d</sup> 33 Shibah can mean *oath* or *seven*. <sup>e</sup> 33 Beersheba can mean *well of the oath* or *well of seven*.

# PRINCIPLE ONE

REALIZE I'M NOT GOD; I ADMIT THAT I AM POWERLESS  
TO CONTROL MY TENDENCY TO DO THE WRONG THING  
AND THAT MY LIFE IS UNMANAGEABLE.

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”*

MATTHEW 5:3

Our amazing recovery journey starts with Principle One, where we admit that we are powerless to control our hurts, hang-ups and habits and that our lives have become unmanageable, out of control. But before we begin this exciting journey, we need to ask ourselves the following two questions:

**ARE WE WEARING A MASK OF DENIAL?**

**OVER WHAT DO WE REALLY HAVE CONTROL?**

Let's look at the first question: Are we wearing a mask of denial? Before we can make any progress in our recovery, we need to face our denial. As soon as we remove our mask, our recovery begins—or begins again! It doesn't matter whether we're new in recovery or we've been in the process and working the principles and steps for years. Denial can rear its ugly head and return at any time. We may trade addictions or get into a new relationship that's unhealthy for us in a different way than a previous one.

God says in Jeremiah 6:14 “They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.”

Denial is serious. We can't heal our wounds, hurts, hang-ups and habits by pretending they're not there. Following are six negative effects DENIAL has had on our lives:

- D**isables our feelings—2 Peter 2:19
- E**nergy drain—Psalm 146:7–8
- N**egates our growth—Psalm 107:13–14
- I**solates us from God—Genesis 3:7–8
- A**lienates us from other human relationships—Ephesians 4:25
- L**engthens our pain—Jeremiah 30:17

As soon as we start working on this principle and admit that we're powerless, we begin to change. We see that our old ways of trying to control our hurts, hang-ups and habits didn't work. Our attempts were buried by our denial, and our problems were held close by our false sense of power. This leads us to the second question we need to answer:

Over what do we really have control? In Principle One we recognize our need to admit our powerlessness. Our lust for the power to control is rooted in our weaknesses, not in our strengths. We need to realize our human weaknesses and turn our lives over to God. Jesus knew this would be difficult. How difficult? He said this about a related issue, but it

applies here as well: “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

The following acrostic demonstrates what happens when we admit we’re POWERLESS. We begin to let go of the following “serenity robbers”:

**P**ride—Proverbs 29:23  
**O**nly ifs—Luke 12:2–3  
**W**orrying—Matthew 6:34  
**E**scape—Ephesians 5:13–14  
**R**esentment—Ephesians 4:26–27  
**L**oneliness—Hebrews 13:1–2  
**E**mptiness—John 10:10  
**S**elfishness—Luke 17:33  
**S**eparation—Romans 8:38–39

The power to change comes only from God’s grace. In Principle One we start working and living this program in earnest. When we admit we’re powerless, we go on to recognize that we need a power greater than ourselves to restore us. That power is the one and only true Higher Power, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 12:1 invites us, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

This verse spells out two important insights as we begin our recovery journey. First, God has a particular race, a unique plan, for each of us—a plan for good, not a life consumed with dependencies, addictions and obsessions. The second thing is that we need to be willing to get rid of all the unnecessary baggage—our hurts, hang-ups and habits—in our lives that keep us stuck (“let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles”). Working through the eight principles will allow us to discover God’s plan and purpose for our lives. The journey begins by taking the first step.

The first step of the Christ-centered 12 steps relates to Principle One.

STEP ONE: 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

## PRINCIPLE ONE PRAYER

Dear God, your Word tells me that I can’t heal my hurts, hang-ups and habits just by saying they’re not there. Help me! Parts of my life—or all of my life—are out of control. I now know that I can’t “fix” myself. It seems that the harder I try to do the right thing, the more I struggle. Lord, I want to step out of my denial into the truth. I pray for you to show me the way. In your Son’s name, Amen.

## PRINCIPLE ONE LESSONS:

DENIAL: Go to 2 Peter 2:19 (p. XXXX).

POWERLESS: Go to Proverbs 29:23 (p. XXXX).

## DENIAL

Hebrews 12:1 offers a challenge none of us can afford to ignore:

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."*

For many of us, though, past hurts, hang-ups and habits are holding us back and tripping us up. We may be stuck in a mode of bitterness over what someone else has done to us, continuing to hold on to the pain and refusing to forgive those who are responsible. In all fairness, some of us have been hurt very deeply. Perhaps we were abused as a child, or maybe our spouse has committed adultery. But it's important for us to understand that holding on to that hurt and being unwilling to forgive the person who has injured us in the past only allows them to continue hurting us today. By starting to work our recovery program, we can, with God's power, begin to find the courage and strength to forgive the guilty party.

Others of us are bound by guilt. We keep beating ourselves up over some past failure. We're trapped, stuck fast in self-reproach and shame. We reason that no one else anywhere could be as bad as we are, that no one could love the *real* us or forgive us for the terrible things we've done. But we're wrong: For starters, God can. Jesus went to the cross for all our sins. He knows everything we've ever done or experienced. The apostle Paul harbored a lot of regret about his past. He'd even participated in Stephen's murder. Yet in Philippians 3:13–14 he inspires us with these words: "Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

If we want to be free from our hurts, hang-ups and habits, we need to deal with our past bitterness and guilt once and for all. In the words of Isaiah 43:18, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past." That doesn't mean we're to ignore the past. Instead, we need to learn from our past, offer forgiveness and make amends; in doing so, we break its hold on us.

Some of us, on the other hand, are trapped in fear of the future. We may worry about what's coming next and be afraid to change. We're naturally apprehensive about things over which we have no control. The truth is, though, that we can "say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?' " (Hebrews 13:6).

Some of us have been entangled in our hurts, hang-ups or habits for so long that they've become intertwined with our identity. We're so accustomed to them and comfortable with them that we confuse what we've *done* with who we *are*. We may be thinking, What will happen if I really give recovery a chance? Will I change? If I give up my old hurts, hang-ups and habits, what will I become? Who will I be? What will be left of me?

We may have been abusing alcohol, prescription drugs or food. We're afraid of what we'll do without our substance of choice. We may have been enabling someone else in a dysfunctional relationship for years. We wonder, What if I change and my alcoholic husband gets mad at me? But God doesn't want us to stay frozen in an unhealthy relationship or a bad habit. He wants us to do our part in helping the relationship or habit become healthy.

Even if our past has been extremely painful, we may still resist change and the freedom that can be found in really working our program. Because of our fear of the unknown or our feelings of despair, we choose to close our minds, reasoning that we don't deserve any better than what we have right now.

Principle One states: "Realize I'm not God; I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable." As we begin working this principle, we need to remember 1 John 4:18: "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear."

Because of Christ's unconditional love, power, grace and complete forgiveness, we don't have to let our past failures or future fears stop us from completing Principle One. Remember that we've all stumbled over a hurt, hang-up or habit. But the race isn't over yet. God isn't nearly as interested in how we start the race as he is in how we finish it.

Take a Look:

What past hurts are you holding on to?

What past or present actions make you feel guilty?

What are you afraid to change in your life? Why?

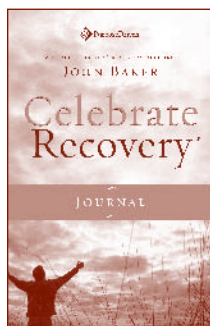
What are your fears about the future? Why?

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## FEATURES

- Articles explain eight recovery principles and accompanying Christ-centered twelve steps
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