

## **The Golden Ladder: Jesus's 8-Step Program**

**By Jonathan Sargent, ThD, PhD**

All scriptural quotes are taken from the King James Version Bible unless otherwise noted.

Scriptural quotations marked NLT are taken from the New Living Translation (Tyndale House Publishers 2004).

Scriptural quotations marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible (Ryrie 1995 update).

Scriptural quotations marked NIV are taken from the New International Version (Holy Bible. New International Version 1984).

Scriptural quotations marked AMP are taken from the Amplified Bible (The Amplified Bible: Containing the Amplified Old Testament and the Amplified New Testament 1965).

Scriptural quotations marked ESV are taken from the English Standard Version (Bibles 2007).

Scriptural quotations marked BSB are taken from the Berean Study Bible (Bible 2016).

Scriptural quotations marked CEV are taken from the Contemporary English Version (Holy Bible: Contemporary English Version 1995).

Scriptural quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version (The Holy Bible: New King James Version 1982).

## Introduction

“Jesus wept” (John 11:35).

It is the shortest verse in the King James Version. Two simple words yet so intense. In this brief statement, we see the heart of Jesus manifest in such a profound way. Jesus stood outside the tomb of Lazarus so long ago with tears running down his face as he looked toward the grave of his friend. While many have speculated why Jesus wept that day, I’m reminded the Bible says Jesus sympathized with us (Heb. 4:15 [New King James Version]). Perhaps Jesus wept because death had come to the human race through the original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Maybe he wept because Lazarus’s two sisters had to bury their brother. Or possibly, it was because his friend suffered the agony of a slow death. Whatever the case, Jesus was touched by the situation and there to help. The same is true for your situation; Jesus is touched by your problems and there to offer a helping hand to “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord” (Acts 2:21)!

All of us have seen the effects of addiction as it has destroyed homes, ruined relationships, and robbed many of us of our health and even our lives. We too, like Jesus, have wept since we have seen the pain and misery the bondage of addiction has caused. As I sit here, my mind sifts through the faces of those who have lost their battles. One former classmate after another appears in the obituary section of the local paper. Why should we not weep when we think of so many of our friends and family who have been robbed of their lives and happiness due to these dependencies?

Where I sit, in the middle of Appalachia, we are in the hotbed of drug addiction. Every church service is filled with multiple prayer requests for family and friends who are struggling with addiction of every sort. Mothers with tears streaming down their faces call out for God to have mercy on their children who are losing the battle. Our church, like so many others, has watched those who desperately want help come through our doors, but they are not willing to lay aside the thing destroying their bodies, lives, and souls. We have buried countless loved ones who seemed to have the world at their fingertips only to fall into the pit and drown. Well, we’re sick of it, and we have decided to make our stand with the ARISE program.

With that in mind, I have written this book. From a Christian perspective, we see it all with a bird’s-eye view. Addiction is merely a snare of Satan’s to destroy men’s souls. Christ is

the cure. We are the doctors to prescribe the cure to those in need. We have been called to be the light of the world and to shine in the midst of the darkness that is, without a doubt, all around us. This is especially true where I live in eastern Kentucky, which holds the dismal honor of being among the highest pills-per-capita places in the United States. It's sad. Right in the heart of the Bible Belt there is this overlap—the disease and the cure are both readily available, yet many drown in the pit on a daily basis.

This book began as a simple theological guide for our Christ-centered addiction recovery group, called ARISE, at our church. During this time of prayer and meditation, God revealed “The Golden Ladder” to me by showing how Jesus’s Beatitudes give us everything needed for a person to be set free from addiction and sin in their life. Jesus’s eight blessings form an eight-step program that will lead everyone out of the bondage they are in. When I examined other programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, I realized many of their steps line up with God’s Word perfectly.

Our purpose here is to explain the nature of addiction. While it has been called many things, like a disease or an allergy, we attempt to get to the root of the problem. We recognize from a Christian viewpoint all addiction is spiritual. Satan attempts to bring us into bondage through addiction or anything else he can use. The apostle Paul warns us in 1 Corinthians 6:12 (New International Version) to not be “mastered by anything.” Addiction is being mastered by the forces of darkness. That dark “master” needs to be replaced by the one true “Master”—Jesus Christ.

Addiction is a pit. The pit is a common image used in scripture as a trap to catch innocent victims. Throughout this book, we will refer to addiction as the Pit of Despair, a trap created by Satan, who has caught many unwary souls. Full deliverance from the pit can only come through Jesus Christ. Likewise, the ladder is also a familiar image in scripture. For instance, Jacob dreamed of a ladder that reached from earth to heaven, connecting us to God. In our case, the eight Beatitudes form a type of ladder. Each step, or rung, is contingent upon the one preceding it. They cannot be bypassed or neglected. These eight Beatitudes will be referred to throughout this book as the Golden Ladder of Recovery. There are just eight steps, but they lead from the pit to the throne of God!

Each step will be examined from a theological standpoint. We'll draw examples from scripture, showing the ageless nature of addiction and recovery since the fiery trials we face are common to every age. The first couple, Adam and Eve, had to deal with the trap of Satan, and so has every person who has been born since then. Next, we will discuss the actions needed to ascend this ladder properly by looking at each step objectively. Every step will require us to do something, as we encourage activity in our program.

My purpose for writing is not to teach some great theological doctrine. This book is not intended to be written in a way that only those with a seminary degree can understand. Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 14:9 (New Living Translation), "If you speak to people in words they don't understand, how will they know what you are saying?" I want readers to be able to understand this book. Remember, Jesus spoke in parables so the common people could learn about the kingdom of God. While I preach out of the King James Version, I have chosen to use different versions in this book based on which ones I feel make the particular scripture easiest to understand. The goal is to make things so simple that a person who has never picked up a Bible in their life, or been to a church service, can comprehend what is being taught.

When we read the Bible, we recognize that the scripture has one main meaning. It must always be read in context. After that, there may be a thousand applications to one text. We do not want to lose the original meaning, but we can still use scriptures to apply to our situation when needed. This will be done from time to time. Jesus's great Sermon on the Mount was delivered to a nation steeped in Pharisaical, or literal, interpretation—they had lost the spirit of the law and replaced it with the letter of the law. We do not want to lose the spirit of the text we are studying. Instead, we want to take the meaning of each Beatitude and apply it to our topic of addiction.

I pray that this book is a blessing to each and every one who reads it. Take your time as you work your way through it. We are all on our path to recovery. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We have been pulled out of the pit by a gracious, merciful God, and he will deliver you if you call on him. Keep your eyes on the Lord at all times, and after a while, you can hear him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21).

God bless!

## ***What do you want?***

“What do you want?” Jesus asked in John 1:38 (NLT).

Two men saw John the Baptist point to Jesus and proclaim he was the “Lamb of God,” so they turned and began following him. Of all the questions Jesus could have posed to those two men, he chose to ask them what they wanted. “Plain talk is easily understood,” the old adage goes. Jesus, who is the source of life and blessings, penetrates the very soul with these four words—what do you want?

Now I ask you the same question. “What do *you* want?”

“Why are *you* here?”

“What are *you* looking for that you have not been able to find elsewhere?”

“Why are *you* reading a Christian book looking for answers?”

“Why are *you* attending a Christ-centered addiction recovery program?”

There are questions each of us should ask ourselves. What do we want? What would make life have meaning? Where would we like to be in the future? What have we been doing that has stopped us from achieving what we want? These are not easy questions to answer either. They should force us to look deep inside ourselves and evaluate our lives objectively. Now, we could blame people and situations to make us feel better about our pitiful condition, or we can formulate a plan to get what we are looking for out of life. But the first question has to be, “*What do you want?*”

One of Jesus’s miracles involved a blind man named Blind Bartimaeus. When he heard Jesus was near, Bartimaeus cried out for mercy. Jesus called to him and then asked him an odd question: “What do you want me to do for you?” (Mark 10:51 [NIV]). While it’s obvious the blind man needed his sight restored, Jesus asked him to say what it was he wanted. Bartimaeus asked to be healed, and Jesus healed his blinded eyes. The point is, Jesus knew what he needed but forced him to ask for it. If you really want anything out of this program, you are going to have to become engaged. You have to figure out what you want, and you’re going to have to ask for it.

By asking, I'm not talking about today's whims. I mean you must take a critical view of your life, your situation, your own weaknesses and strengths, and your determination as you attempt to answer the question, "What do *you* want?"

The next question is, "What are *you* going to do about it?" Is your desire just wishful thinking, or is it something worth pursuing? Are you willing to take the necessary steps to ensure your goals can become a reality? If your answer is yes, then this program is for you.

One issue you will face is the fear of the unknown. Of course, everyone wants to better themselves, but many do not know where to begin. This is why our program exists. Jesus laid out a plan two thousand years ago that ensures every person can "have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Our goal here is to walk you through Jesus's plan so you can have what it is you're wanting out of life.

Nonetheless, when facing the unknown, there often comes reservation in beginning a program. It can seem overwhelming, but there is no need to be timid in making a start. Take it one step at a time, don't get discouraged if you stumble, and keep your eyes on the goal. One problem many people face is trying to figure everything out before they begin moving. Don't concern yourself with that. As you work yourself through the program, it will take shape. Don't let fear stop you from making a start. Think of it like this: when a child is in elementary school, they learn simple math. The greatest mathematician in the world may have struggled with one plus one at some point in their developmental years. They grew, though, and understanding came with that growth. Such is the case with this program. You may not understand everything or even how it will work for you, but if you trust Christ, it will work. Your growth will enable you to make your way through the course.

The first thing this program will deal with is getting started in the right direction. To do this, we must understand the nature of addiction. Using symbolism, we attempt to construct a proper perspective of the situation. Addiction is a pit. Jesus is the ladder. At the top of the ladder is a life of meaning and purpose. How do you get from the bottom of the pit to the top of the ladder? To some, it may seem an impossible feat. They have resolved they are too far gone. Others feel inadequate to even begin the climb. But we know you can make it. You just need to have the proper focus.

If you can assess your situation properly, then you can recognize the reality of this pit of addiction. If that seems like a proper evaluation, you will be able to answer the question, “What do you want?” The simple answer is you want out of the pit. That leads to the next question, “What are you going to do about it?” The answer is you’re going to set in motion a plan to get out using the teachings of Jesus as the means. Do not overwhelm yourself at this point with any more “hows” or “whats.” That will all come later. Just getting started in the right direction is imperative at this point.

Now that you have a goal in mind, you can aim for it. Think of it like this: suppose you were to go golfing, and the flag pin is five hundred yards away. You should not be concerned, at this point, how the putting green slopes. Perhaps there’s a sand bunker next to the putting green, but that is irrelevant at this point. You can negotiate all of that when you get to it. For now, you just need to take your driver and hit the ball as hard as you can in the right direction. As you progress forward, you can worry about those other aspects. In the meantime, just aim toward the goal. When you get ready to take your second, third, or fourth swing, you’ll need to readjust your aim. You are not going to have it all figured out ahead of time. Yet each stroke is moving you closer to the pin, and each time, you will need to narrow your focus until, at last, you’re aiming at a four-inch hole. Even the worst golfer will sink the putt eventually. This is not a competition against others; this is you trying to get *what you want*, which you will get if you really desire it.

With this in mind, you can begin the book properly. Take time to evaluate what it is you’re wanting and what you are willing to do to make that a reality. If you are like the rest of us, then you’re sick of the bondage of addiction. Your goals for life have been affected by this terrible taskmaster. Perhaps you feel like you are drowning in the pit and have even questioned if there was any help for you. But be assured, there is help, and his name is Jesus Christ.

All I ask at this point in your recovery (and yes, it has begun) is to give your life an honest assessment. Do not justify or glorify your addictions. Be honest about your weaknesses. Believe there is hope for you because I promise there is. Keep an open mind concerning the words of Jesus and his Golden Ladder. Please, give this program and this book the opportunity to illuminate the way out of the pit. Before long, you will be standing at the top of the ladder with your former life of addiction a distant memory.

**Journal**

In chapter 30 of 1 Samuel, we read of a seemingly hopeless situation. David, who would soon be the greatest king of Israel, had returned home to his family only to find the city burned to the ground. His family had been taken captive along with the families of his soldiers. And as they stood in the ashes of the city, they began to weep. It seemed like everything had been taken, and there was no hope for David and his men. The Bible says David was “greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him” (1 Sam. 30:6).

Imagine the scene: his home was burned, his family had been kidnapped, and even his best friends were blaming him to the point of talking about killing him! What did David do? The Bible says, “but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God” (1 Sam. 30:6). He asked God what to do, and God told him to go get what had been taken from him. God’s word to David was to get up, pursue what he had lost, and he would recover all!

What about you? What is it you feel has been taken from you? What has addiction taken that you want back? We want you to reflect on these questions and take the time to answer them honestly.

List what addiction has taken from you. This will help you to work toward a plan to recover all. (Ex: peace of mind/family or other relationships/health/finances/reputation/joy/etc.)

---

---

---

---

---

Now, are you willing to do whatever it takes to recover what has been stolen from you by addiction? \_\_\_\_\_. It may seem odd to even ask as the answer should be yes, obviously. But we want you to write it down. A person is only as good as their word, so if you face your situations and vow to work toward that word, we trust you will honor it to the best of your ability.

Are you willing to make a commitment to follow the steps of Jesus’s program to attain these goals? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you ready to prioritize your life to achieve these goals? \_\_\_\_\_

*Prayer: Father, I ask you in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, to help me recover what the past has stolen from me. I am ready to make a commitment to you and rely on you to lead me in the direction you would have me go. I trust you, knowing I cannot trust my own ways, to help me. I am asking for your mercy and grace, as I know you will not turn anyone away who comes to you heartbroken and in need. Help me as I begin my journey toward recovery. I realize I do not know the way, but you do, so I lean on you for guidance from this point forward! In Jesus's name, amen.*

### ***Scripture***

*Psalm 40:1–3 (NLT)*

“I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the **pit of despair**, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord.”

## Chapter One: A Time for Action!

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants’” (Luke 15:18–19 [NKJV]).

These verses show us a man who has hit rock bottom in his life. Everything has fallen apart, and he is looking at a hopeless situation from where he’s standing. He’s got no food, no money, and no friends. What he thought would bring him fulfillment and joy has not produced anything but misery and heartache. He wants to escape his predicament but is uncertain what to do. Then, the thought comes to him; he knows a place where he can get help. If he can make it there, maybe everything will be okay.

“I will arise and go to my father.” These eight words began his journey of healing and restoration. These are words of action! They are words of resolve. They are the words of a man who is sick of the situation.

Most importantly, though, is the verse that follows, which says, “And he arose and came to his father” (Luke 15:20 [NKJV]). It would take more than good intentions to get him out of the situation. All the talk in the world is just hot air if the idea is not a plan of action. That man fixed his mind on the fact that he may be able to go get help, and he got up and went.

Of course, this is the famous parable told by Jesus of the Prodigal Son. The story is that a man had two sons, and one decided he wanted his inheritance while his father was still alive. He asked for it, and his father obliged him. The young man then went to a far country and wasted everything his father gave him. Although a parable, Jesus is painting the picture of a man who spent everything on drugs, alcohol, and women. He lived it up. That is, until the money was all gone, and the young man was forced to face a famine in that country. His friends turned their backs on him when he had nothing to offer them, and he was forced to work as a slave on a farm feeding hogs. To a Jewish person, a hog was an unclean animal unfit to be touched. Now, the man was not only touching hogs but living among them. Just before his epiphany that he could perhaps go back home and get help, he contemplated eating slop with the pigs. The thing he never dreamed of becoming had suddenly become a grim reality. He needed help, and he knew where to get it.

As the Prodigal Son contemplated getting out of the hogpen, most likely a thousand doubts entered his mind. “What if I am not accepted by my father?” he probably thought. “What if I can’t make it?” What if, what if, what if? We are our own worst enemies at times as we make mountains out of molehills and imagine the worst. But we have to get up, otherwise we’re doomed. As the Prodigal Son arose, he resolved to go home and ask his father if he could just be a servant. He didn’t think he was worthy of being a son.

Except the father had other plans. The Bible says the Prodigal Son did indeed go home, and while he was “yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). This wonderful parable tells of a father who runs to his son and does not care about his past or anything else; he’s just happy his son has returned. He hugged him and kissed him and welcomed him back home. The son tried to say how sorry he was, and that he was willing to be a servant, but the father interrupted him and called for the best robe to be put on him, as well as the best ring, and for a party to be thrown for him.

“I will ARISE and go to my father” was the turning point in his life. When facing the hogpen, he realized it was not the life he dreamed of. We should all be able to relate. All of us have been there. There is not one drop of self-righteousness among us. We have all been addicts in one sense or another—alcohol, social media, work, partying, etc.—and we all have to make up our minds to ARISE and find help.

Our application here is the son decided to go home but was unsure how he would be accepted. He didn’t envision having the robe, the ring, or the party. All he wanted was to go home and get help. But the father, full of mercy and grace, gave him more than he ever expected. The Prodigal Son’s only action was to return, and the father stepped in and did the rest.

As a Christ-centered recovery group, we are not asking for anything except for you to ARISE. We believe that if you come to Jesus, then he will take care of the rest. We don’t care whether the stench of the hogpen (addiction) is on you, for we were brought out of the hogpen ourselves. We do not expect anyone who comes to this program to have it all figured out nor to be religious. All we want is for you to have a desire to ARISE, and we will work toward a plan that will introduce you to the one who can guarantee freedom from addiction.

Let us take this time to explain the nature of this program. ARISE gets its name from Luke 15:18. We know we have to make up our mind to ARISE and get out of the situation we

are in. The scriptures are filled with people who made up their minds to get help and initiated a plan to do so. We mention those people throughout this book as proof of human nature. Those people in the Bible were just like you and me.

As a matter of fact, one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament, Elijah, is described as a “man with a nature like ours [with the same physical, mental, and spiritual limitations and shortcomings]” (James 5:17 [Amplified Bible]). This man was used by God in great ways. He raised the dead, called fire down from heaven, and stopped the heavens from raining for three and a half years! But he also had doubts, and at one point, he even asked God to let him die. You do not have to feel inferior because you have weaknesses and struggle in certain areas. All you need at this point is to **ARISE** and let God work in your life.

The story of the Prodigal Son could very well be any of us. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We have all been in the hogpen just like that young man. This famous parable, told by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, shows us the depravity of sin and the mercy and grace of God. The wording of riotous living (representing the worldliness of alcohol and drugs) and the wasting of his wealth on prostitutes (representing the sexual addictions that plague so many) is a microcosm of addiction. Of course, addiction can come in countless forms, but the disease is not so important as the cure. If there is a medicine that heals everything, then the symptoms are irrelevant. The only issue is whether we recognize the need for the cure or not.

**“I will arise and go to my father,”** the Prodigal Son resolved.

These are eight simple words that show a change of mind that determined the destiny for not only the Prodigal Son but his entire family. The terrible plight of his fallen condition and the splendors of his welcome home celebration hinged on these eight words.

“I will arise” makes the difference between whether a person is a success or a failure. Everyone gets knocked down. That is inevitable. Despite our planning and preparation, it is going to happen. Our fate is determined by whether we **ARISE** or stay down. “For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again,” the scripture teaches us (Prov. 24:16 [NIV]). So the key to success is the perseverance to rise again.

The ARISE program revolves around this concept. We wish to proclaim to all who struggle with addiction of any sort that their plight is as old as time itself. The story of the prodigal could very well be any number of people who will attend our program. Although the story is over two thousand years old, it is still as applicable today as it was then. The Prodigal Son could have stayed in the hogpen and wasted his life; instead, he chose to arise. You are never truly defeated until your spirit is broken to the point where you will not get up again.

I want you to consider Joe Jeanette who fought in the 1909 World Colored Heavyweight Championship. He was knocked down twenty-seven times and ended up winning in the forty-ninth round when his opponent failed to rise from his stool. It is a remarkable story of perseverance and determination. It was the longest boxing bout of the twentieth century, but the most amazing fact is Joe kept rising until he got the victory. The same holds true for any of us who struggle with addiction. The key to victory rests in the fact that we ARISE.

Skeptics will doubt the validity of any program. They will spout statistics about the failure rates of rehab and recovery groups. However, this program is different. We are based solely upon the Word of God for our inspiration. Programs may fail, but Jesus Christ will never fail. If we simply set our eyes upon him, our success is inevitable. We have seen many come through our church who have been former drug addicts, alcoholics, sexual deviants, and the list could go on and on, and still they have been delivered. Just because you have been or are under bondage does not determine your destiny. The great apostle Paul told some of those in the Church of Corinth they had once been “sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, men who submit to or perform homosexual acts, thieves, greedy, drunks, verbal abusers, and swindlers” (1 Cor. 6:9–10 [Berean Study Bible]). He said, “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11 [BSB]).

Notice he said that some “were” those things—meaning not anymore. We are teaching a full recovery—not one that lives in fear of failure at every turn. We truly believe the one who lives by the steps laid out in this book will find the freedom Jesus Christ can offer anyone. He extends the invitation time and again throughout the scriptures to come to him. Our ladder program is leading to him. We are not promoting a philosophy or merely an inner peace. We are Christ-centered. He alone has the keys to eternal life (Rev. 1:18); therefore, we need him to set

us free from the addictions and bondages. John 8:36 (AMP) says, “So if the Son makes you free, then you are unquestionably free.” How wonderful is that? “Unquestionably free” means all the chains are removed, and we can enjoy true freedom. Therefore, this book is dedicated to all who struggle to find their way. Court mandates and self-resolutions have only managed to paint over the issue. The disease of addiction is still there despite best efforts. For those who have arrested the problem, there is still a nagging feeling that, at any moment, the dam will break, and the bondage of addiction will take center stage once more. The spirit of fear of relapse is nearly as bad as the addiction itself. Wouldn’t it be liberating to be unquestionably free?

Jesus said, “Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28 [NKJV]). Perhaps that is how you feel or maybe how someone you love feels right now. You are laden down with addiction and guilt and shame. You need not go one more day without coming to him. This program will work, not because it’s an opinion of a man with a theological bent but because it’s a program that comes from the lips of Jesus himself. It is Jesus who came to give men and women an abundant life. As the old saying goes, “Give him a try. If you’re not satisfied, then Satan will gladly take you back.”

ARISE is an acronym. The letters stand for the following:

A—Acknowledge

R—Repent

I—Initiate

S—Submit

E—Exonerate

*Acknowledge.* We must all come to terms with the fact that we are unable to help ourselves. We have to admit there is a problem and be willing to work toward a solution. Without acknowledgement of addiction, all programs are a waste of time. Just like the Prodigal Son, we must acknowledge our situation is not a desirable one, and something must change. If we face our situation, then we can move forward with recovery.

*Repent.* The word “repent” means to turn around. While we often use it as a term to indicate sorrow, it must be an action. Nearly all addicts will say they are sorry at various times, but unless there is action involved, these words are meaningless. The Prodigal Son had to not

only acknowledge his situation, but he also had to turn and go back home. If you continue going in the wrong direction, then you will forever be traveling further away.

*Initiate.* In the ARISE program, we lay out an objective plan for your recovery. It is not a theory but a process that, if followed, will give you victory over addiction. We set into motion a means of deliverance. You can have complete confidence in this program because it is Christ initiated—it is his own words we use as the layout for our addiction recovery plan.

*Submit.* The definition of “submit” means to yield to the control of another. By acknowledging our own situation, we all face the reality that we do not have the means to help ourselves, or we would have already done it. But Jesus can, if we are willing to submit to his plan. We are simply yielding to a power that’s greater than ourselves in Christ.

*Exonerate.* This means to be pronounced not guilty. While we have lived in guilt in the past, we can now be pardoned from all our previous transgressions. We believe in a full recovery where the burden of addiction can be cast away. The Bible tells us that there is “no condemnation to them that are in Christ” (Rom. 8:1). Jesus came to set men free; therefore, if we follow his plan, we can be “unquestionably free” (John 8:36 [AMP]).

We state repeatedly that this program will work because it comes from the lips of Christ himself. Therefore, it is not arrogant or egotistical to say our program will undoubtedly work. Naturally, there will be those who will come with the wrong motives and will only pretend to go through the steps and fail. But that is not a shortcoming of the program or the one who instituted it. If you come honestly and willingly to the program, I am convinced you will be successful!

To those who argue Jesus never held an AA meeting or led an addiction recovery group, we answer with one question: What did Jesus come to do? The answer is given by him in Luke 4:18–19, when he reveals that he came to preach the gospel to the poor, to pardon and forgive the captives, to give recovery of sight to the blind, and to set those free who were downtrodden, bruised, and crushed by tragedy. This explains a person bound to addiction perfectly.

Okay, but where is his step program? It is found in Matthew 5. In one of the most highly regarded sermons ever preached, Jesus begins with an eight-step program that will guarantee deliverance to every person. This sermon is called the “Sermon on the Mount,” and the steps are called the Beatitudes.

Let us explain the program and some of the wording at this point. We are going to be looking at the Beatitudes as the Golden Ladder with eight steps that must be ascended. It is amazing to look at the steps of the Beatitudes juxtaposed with the twelve steps of *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Alcoholics Anonymous 2010) in its original printing. Although I was not familiar with AA and their program, I could immediately relate because I knew the Beatitudes. Jesus predated the most famous program in history by over 1,900 years!

In our book, we will refer to addiction as the “Pit of Despair.” Addiction, as we will explain later, is simply a trap by Satan in which he drowns men’s souls. To be addicted is a death sentence if someone does not help the addict out of that pit. We are unable to climb out of the pit on our own. If we could, we would. But we can’t, and therefore, we look for help. The means of our deliverance comes through the words of Jesus. His eight “blessed ones” in Matthew 5, the Beatitudes, are not simply philosophical statements. Instead, they form a “ladder” with eight steps that will bring a person out of the Pit of Despair. Each step is just as important as the next and must be dealt with properly. Not one can be skipped.

The pit is a common image in Christianity. King David praised God for bringing him up out of a “horrible pit” in Psalm 40:2. Likewise, the rebels were swallowed by a pit in Numbers 16:33. Psalms and Proverbs are also filled with images of the pit as a snare for those who are unaware. Even hell is described as a bottomless pit. So we look at addiction as a type of hell and the consequences of a spiritual trap. Ask anyone who has faced their addictions, and they will readily affirm their dependency turned into a type of hell on earth. Many felt like an animal caught in a trap waiting for the end. To me, the pit is a narrow hole that allows little room for moving around. The walls slowly close in, and in desperation, I look for a means to get out. But there’s no room for a large set of steps. Instead, there is just enough room for a narrow ladder to reach down to the bottom. (After all, it is a straight and narrow way that leads us to heaven.)

The ladder is also a common image for Christians. It was Jacob who saw a ladder coming down from heaven, where he saw the angels of God ascending and descending on it. It was at one of the lowest times in Jacob’s life that God revealed the ladder to him. He was, at that point, like the Prodigal Son—away from what was familiar and needing help. There at Bethel, he needed encouragement and help, and God sent a ladder! The same holds true for us! When we

get trapped in the lowest pit, we need to ARISE and call on God, and the Golden Ladder will be let down for us!

Our program is based upon these two images: the Pit of Addiction and the Ladder of Recovery. Again, each step of the ladder is a step of recovery based upon a Beatitude from Matthew 5. All steps will be explained in detail, and an objective application will be given. We will work through each of them individually. We are not in a race; we are simply wanting deliverance. If each step is taken seriously, we can, in Jesus's name (meaning by his authority), declare with certainty that you will be set free and have an abundant life!

**Journal**

**These pages can be torn out upon completion if you feel they are too embarrassing or personal. The point is to formulate your thoughts and ideas and physically write them down so you become engaged in the program.**

What was the turning point for the Prodigal Son and how does it seem applicable to you?

---

---

---

---

---

Seeing how addiction is described as a pit in this program, describe what imagery the word “pit” brings to your mind.

---

---

---

---

---

Are you looking for a way out? \_\_\_\_\_

*Prayer: Father, I need your help. My situation needs your intervention as I recognize my circumstances are greater than I can bear. Like the Prodigal Son, I just want to go back to where I can feel secure and loved. I blame no one for my dilemma except myself. But I understand that you are a gracious God, and that grace means “unearned favor.” In the bottom of this pit, I look upward for mercy today. I reach out to you, and by faith, I know you will reach your hand down to me. Just as the Prodigal Son made up his mind that he would arise, I too want to arise and come to you! I put my trust in you today! In Jesus’s name, amen.*

## Chapter 2: The Nature of Addiction

To begin the program, we must first examine the nature of addiction. Addiction has been defined as “an inability to stop using a substance or engaging in a behavior even though it is causing psychological and physical harm” (Felman 2021). In Proverbs 6:27 (AMP), the Bible asks us this rhetorical question: “Can a man take fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?” Of course, Solomon is making the argument that anyone who subjects himself to something harmful will inevitably face the repercussions of his actions. To us who have struggled with addiction of any sort, there always seems to be a warning bell going off in our minds not to do something harmful, but we find ourselves doing it, nevertheless.

When I say “us,” it involves all of us. One of the most important aspects of our Recovery Ladder is to realize that we are all sinners and are unable to ascend the ladder on our own. We will get into that later. For now, we are speaking in a way to remove all self-righteousness and pride from our program. The last thing we need in this program or our churches, or anywhere else for that matter, is a holier-than-thou attitude. Perhaps some have not been addicted to alcohol or drugs, but that does not mean addiction has not been in your life. If you are convinced you have not struggled with addiction in any way, then praise God for it. But at the same time, pray for the love of Christ to fill your heart, so you can reach out to those who are struggling.

The parable we spoke of earlier concerning the Prodigal Son was given by Jesus as an illustration to a self-righteous, religious crowd. They acted indignant toward Jesus because he had sat with sinners and ate with them. Those religious men in the crowd, called the Pharisees, convinced themselves they were better than common people. Yet Jesus told three parables in Luke 15 where each one described something being lost and then found, each time resulting in joy.

The lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son were all found, and for anyone who had a heart, there was a celebration. To those who have no compassion for the struggles of others, their religion is in vain. As a matter of fact, Jesus, afterward, called attention to the Pharisees’ addictions, which included sexual sins and greed. Simply put, nearly all of us have struggled with addictions of some nature, and it would be hypocritical of us to look at others as somehow lesser than ourselves.

Addiction is viewed by many as a chronic medical condition. But if addiction is a disease, it is certainly a treatable one. If it was not treatable, then there would be great despair. It is a complicated matter to understand, but once again, we want to stress that the causes and the symptoms are not what we wish to focus on. Instead, we want to look at the cure.

Another explanation for addiction is that it is an allergy. Alcoholics Anonymous is one of the groups that promotes this theory. Dr. William D. Silkworth explains in the “Big Book,” or *Alcoholics Anonymous*, “We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a *manifestation of an allergy*; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all; and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001, xxviii; italics added).

Some religious types would bristle at this thought, but let’s examine the theory. Silkworth explains addiction as an allergy. Allergies attack people in specific ways. For instance, we have a cat, and my wife can handle it, pet it, or anything else and be okay. If I even come close to being in contact with it, I will immediately start sneezing, and my eyes water because I have an allergy to cats. But what may bother me may never affect you. What’s wrong with acknowledging that some people are more prone to certain addictions than others? I have seen people get angry when some argue they were “born this way.” Maybe they were or maybe not; it depends on the circumstance. Now, suppose we look at the issue of addiction as laid out by Dr. Silkworth from a religious standpoint. There is little doubt some people struggle with certain addictions and sins more than others.

Likewise, what tempts you may be laughable to me. Does that mean the addiction is acceptable? Never! It just means that you should address the elephant in the room as quickly as possible. If I walked into a home full of cats, I would be insane to sit down and start petting them. In all likelihood, I would end up in the hospital. I have to acknowledge my weakness. Similarly, an addict should recognize certain things affect him worse than they affect others.

The addict, though, should never compare themselves to someone else. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:12 (NKJV), “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those

who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” He was speaking of spiritual things, but the truth remains no addict should look at himself in the light of someone else. Maybe the other person does not have an “allergy”—if we can call it that—to the same things you are addicted to. To think otherwise would be ludicrous. If you know you struggle with something, do not get angry at someone else who does not have that exact weakness. Likewise, do not think that because they are able to do things, it is acceptable or healthy for you. You have to run your own race and be man or woman enough to be honest with yourself. Jesus tells us, in the same Sermon on the Mount we will be basing our ladder on, if an eye or a hand causes you to sin, then pluck it out or cut it off. Of course, he is speaking in hyperbole. But he draws attention to the fact that anyone who is struggling with sin or addiction must do whatever is necessary to remove the things from their life that will cause failure. If we want to look at addiction as an allergy, then identify the allergy and take the precautionary steps to stop it from killing you.

To a Christian, all types of recreational drugs and alcohol are to be avoided, as they are destructive to the temple that is our body. Drugs and alcohol are addictive substances. Do we realize there are many other addictions, many of which are recognized medically, that we as Christians may very well indulge in, that can create just as much bondage as the alcohol or drugs? These nonsubstance addictions include gambling, food, the internet, gaming, cell phones, sex, and many others. It all revolves around the issue of how our bodies crave these substances or behaviors as we become compulsive and obsessive in gratifying these “needs.” The addict will, in most cases, be unable to stay away from the substance or behavior and thus lack self-control. He or she will increase their desire for the thing they are addicted to and will not recognize the damage their behavior is doing both to themselves and others.

Going back to the argument of an allergy, we must address something very important. Many would like to use the “allergy” or their “addictive nature” as an excuse for their failures. This is nonsense. There is a cure, but it is dependent on you truly wanting it. “Well, I was born this way” could very well be applied to nearly any addiction or sinful behavior you wish to justify. The problem with that argument is the Recovery Ladder we are offering obliterates that excuse. The whole basis of Christianity revolves around a “new birth.” Jesus told one of the most religious men in the world that he needed to be “born again.” That truth is for all of us. We can

use the crutch of self-pity and personal circumstance to our detriment, wanting to justify our weaknesses. But that is removed completely with the command from Jesus to be born again.

Think about it. The new birth wipes our slate completely clean. The chains are removed, and for the first time in our lives, we are truly free. In Romans 8:1, we are told that there is “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” The new birth is also called regeneration or “getting saved.” What are we saved from? A thousand things. Naturally, we are saved from hell and judgment, but we are also saved from past bondages. The new convert is just as saved as the pastor who has ministered for fifty years. All are brought out on an even playing field. We all become brothers and sisters in Christ, and we all begin to feel a love for God and our fellow man we have never felt before. If addiction is the allergy, then Jesus is the remedy.

Medical journals classify addiction as a disease or an allergy, among other things, and these have their place. We appreciate everyone who works to help an addict beat his addictions. However, as a Christ-centered recovery group, we would like to look at the root cause of addiction. The “disease” or the “allergy” of addiction is what’s manifested, but what’s the root of it all? The answer lies in the spiritual. We must realize addiction is much more sinister than simply a sickness or an allergy. It is the trap of an enemy older than the earth. Addiction is just one of the many snares of Satan as he seeks to destroy the souls of men.

In Ephesians 6:10–12, Paul tells the Church of Ephesus, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” To properly deal with addiction, you must realize it is spiritual in nature. It is not a “flesh and blood” issue; instead, it is demonic. Simply think of the outward manifestations of the addict who has gone too far, and we can easily recognize the evil that plagues them. Furthermore, we must realize we are all locked in this life-and-death struggle. Satan does not care who he attacks with addiction—an innocent young lady or an aged grandfather is just as much a target as anyone else. John 10:10 calls Satan a thief who comes “to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” However, Jesus follows it up by saying, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Our issue is the two

forces are vying for the souls of men; Satan is out to destroy, and Jesus has come to set free. The choice of following one or the other is ours.

In understanding the spiritual aspect of addiction, let's look at the etymological origin of the word. "Addiction" is borrowed from a Latin word *addicere* (Merriam-Webster n.d.), which relates to the adjudging of disputed property or the assignment of a debtor to the custody of his creditor. This perfectly explains the nature of addiction as the idea of a dispute over property. The addict can easily recognize he is being torn between two things. His will wants him to be free, but the desire of the addiction keeps drawing him in the opposite direction. The only proper way to articulate this is to recognize the two forces that are pulling. The Spirit of God is drawing the addict away from the precipice of destruction, while the sinister one is driving him toward it. Two parties are claiming possession, and the addict is stuck in the middle. What's sad is the addict is the one who casts the deciding vote. If he chooses not to turn to the light, then the darkness will overtake him. A second definition to this Latin word *addicere* means "to assign (property), hand over, give up to," or "to surrender" (Merriam-Webster n.d.). The addict has surrendered his life to that which is destroying him. Unless the situation changes, destruction is inevitable.

Do not think any one of us is impervious to the temptations of Satan. This is why Paul continues, in Ephesians 6 (just after telling us to be on guard against the powers of darkness that wish to destroy us), to list all the armor for the spiritual fight that will inevitably come. We are not to be passive in the warfare that has been waged against us. The addict and the child of God alike are to be on guard for any sign of attack the evil one will bring against us. You and I are not above temptations regardless of our experience. Satan is cunning, and he is looking for a weakness to exploit. We must **ARISE** and face this enemy daily so we can be victorious.

The nature of Satan's assaults is subtle. This is very important to understand. Paul told the Church of Ephesus that Satan will invade through wiles or tricks. The oldest confrontation with mankind is Satan manipulating Eve to taste fruit from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. His subtle suggestions and questioning of God's word convinced Eve to eat the very thing that brought death. How is that any different from the addict who hears the voice whispering, "One more won't hurt"?

Please do not underestimate Satan's influence and the magnitude of his deception. Because of him, one-third of the angels were thrown out of heaven (Rev. 12:4). Because of him, mankind was cast out of the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:23). And because of him, hell has been enlarged to hold all the souls of the damned as he tricks them to their own doom (Isa. 5:14). Do not be one of them!

Consider the great King David of scripture. His name is spoken more often than any other person in the Bible besides Moses and Jesus. Anointed at around the age of fourteen, his life is one of the most amazing stories in scripture. Around sixteen years old, he famously killed Goliath, the giant of Gath, who stood over nine feet tall. After that, he became a mighty man of war and led Israel into victory after victory. King Saul became jealous of David and tried to kill him for years, but David escaped untouched. After Saul's death, David was crowned king of Israel and became the greatest ruler in Israel's history. Being used by God in such a way, he naturally developed many enemies who sought to destroy him, but none could touch him.

However, what Goliath couldn't do—nor Saul, nor any other enemy David faced on the battlefield—was accomplished by one moment of weakness that nearly destroyed David. The Bible tells us in 2 Samuel 11 that one evening, King David walked out on a rooftop and caught a glimpse of a woman bathing. Lust entered into his heart, and David committed the sin of adultery then covered it up with lies and eventually murder. He thought he had gotten away with it as the months passed until a man of God named Nathan came and revealed his sin. But what is applicable here is the way Nathan divulged what happened to David. Nathan was a prophet from God, and he came to David and told a story of a rich man who had many sheep and a poor man who only had one lamb he loved. When a visitor came to the rich man, the rich man went and killed the poor man's lamb and served it to the visitor, rather than killing one of his own. King David had been a shepherd in his youth, and the heart of a shepherd had still beat inside him. Hearing the terrible story of the rich man killing the poor shepherd's lamb, David's blood boiled.

“That man will surely die!” he exclaimed angrily.

Nathan looked up with tears in his eyes and said, “You are that man.”

David's sin was exposed, and he repented of his actions. God, amazingly enough, forgave him. The key to this story, for our application, concerns the visitor who came to the rich man. Nathan refers to the lust David felt in his heart as a "visitor." David hated himself for doing what he did when that visitor came and tempted him. Even though he tried to cover up the actions brought on by the visitor, it had to be dealt with. Think of addiction as this "visitor." Anyone who struggles with addiction of any kind will emphatically proclaim their addiction is not them. Something overtakes them, and they find themselves doing the very thing they hate. Logically, they know before the visitor (the temptation) comes, it is a temporal urge they should be able to control. Then the visitor appears, and they find themselves back in the same struggle as before.

A similar idea is presented in *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Step Two states: "came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity" (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001, 59). The wording implies addiction causes a type of insanity that requires God to restore normality. To some, it may seem offensive, but what else would drive a person to ingest a chemical into their body, knowing it is slowly killing them? Addiction is a type of slow suicide. We can affirm this logically, but something overtakes us that drives us back to the means of our own demise. What else could it be called besides a temporal insanity? From the Christian viewpoint, we are able to unmask this "insanity" or "visitor" and see it for what it really is: demonic.

Two biblical illustrations would suffice to show us the destructive nature of these demonic forces. In Mark 9, there was a father who brought his son, who was demon-possessed, to Jesus. The father explained the spirit in his son often threw the boy into the fire, trying to burn him, and into the water, trying to drown him. Of course, Jesus rebuked the demon, and it left the young man. Here, we can clearly see the destructive force of the demon inside the son. We should be honest about what it is we are facing. Addiction is driving a person toward their destruction. This can be gradual, or it can escalate quite rapidly. Regardless, the end goal is your ruin. Now, let us be clear; we are not claiming that a person struggling with addiction is demon-possessed. But what is apparent is that it is certainly an attack of the demonic. Most likely, it is what the Bible calls "oppression." Eventually, oppression can, and will, lead to possession.

We often think of possession in terms of its portrayal in popular media; however, this is not the case. Possession, as its name suggests, means someone has taken control of the subject.

Again, as the Latin term explains, addiction is a dispute over property. Jesus is the rightful Lord over his creation, while the sinister one wants to take possession over whatever and whoever he can. In Luke 8, we are introduced to a man who was possessed by many demons. The man was driven into the tombs where he cried and cut himself with stones. The “legion” of demons inside him had driven him insane, until he was obsessed with death (represented by the tombs), self-mutilation, and sexual perversion (the Bible says he was naked). But the Bible states when he saw Jesus, the demon-possessed man came running and cried out for mercy. Regardless of how far gone his mind was and how awful his situation was, he had enough mind to come looking for help.

In both stories, the victim was set free by the power of Jesus Christ. That is why we know this program will work. It unmask addiction as the work of Satan out to destroy people, and it teaches the words of Jesus himself.

This is why we must realize addiction, with everything else it can be called, is a spiritual matter at heart. In Romans 7, the apostle Paul is lamenting over the struggles of the flesh:

And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? (Rom. 7:18–24 [NLT])

Paul is recognizing that despite his good intentions, he is still drawn toward sin by an invisible force inside him. To which he answers the question of how to be delivered by proclaiming, “Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 7:25 [NLT]). The key to recovery from addiction lies in getting our eyes focused on Christ. That is why Romans 7 is often considered by theologians as a funeral dirge, and the next chapter is viewed as a wedding march. Romans 7 shows us the depravity of sin, and Romans 8 shows us what it is like to walk in victory.

Romans 8 begins, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). If we are set free, and we certainly can be, then there is no condemnation in us. If Christ does not condemn us, then it matters little what others think. There will always be naysayers and doubters who will never let you forget the past. But scripture teaches us that when Jesus sets a man free, his past record is blotted out (Col. 2:14), his past sins are cast “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12), and he is given a new life of hope and a future (Jer. 29:11). Jesus Christ has made a way for us to have this, if it is something we want enough to pursue.

One of the biggest hurdles we have to face as sinners and saints alike is doubt. We doubt if we can do what it takes. There is not one shred of doubt in my mind that the principles laid out in this book will work if we put our trust in the proper place. We doubt ourselves, sure. That is understandable. But our program does not focus on our own abilities. It is Christ-centered. We look unto Jesus, and we face the temptations of the flesh head-on. That is not to say temptation will not come because it inevitably will. We look to the scripture that says, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13 [English Standard Version]). We are not walking around oblivious or in denial about the battle. We embrace it as soldiers fighting against an enemy that is after our very souls and the souls of our families and friends. We rebuke him when the temptation comes, and if we get knocked down...we ARISE!

Addiction, from the very root of the word itself, is a struggle between two people who lay claim to property. Satan wants to be the master of our lives, which if successful, will destroy our physical body and damn our very soul. God has the rightful claim to us, seeing as we were created by him in his very image (Gen. 2:27). He is Lord! Sometimes, we preachers encourage people to “make him Lord of your life”; however, that is not really an option. He is Lord, meaning “one who has power or authority over another,” regardless of whether we accept it now or later. Because eventually, we will recognize Jesus is Lord, and our mouths will confess this fact at the judgment seat (Rom. 11:14). The key to life is to recognize his power now as opposed to later.

The Bible says, “Do you not know that when you *continually* offer yourselves to someone to do his will, you are the slaves of the one whom you obey, either [slaves] of sin,

which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness (right standing with God)?” (Rom. 6:16 [AMP]). So if we are offering our bodies to the demons of addiction, then we are the servants to that addiction. It now has power over us to make us do what we don’t want to and even hate ourselves for doing it. The only way to break that, if it is in fact spiritual, is to change masters. The Christian life is not one of being holier than everybody but one of yielding to Jesus as the one who has power over our lives. He can set the captive free, but we must want to be free to the point of changing masters. Jesus tells us that in Matthew 6:24: “No one can serve two masters.”

Let me introduce a radical thought at this point. We have recognized the spiritual aspect of addiction and sin, and we understand we must be willing to stop serving the “god of this world” (aka Satan) and turn to follow the true God. Now, when the addictions that drown men’s souls (1 Tim. 6:9) are removed, there is a void. Nature never allows a void, so when one exists, it must be filled with something. Many addicts will claim they have an “addictive nature,” thus allowing themselves an excuse for being addicts. May I suggest that, despite claims otherwise, this is true to some degree. Quitting the things that have held onto us for so long creates an empty space that must be filled. This is why we emphasize the concept of Christ-centered recovery. We are not asking a person to give up their addictions and then live with an emptiness they constantly have to guard from returning addictions. Instead, we encourage the addict to become addicted to Jesus. This may sound sappy or cliché or even like a catchphrase, but I believe from past experience it is the only way. What’s more, the original Alcoholics Anonymous program insisted a person accept God as part of their program. Maybe they weren’t theologians, but they recognized the powers of darkness can only be countered by light.

Jesus explains this perfectly in Luke 11:24–26: “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.” Does this not resonate with so many who have attempted to free themselves from addictions in the past? They feel as though they were free, only to find themselves even worse off than before. The reason is because the “empty house” remained empty. What is needed, and is laid out in this program, is to be inhabited with Christ so the vacuum is filled. If the addict removes the thing causing the

addiction, then there are few potential outcomes. Number one, the addiction will come back worse than before. There are others who beat the odds and manage to keep the addiction at bay. But this option has its downfalls as the former addict can never claim victory completely, having to always feel like they are still recovering and never feeling fully recovered. It is a burden to feel like one wrong move could send them back over the edge.

There is a final danger with recovery, and that is the addiction will manifest itself in another form. This means that an addict will become addicted to something else, either destructive or constructive. This is where a Christ-centered addiction recovery program excels. They invite Christ into the lives of those who wish to be free, and they have no void that must be filled. In Ephesians 5:18–20 (ESV), Paul says, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He juxtaposes addiction to wine with being filled with the Spirit; he plays on their similarities. A man filled with wine will often behave in a joyful way, and a person filled with the Spirit will likewise behave in a joyful, thankful way.

We are not, in this program, trying to cast out the demon of addiction only to leave an empty void for it, or them, to return. Instead, we offer the means to expel the demon and be filled with someone who makes life worth living.

The ARISE program is one of action. We realize the status quo must change. It’s widely believed Albert Einstein said, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.” If we are going to be delivered from the bondage of addiction, we must put into action a plan that will get us started in the right direction. We must ARISE.

Addiction is a spiritual disease. Left untreated, it will destroy an addict. So, what do we do? Oftentimes, people will use all sorts of clichés and empty words when speaking about others’ conditions. They argue people need to straighten up and do better, or they offer countless other derogatory statements about the person struggling. But that is not beneficial to the one drowning in addiction. Subjective opinions mean nothing. It takes objective reasoning. Let us not deal with theoretic ideas; let’s get very technical with the issue of addiction. I often have people call and ask for advice. They will say, “I know you will tell me the truth.” Well, why not? You

don't get a pat on the back if a kick in the pants is what's needed. You don't go to a doctor and expect him to lie to you when it comes to physical ailments. If you have cancer, and the doctor doesn't want to offend you so he tells you there's nothing wrong, that man is a murderer. Similarly, those who come to this program must be looking for help. I can assure you that you can find it if you follow the steps of the Golden Ladder, but you have to want to face the truth.

To do that, you must **ARISE**. Get up! Begin the process that will lead to your spiritual healing. In the scriptures, we are told of a man named Naaman, who's introduced in 2 Kings chapter 5. He was a powerful man and was described as a "great man," "honorable," and a "mighty man in valor" (2 Kings 5:1). Naaman was even a captain in the Syrian army. Everyone admired him. There was one problem, however—he was a leper. In those days, leprosy was a death sentence. Regardless of whatever else he was or could be, the issue of leprosy was going to be fatal to him without divine intervention. As an addict, you may very well relate to this. You know if this one area (addiction) could be taken away, the sky would be the limit to what you can do. We know we are talented and ambitious, but the disease of addiction stops us from doing what we want to do. How many times has the addict lamented over their situation? If only they could beat the addiction, everything would be okay.

Naaman realized he was eventually going to die, so when he got word about a man in Israel named Elisha who had the cure, he immediately made plans to head that way. He **AROSE!** However, when he got there, it was nothing like he had planned. In this program, have no preconceived ideas of how it is going to work. That is one problem many people face when it comes to the spiritual. Jesus told the religious man, Nicodemus, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6), meaning the natural man cannot understand the spiritual. Trust God, and he will deliver you from the addiction or sin in your life. Do not come to this program and already have in your mind how everything is going to work. Deliverance from addiction is more than getting a certificate of completion for a program (I know of those who have had them and died from overdoses). Deliverance is being set free through Jesus Christ and becoming a "new creation." Naaman thought he had it all figured out until he arrived at the house of the man of God and things were not like they seemed.

Naaman rolled up that day in Israel with all the prestige and pomp of a king. A parade of men and chariots marched in front of Elisha's little shack. In Naaman's wagon was, in today's

currency, a million dollars' worth of wealth to offer Elisha. Everybody in that town knew a great man was there, and in front of Elisha's home, the parade stopped. Naaman was waiting for Elisha to come out and worship the ground he walked on; he expected Elisha to come out and bow before him. *After all, I am a big man*, he thought. But instead of Elisha running out to greet him, a servant walked out with word from the prophet. "Go dip in the Jordan River seven times," he commanded, then he turned and went back in the house.

Red-faced, Naaman could not believe what he had heard. *What?* he thought. *Does he not know who I am? This cannot be happening.* He got mad and commanded the parade head back toward Damascus, where he was from. He could not believe what had just happened because every scenario that played through his mind never allowed for that. He expected to be welcomed—he wasn't. He expected the man to want the wealth he had brought—he didn't. He expected a lot of things to happen, but none of them did. Instead, he was told to go dip in a muddy river! As 2 Kings 5:11–12 (BSB) states, "But Naaman went away angry, saying, 'I thought that he would surely come out, stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the spot to cure my leprosy. Are not the Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not have washed in them and been cleansed?' So he turned and went away in a rage."

This story would have been tragic if a servant had not made Naaman realize what he was about to miss out on. His servant reasoned with him: "If the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'wash and be cleansed?'" (2 Kings 5:13 [BSB]). So Naaman swallowed his pride and obeyed the command of the man of God and dipped himself seven times in the muddy Jordan. The seventh time, he was healed completely.

The application here is if a person wants to be free from the leprosy that is killing them (the addiction), then they have to be willing to listen. Two things were key to Naaman's recovery: humility and obedience. The Jordan River held no healing powers in and of itself. The healing came because the man was willing to humble himself and obey. Pride nearly killed him, just as it does so many others. Too many are unwilling to humble themselves; therefore, they remain in bondage. If any of us are going to be set free from addiction, or sin of any kind, we must be willing to deal with our pride and follow the plan laid out for us. There is no shame in

admitting there is a problem. The shame would be to go away like Naaman nearly did and miss out on the opportunity to be healed.

Two chapters later, in 2 Kings 7, we read of some other lepers. There had come a famine in Samaria because an enemy army had besieged the city. The people were nearly starving to death. It got so bad that a donkey's head was sold for an astronomical price, and dove's dung was being divided up and sold to eat. Finally, the people began to turn toward cannibalism. At the gate of the city, four lepers were sitting. They were starving to death, too. So they began to reason among themselves: "If we go into the city, we will die. If we go to the enemy's camp, we will probably die. But why sit here and die?" They realized the worst thing they could possibly do was to continue to sit and starve to death. Maybe, they reasoned, there was help somewhere out there, but they were not going to get it by just sitting around and waiting.

They had to ARISE and try something. By doing so, God performed a great miracle for them as the enemy fled and left all the spoils for them to enjoy. They could have never believed that by getting up and doing something, they would find the help they so desperately needed. Such is the case with a person struggling with addiction. It takes action. If you do not change the situation, destruction is inevitable. "Why sit here and die?" All kinds of scenarios play out in our minds. What if it doesn't work? What if people don't accept us? What if...But let's look at it this way. What if something doesn't change? Financial ruin is probably inevitable. Your family will be torn apart. Happiness is impossible. And finally, your soul will be destroyed. We know this will work, and even if you are not as convinced as we are, what would it hurt to ARISE and go for broke?

Those lepers recognized their dire situation. Are we willing to admit things are getting dangerous, both physically and spiritually? They realized they had to get up and do something. Can we understand this? They did not fully know the details of how it was going to work, but a glimmer of hope produced faith in them that made them put into action what was needed. Again, we look back to the Prodigal Son just before he began his journey home. He reasoned, "I will arise and go to my father." Then "he arose." Planning on doing something will not make it happen. The old saying "the road to hell is paved with good intentions" could well be applied here.

Our program is called ARISE. This is a verb. We want everyone to get up and start moving. King Solomon tells us about a man's farm in Proverbs. The man pondered what had happened to his land as he looked at the mess it had become. It once had beautiful fields and a strong stone fence. But what he saw was a field covered with nettles and weeds and a stone wall broken down by vines. What happened to it? This thought flashed in his mind: "A little sleep, little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and the poverty will come" (Prov. 24:33–34 [NIV]). He recognized inactivity had taken something so useful and beneficial and reduced it to a mess. But he noticed also, the potential was still there. The man's neglect had brought poverty, yet the field was still a field, and the stone wall still had all the stones. The farm could be just as great as it once was, but it was going to take a change of mentality. Work needed to be put into it, and if someone would ARISE, it could be restored to its former glory or even exceed it!

At ARISE, we are not simply pronouncing philosophical statements. We are being direct here. The program insists upon action. We ARISE. But it is not just getting *up*; it is also getting *out*. Addiction is like a pit. Realizing the spiritual nature of addiction brings us to the reality that we have been caught in a trap. In ancient days, one of the traps people used was a pit designed to prevent anything from climbing out of it. To fall into the trap was eventually certain death. That is, unless someone delivered them. When King David had committed his terrible sin, brought on by the "visitor" (the uncontrollable urge), he fell into a pit. Nathan the prophet had given him the word from God, warning him to deal with his actions. Because of his repentance, he was restored. Afterward, David proclaimed, "He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand" (Ps. 40:2 [NIV]).

In the ARISE program, we face the reality of the pit. We are willing to admit we need help. We face the famine brought on by addiction like the Samaritan lepers. We deal with the leprosy of addiction like Naaman and acknowledge the despair of the hogpen like the Prodigal Son. Now, we confront the grim reality of the horrible pit like King David. Having done so, we are ready to not only get up but to ascend out of the pit. How can we do this? Through Jesus Christ, our means of deliverance.

How can I be assured of the program we present? Because it is not a program created by men. If I designed a program, then it would be doomed to failure. I cannot help anyone by myself. This means of deliverance is not of men but from God. I can guarantee the success of the

Golden Ladder only because I am confident in the one who taught it. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus went up on the mount and preached the greatest sermon ever delivered. The famous Sermon on the Mount begins with the words "blessed are." While we could look through biblical commentaries and try to make it something more than it is, the word "blessed" quite simply means "happy." What better word could we use for the addict who has been driven to the bottom of the pit, especially since their happiness has been long gone?

The thief (Satan) has stolen away joy and peace from the hearts of people who once considered themselves happy. Sin, or addiction, robs men of this. And yet, Jesus began his famous discourse by proclaiming that happiness, or blessedness, is achievable.

In his next several sentences, Jesus reveals to us the Golden Ladder, which we must use to ascend out of the Pit of Despair. Each step is leading us out. And make no mistake, there are not many ladders—there is only one. You cannot transfer credits from other insufficient ladders. There is only one ladder that will lead us completely out of the pit. While others may offer solutions to help get out of the hole, they can only ascend so far. The Golden Ladder has the means of full recovery with eternal life at the top.

It'll take some climbing. You'll have to get up and make up your mind about what you want. If the "god of this world," as the devil is called in scripture, has convinced you the pit is not so bad, then you will never make the effort to ARISE out of it. But if you have exhausted all resources and realize you are not any better off, I will now point you to the Golden Ladder that will lead you out of this horrible Pit of Addiction and Sin.

*Journal*

**These pages can be torn out upon completion if you feel they are too embarrassing or personal. The point is to formulate your thoughts and ideas and physically write them down so you become engaged in the program.**

What is the true nature of addiction? Is it just physical, or is it spiritual?

---

---

---

---

---

David was tempted by a spirit of lust that the prophet explained as a “visitor.” Explain how the cravings or temptations for your addiction could be described as a “visitor.”

---

---

---

---

---

What seems to trigger this “visitor”? For instance, is it prevalent after being around certain people? Does it occur at specific times of the day or night more than at other times? Please reflect honestly with yourself so you can work on a plan to remedy these occurrences. Sometimes, we just need to see it for ourselves, and the pattern will become evident to us.

---

---

---

---

---

From the Latin root, addiction is viewed as a dispute over property. Do you ever feel as though there are two forces pulling at you? If so, are you willing to become “addicted to Christ” so the dispute can be settled? You are the one who makes the deciding vote, so are you choosing Christ as the rightful Lord of your life? \_\_\_\_\_

*Prayer: Gracious God, our heavenly Father, we understand that addiction is spiritual. We know Satan is trying to lay claim to our life, but you are our Lord. We need your help. When the “visitor” tries to come into our mind, we ask you to block it. We are ready to take action against everything trying to destroy us, but we need you to guide us in the way of truth. Help us*

*put on the whole armor of God that your Word says we need to stand against the wiles of the devil. Please open our eyes to see the spiritual forces that wage war against us, so we can be prepared for each attack from the enemy. In Jesus's name, amen.*

### **Chapter 3: The Golden Ladder**

Now that we are prepared to act, we are ready to go to the Golden Ladder of Recovery. This program will focus on the Eight Steps of the Ladder to help us reach the top. It is very important we do not take this lightly. We must be ready to climb to the top or else not begin the ascent of the ladder at all. Each step is contingent upon the step below it; steps cannot be bypassed or neglected. Each one is important for the recovery to be complete. If we are now ready to ARISE, both out of our inactivity and out of the pit, let us approach the ladder.

The basis of the Golden Ladder is found in Matthew 5:3–12. In it, the Lord tells us exactly how we can get out of the pit. And let's be clear here. This teaching is not merely for the addict; it is for all of us. It is impossible for any of us to get to heaven by our good works or efforts. We all need God. Therefore, no one should look down upon another, nor should one feel inferior to another. We are all in need of mercy, and this ladder represents the grace that God has given to deliver us. We know the validity of this program because it comes from Christ himself as he lays each sentence out for us as a roadmap to live by.

Briefly, we will go over the order of the ladder, then we will elaborate on each step and its importance. Read through each of these steps and look at their application. At ARISE, we encourage action. Each step will have work that we must do as well as the scriptural basis for our program. Examine every step carefully and keep in mind the steps of the program as you ascend up the ladder. For instance, Step Seven calls for us to make peace with others. Keep this in mind, and as early as Step One, you can be preparing for those with whom you need to make peace with later.

#### ***Quick Synopsis of the Golden Ladder***

##### ***Step One: Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit***

We understand we are unable to help ourselves, so pride and self-esteem are put away. As a result, we stop trying to figure out how to fix our problem in ourselves. But we must be willing to admit our inability to facilitate our recovery. Once we do, we begin the ascent up the Golden Ladder with humility. We express this fact in three ways.

First, we acknowledge it to ourselves. We objectively face our own helplessness by writing down our previous failures. This is done only for ourselves and can be destroyed

immediately afterwards. The reason for writing them down is that we need to formulate our dilemma in our own mind, and writing it out helps. Don't hold back! We must be completely honest. We do not justify ourselves or make any excuses. To do so will only aid in our addiction.

Next, we confess this fact to God since he alone can bring us up out of this horrible pit. We are relinquishing our "lordship" over our own lives to him. Failure to do so is proof of pride and self-reliance. No help can be found without admitting our powerlessness over our situation. If we are admitting we have no power in ourselves to mend our situation, then we must believe someone can or else we stay in the bottom of the pit. You may not know everything about religion or even how to pray, but you are a person made in the image of Almighty God, with a soul that searches for meaning. Tell him you need his help.

Third, we are willing to tell others that we are unable to help ourselves. This public confession of weakness is crucial to the program. We can admit failure to ourselves and to God easier than we can to other people. It makes us feel vulnerable, but that is the point—we are. Confess it openly, and a burden will be lifted.

#### *Step Two: Blessed Are They That Mourn*

We now acknowledge our failures. To "mourn" means to grieve or hurt over our failures or sins. To do so, we first have to understand what we are mourning over. This will take some deep soul-searching. We have turned to God in Step One, and now we are being specific in what we need help with. We are not being vague at this point. Whatever the addiction is, we address it properly. We do not circumvent the issue.

Think of it as going to a doctor. You may have ignored the symptoms for a long time. Or perhaps you have self-diagnosed, and it has not worked. You then admit your own inadequacies and trust someone greater than yourself. That is Step One. Now that you are on Step Two, you realize going to the doctor will do you no good if you do not let them get to the heart of the problem. When they ask what you came to see them for, you must be honest with them. To evade their questions is detrimental to your recovery. You help yourself immensely by being honest.

In the second step, you are being truthful about the problem. But once again, we address this issue in the same three ways we did in Step One. We take responsibility for our failures and

bring them out in the open. Confession of failure is recognized in ourselves first. No excuses. No sugarcoating it. Be blunt with yourself.

Then you need to confess your sins to God. We must be looking up toward God for our healing. Do not just randomly pick an object or person to confess to for it takes God to heal us. Remember, the ladder goes up, not down. We are not trying to dig out of the pit; we are ascending. Keep this in mind throughout the whole process and reach up to God for help. Confess your faults to him as one who really mourns over their failures.

Finally, we confess our failures to another person. Use discretion here. We can make vague confessions of failures publicly but save the more personal, deeper issues for someone you trust. This is crucial for spiritual healing since addiction is a spiritual disease. The Bible tells us to “confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed” (James 5:16). Choose someone who will pray for you and support you. Whether it be a minister, a layperson, or a friend, make sure they are there for you and will understand their role in your healing. If they care not whether you find help, then they should not be entrusted with your burdens.

### *Step Three: Blessed Are the Meek*

The definition of meek is important for this step. To be “meeked” was a term used when a wild horse was broken to ride. The wildness had to be trained out of the horse. That did not diminish its strength; it merely relocated it. In this third step, we are now being trained to respond to the temptation of addiction. Having focused on our weaknesses in the previous steps, we now begin to take the position of strength. This step forces us to face our addictions and see where our weak points are located. Having only recently been in the pit, we cannot expect to be perfect. This gives us the opportunity to allow God to work with us on our shortcomings.

Once again, we do not speak in abstract terms here. We want to stay serious in our recovery. What is causing the craving or temptation? Make note of it. Confess it to your close confidant. Work on a plan that will ensure better success. If there are certain people or places that seem to trigger the wrong impulses within you, then make note of that. The key here, as in the past, is to be honest with yourself. Work on the parts that are lacking and solidify the parts that are working. Attendance and interactions with the recovery group are paramount. You are training away your bad behavior. Most importantly, your training will need to focus on the

spiritual. Prayer cannot be overstated here. You are being trained by one who is higher than us. Let him work with you and allow the Holy Spirit to expose your weaknesses so they can be fixed now. Not allowing this will lead to certain failure later.

*Step Four: Blessed Are They Which Do Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness*

Work on getting established in the faith. Having begun to pray and look to God, we cultivate that here. The “hunger” we once had for the addiction needs to be replaced with a “hunger for righteousness.” Righteousness simply means a right standing with God. You may be very new to this, but remember this is your *training*. Many people fall by the wayside because they have not been properly prepared. At this step, we want you to work toward educating yourself in God’s Word and becoming more and more dependent on him.

This step involves homework that should carry you through the rest of your life. That is, you need to discipline your habits, so you are putting yourself in a position to succeed. It may seem hard at first, but taking baby steps will lead to running after a while.

Three things are important. Number one, develop your prayer life. This cannot be overstated. At first, work toward spending time in prayer. You may find that five minutes starting out is sufficient. Strive toward the time you have set for yourself, and do not deviate from it.

Number two, read your Bible. Described as the sword of the Spirit, it can combat every attack from Satan. Addiction is a spiritual attack, and you have been equipped with a sword to defend yourself. Use it! Become skillful with the Bible (i.e., the sword) and you will find it unbelievably useful. You may only be focused enough to read one chapter a day. That’s okay. Just make sure you read it. We’re not trying to impress anyone; we want to understand what we read. If you struggle, don’t give up. We all struggle with certain scriptures. But we must learn to trust God to give us the meaning of the scriptures we need as we come to them. Start in the New Testament at Matthew and work your way through Revelation to begin.

The third piece of your training is to go to church. Attend a church that preaches the truth and has people who care for your soul. The addiction group is great and should be providing you with spiritual insight, but it can only go so far. The preaching in the church, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, is unparalleled in its usefulness to your recovery and Christian life.

One word of warning: be realistic. Do not set unattainable goals, for they will not work. You can promise to spend an hour in prayer, read ten chapters a day, and attend church five times a week, but this is not practical. Give a few minutes to prayer a couple times a day, and read a chapter or two every day. Attend church regularly, and you will be giving yourself the best training you can have.

*Step Five: Blessed Are the Merciful*

This step gives us the opportunity to reciprocate the mercy that has been shown to us. The term “merciful” means to have compassion for someone when they are in a position to be punished. In this step, we focus on forgiving those who have wronged us. There is no growth to be found when we will not let go of the past. As we ascend the Golden Ladder, we are striving to get as far out of the pit—with God’s help—as possible. Unforgiveness is a weight that will hold us down. We have recognized our shortcomings and failures of the past and confronted them in Steps One and Two. Now, we turn that understanding toward others. We are not condoning bad behavior and actions of others in the past, but we are willing to forgive them at this point.

Make a list of people and circumstances that have hurt you in the past. This list is not for minor infractions; it is reserved for those who we have blamed in the past to justify our condition. For instance, perhaps a bad home life has been the scapegoat to vindicate your addiction. Let go of it! Forgive whomever you feel let you down or caused you to stumble. Your past does not have to determine your future. You can choose to defend yourself by blaming others, or you can take action now.

Once again, we face this head-on. We are honest in our evaluations. Perhaps some who we have blamed in the past were not really to blame at all. Instead, we may have wanted to act like victims and seized an opportunity to do so. On the other hand, there may have been others who we have defended, who actually may have been injurious to us, but we were not willing to admit it. Take time to reflect on each situation and be willing to forgive each one. If you feel the need to go and talk to certain people, by all means, do so. Regardless of their attitude or defense of themselves, do not harbor ill feelings toward them. Honestly, try to forgive each one so you feel as though they are not your enemy. This will take God to help you, so call upon him. Name the people and situations to him. As 1 Peter 5:7 (NKJV) tells us, “cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” He can help you show mercy even to those who do not deserve it.

*Step Six: Blessed Are the Pure in Heart*

“Pure in heart” means our motives are pure so we can stand in the presence of God. The application for us on this sixth step is we examine these motives. Knowing our need to get out of the pit, we should contemplate our reasons for doing so. The entire Golden Ladder is based on the premise we are honest with ourselves and God. So, in analyzing our motives, we must be honest.

As we progress up the ladder, our motives may change. That would be good. For instance, perhaps the reason for attending the ARISE program was because it was necessary for legal purposes. That may have been a good motive to begin with, but that purpose should change as you get closer to the top of the ladder. Or maybe you came because you felt like your addiction was ruining your future, and you were looking for someone who could offer help. We can certainly relate. That is a good motive. Because of that good motive, you work your way through the program. When you get to the sixth step, you will likely be closer to God because you are doing your best to draw near to him. Because of your pure heart and pure motives, he is helping you in ways you may not even comprehend at this point.

Wherever you are on the ladder, you need to always evaluate your motives and perhaps adjust your focus. You started toward a better life by simply “arising” and doing something about your situation. As you progress, keep a journal of where you want to be and work toward that. Maybe what you first envisioned when you came to this program should now be recalibrated. Your progress has opened your eyes to more possibilities and a future that you never dreamed possible.

Now, write down where you want to be. Question your heart and make sure that it is a pure motive. That is, make sure it lines up with God’s plan for you. Does it hint at any selfishness that would exclude those to whom you are entrusted to protect?

If your motives are pure, then you need to set up a course of action to achieve those goals. We encourage action at ARISE! Figure out what you want out of life and then be serious about achieving those targets. With God’s help, anything is possible for you!

*Step Seven: Blessed Are the Peacemakers*

In this seventh step, we work toward righting the wrongs we have caused. We are peacemakers now and not the “peace-takers” we once were. Our actions of the past must be confronted. While other programs may encourage this step earlier, Jesus held it back until later. Now that we have examined our motives and are allowed access into the presence of God, we need to work toward righting our wrongs. Jesus said we must go and make things right with a brother who has something against us. Seeing how we have forgiven others of the wrongs they committed against us, we must now work toward reconciling with those we have wronged.

This must be done through careful examination. Make another list. The list will most likely include friends, family, and those we have done business with. It should include the people we have harmed and how our actions have affected them. Next, we examine the situations and diagnose each one honestly. Now comes the hard part: going to these people and asking for forgiveness or what we can do to help them heal. This is no insignificant gesture we are making because it will include swallowing our pride as we confess our faults and admit our failures. As we show later, it may include giving ourselves to fix the problems. And even then, there will be some who will never forgive or forget the hurt you caused. Even so, you must be willing to do whatever is reasonable to repair the damage that is done. This is a hard step, but if we are willing to address these issues, both now and throughout our lives, we can have complete victory from the Pit of Addiction.

*Step Eight: Blessed Are They That Are Persecuted*

Be on guard. Having ascended to the top of the ladder, we now stand watchful over the “enemies” that will attempt to destroy us. We are blessed with persecution now! That seems like a paradoxical statement, but it is true. The reason we are being attacked is because we have been successful on the ladder. We can enjoy happiness now like never before, yet that doesn’t mean we are naive. We stand watchful, knowing there will be attacks from our adversaries that will try to thwart our progress and drag us back into the pit. This may come from people, places, or situations that may seem innocent enough but could be deadly to our recovery.

As in previous steps, we look at this objectively. Make note of threats and address them properly. The former addict will be persecuted by others who are not happy (or blessed) themselves. While some will use your recovery as inspiration, others would rather pull you down. These “friends” may endeavor to put you in compromising situations that will threaten

your recovery. Evaluate *everything*! For instance, if an invitation is presented to you to attend something, ask yourself if it will be detrimental to your recovery. What will the environment be like? Who will be there? Will it be beneficial or harmful to you? Questions like these will reveal pitfalls along the way. Just be completely honest with yourself, and you will be able to differentiate between what is innocent and what is dangerous.

Jesus says you are blessed when others insult you and lie about you and accuse you falsely (Matt. 5:11).] Do not get discouraged because of the talk of others; this is simply persecution by Satan using them. People will always stereotype you or label you to justify their actions against you. You know where you have been brought up from. Your motives are pure; therefore, you are in good standing with God. When others speak evil of you, remember it is either their ignorance of your recovery or just malicious attacks driven by Satan to cause you to stumble. Be watchful and make note of everything, and you can stand victorious atop the Golden Ladder. Here, you will draw the admiration of those who love and respect you as well as the ire of those who are jealous of you and wish to see you fall.

While Step Eight is the apex of the ladder, it does not mean we can step off into some sense of nirvana on this earth. We are happy because we are looking toward Jesus. The guilt and shame have been taken from us, and we no longer grovel in the muck and filth of addiction. However, we remain on the ladder, happy though we are, until the time comes to pass from this world to the kingdom of heaven. At times, our pride and self-confidence may knock us back to the first step, but we can rest assured we are not going to draw back into the previous state we have been brought out of. Churches throughout the world can attest to the fact that the addict can be set free in a moment's time. That freedom begins once we take that first step out of the bottom of the pit because through our faith, we are climbing toward Jesus.

As we begin the ascent up the Golden Ladder, we want to look at the different facets of this program. First, let's look at the spiritual nature of addiction. As we realize the spiritual aspect of our condition, it forces us to look to Jesus to heal our spirit. In each step, we examine the scriptural basis. This is not merely a program to motivate someone to get better; it is designed to get to the heart of our addictions. We should take comfort in knowing our addictions and failures are not new problems, for they are as old as man has walked on Earth. Jesus preached this ladder two thousand years ago as the solution to every problem we face in life. I care not

whether a person has ever darkened a church door before or if they grew up in a church pew. Each step deals with issues we all face, sinner and saint alike. Addict or not, we all come the same way. Our visualization of the ladder helps us understand the progress we are making as we follow Christ out of the pit. Each step uses the scriptures to help us understand the nature of addiction and the cure.

But we also want each step to be viewed objectively. We are not just spouting theological arguments and theories. We do not want to get wrapped up in subjective reasoning; we want to deal with our addictions in reality. Each step will force us to be sincere in our recovery and will involve us doing something to move forward. In the Bible, we are warned that “faith without works” is useless (James 2:20 [NKJV]). Believing something without doing anything about it is called being “dead” in scripture. Knowing something is not right and not working on fixing it is completely useless. We are not here to simply educate you on the spiritual nature of addiction; we are insisting that you **ARISE** and take action.

As we move up the ladder, let’s keep two things in mind: we are a combination of body and spirit, and each one has its own desires. The Bible tells us these two “natures” are constantly fighting against each other. The body wants to indulge in the things that could be harmful, while the spiritual nature draws us toward God. The key to moving in the right direction is to get our two natures working in unity. When we can understand the spiritual aspect of addiction and the effect it has on us physically, we then can formulate a plan to counter it effectively. This will make the ladder traversable.

In our program, we emphasize the importance of having others around us who support our efforts. We all need one another. We should celebrate each other’s successes and weep over one another’s failures. As the seventeenth century English poet John Donne once wrote, “No man is an island.” We recognize this need both physically and spiritually. Donne’s famous quote says, “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend’s or of thine own were: any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee” (Donne [1624] 2007).

We realize that, while climbing the Golden Ladder, we will suffer persecution from others. This is why Romans 12:14–18 (Contemporary English Version) is so applicable for us, as it states, “Ask God to bless everyone who mistreats you. Ask him to bless them and not to curse them. When others are happy, be happy with them, and when they are sad, be sad. Be friendly with everyone. Don't be proud and feel that you know more than others. Make friends with ordinary people. Don't mistreat someone who has mistreated you. But try to earn the respect of others, and do your best to live at peace with everyone.”

The teaching of surrounding ourselves with others is taught in nearly every recovery group and is evidenced throughout the Bible. Do not underestimate the power of a good support system. In the Bible, the church is referred to as a “body.” In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul says God has placed us in that body as he saw fit. He goes on to say that one member of the body could never say to another that they do not need each other. Now, you may feel as though you are not contributing much to the group, but we must trust God has placed you where you are for a reason and will use you as he sees fit. We need each other. Trust the process and the Lord (who encourages unity), and you will come to realize how valuable you are to everyone around you and to the kingdom of God. May everyone who comes through this program find support and understanding from others, then reciprocate that support and understanding to others.

Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 12:24–26 (CEV) by saying, “God put our bodies together in such a way that even the parts that seem the least important are valuable. He did this to make all parts of the body work together smoothly, with each part caring about the others. If one part of our body hurts, we hurt all over. If one part of our body is honored, the whole body will be happy.” So yes, you are *very* valuable. If we understand this, both for ourselves and toward others, the program will be successful. Therefore, we will *celebrate* the successes of others. When a person has secured even the smallest victory in their recovery, we want to rejoice with them! What may seem minute or insignificant to an onlooker will not seem small to those of us who have been where they are. A person who has been delivered from addiction for years was, at one point, celebrating a week of freedom themselves. These victories are calls for celebration because we are proud of all who progress up the ladder!

Likewise, we encourage others who are struggling. We are not trying to outdo someone else. We vow to “lift up the hands which hang low and [strengthen] the feeble knees” (Heb.

12:12). We show compassion and support to everyone. After all, we have *all* failed and come short of the glory of God, just like the woman in the Bible who was brought to Jesus and could have been legally stoned to death for adultery. But Jesus warned those with rocks in their hands only those without sin could throw the stones. We have all slipped and fell along the way. Any of us who have ascended the Golden Ladder could testify to slipping down a couple steps. If a person has been broken by their addiction, we do not throw stones. Instead, we offer a hand of support as we encourage them to get up and move forward once again.

Another important aspect of this program is the one-on-one relationships we develop with others. Having realized we are not an island, we seek out someone with whom we have confidence in to help us along. This is our confidant, the one person who will help us along the way as we make confessions of our weaknesses and failures to somebody. They must be someone you can share personal issues with in confidentiality. While our program involves personal soul-searching and petitions made to God for recovery, we recognize the importance of formulating our plans and petitions out loud to another person. They are not simply people we can bounce ideas off; they are friends and mentors who can relate to your situation and give you feedback when necessary. They are strong, spiritually minded people who have your best interests in mind and can be good listeners at times, all while giving you a reality check when needed.

Choose this person wisely. Perhaps they are ministers you have confidence in, or maybe they are lay members, friends, or family. The point is, choose them based on their character. We should realize we are all recovering addicts from the Pit of Addiction, seeing how we were all sinners at one time. Therefore, your confidant does not necessarily have to be someone who has suffered from the same addiction you have. It would be great if they had, but the character of the confidant is most important at this point. They need to be someone with whom you can speak candidly. They need to be available day or night. You may be calling them at three in the morning, needing a listening ear. They may be called upon to come to you in the midnight hours. Ask them for help, and if you have chosen the right person based on their qualifications of character, they will be more than happy to see you make it through.

The power of a proper network of people working toward the same goals cannot be overstated. Even Jesus surrounded himself with men and women who were encouraging to him

and his ministry. In some of his most intense moments, Jesus called for his close group of friends to be there. For instance, just before his crucifixion, he called for Peter, James, and John to go with him and pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. If Jesus surrounded himself with people he had confidence in, how much more should we do the same? After all, the Bible speaks of the power of banding together, claiming in Ecclesiastes 4:12 (New American Standard Bible), “And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three *strands* is not quickly torn apart.” There is power in numbers if they work toward a common goal and fight a common enemy—in this case, addiction. The Bible is filled with groups of two who worked together and encouraged one another. There’s no time to list them all, but a few come to mind: Moses and Aaron, Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, Paul and Silas, etc. When Jesus sent his disciples out, he sent them out in twos. Solomon even warns us in Ecclesiastes 4:10 (BSB) that if two are walking together and one of them falls, “his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to help him up.”

As you work your way along the Golden Ladder, know you are not alone. The importance of the group and your close contacts will be imperative to your recovery. Likewise, your availability for others will be vital to their recovery. Hebrews 12 warns us not to forsake assembling together. The writer also tells us to “exhort one another” (Heb. 3:13). If we meet together and work on this ladder collectively, we can find help in others when we need it, and we can help others when they need it. So, as we move along the ladder, let us keep this in mind. From day one until we leave this world for heaven, we will need one another. Embrace that, and your recovery will move along rapidly.

Hebrews 12:1–2 says, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” The “great cloud of witnesses” spoken of here are those who endured hardships before them (Hebrews 11 recounts the heroes among them) but were able to, through faith, gain victory. All addicts should take heart to the testimonies of others who have been brought up out of the bottom of the pit. This should encourage us all, seeing how the same God who will set one free will set whoever looks to him free as well. I have seen men

and women bound by drugs, sex, alcohol, and countless other addictions set free in a single church service.

The “weights” and “sins” could be applied as the bondages of addictions and sins. The writer said that they so easily make one stumble. If we are going to run this race properly, we must be willing to let everything go that will cause us to stumble, whether that be friends, family members, or circumstances that impede our spiritual recovery. This race is not a hundred-yard dash; it’s a marathon. And the prize at the end is your very soul. You must be willing to recognize the things that are harmful to running this race and deal with them properly. If not, then recovery is improbable.

The passage also says that Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame, then took his place in heaven. Realize the path to recovery is not going to be a bed of roses. There are going to be some hardships along this ladder. If you are looking for an easy out without any bumps along the way, you are going to be terribly disappointed. There is no “magic formula” to recovery. There is a path you can get on that will take you out of the pit, but it’s going to be tough at times.

There is an illustration given about a man getting on a plane. If the man got on the plane and the stewardess told him to put a parachute on and that it would make his flight more enjoyable, he would put it on. After a while, though, the man would begin to get less comfortable with it, and upon seeing others take theirs off, he would figure the stewardess had lied to him. In disgust, he would rip it off and throw it down angrily.

But suppose the presentation was offered differently. Suppose the same stewardess offered the same man that exact parachute. Except this time, she tells him it might make him a little uncomfortable, but somewhere in the next few hours, the back hatch would open and drop the man thirty thousand feet. Without the parachute, the man would be nothing more than a greasy spot on the ground. Now the man would not let go of that parachute for anything in the world. This time, he realizes the necessity of the parachute. Okay, so now a person wants out of the bondage of addiction and knows if he doesn’t get out, he will be destroyed both physically and spiritually. Here is the ladder. It may be a little rough at times, but without it, there is no hope for you. What do you do? You hang on with everything you’ve got because there is no alternative.

The parachute in the illustration is Christ, and Hebrews 12:2 says we are to look unto Jesus, the “champion who initiates and perfects our faith,” as the New Living Translation puts it. As the famous paraphrase of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* goes, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will do.” We do not want to be that person. Once we ARISE, we are objectively moving toward a goal: the ladder of grace that is being illuminated to show us the way out. This ladder is the only one worth ascending. The goal here is to get our eyes on the one who will lead us out of our addiction. Looking to him will lead us to the proper ladder. The Holy Spirit will come and guide us into all truth; he will move us to the Golden Ladder. Our eternal soul cries out for help, and there we find the bottom step of the Ladder of Recovery.

*Journal*

**These pages can be torn out upon completion if you feel they are too embarrassing or personal. The point is to formulate your thoughts and ideas and physically write them down so you become engaged in the program.**

Having read the synopsis of the Golden Ladder, is there any step you feel will be difficult to ascend? You are not being asked to fully understand the steps now; this is just a preemptive survey to address any concerns. For instance, Step Five tells us we must forgive others. Does that feel like it is going to be an issue? Maybe Step Seven, where we make amends with those we have harmed, may seem tough at this point. Let's address these potential issues early on, and we can work on them as we progress. This way, they are more manageable when we get there, either by ourselves, with our confidant, or in the group.

What step do you feel will be the hardest to ascend? Why?

---

---

---

---

---

Being part of a group, we will ask others to help us work on these steps. What is it you have to offer the group that will help them? We all have strengths and gifts God has blessed us with that can be beneficial to others. Maybe you are a hard worker who is willing to do whatever needs to be done physically. Or maybe you are a good listener who someone can talk to about their problems. Whatever it is, this is for your eyes only, so it is not arrogant to state what you feel your contributions to the group could be.

---

---

---

---

---

Have you chosen a confidant who you trust and can talk to intimately about your problems? \_\_\_\_\_ This person needs to be compassionate yet firm. Don't pick a weak person; pick a kind person who will be brutally honest when need be.

*Prayer: Dear God, as we begin our ascent up the Golden Ladder you gave us, we are putting our trust completely in you. We are ready to get out of the pit and look to you for each step forward. We realize this is going to be a marathon and not a sprint. We do not claim to know everything about your way, but we know you will help us finish what we start. Your Word tells us in Hebrews 12 that you are both the initiator and the finisher of our faith. You will not start something for us that you will not see us all the way through. Our doubts are not in you but in our own selves, so we come to you now and ask you for strength and courage to begin the climb. With your help, we will make it! In Jesus's name, amen.*

## Chapter 4: Poor in Spirit

### ***Step One: Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit, for Theirs Is the Kingdom of Heaven.***

*We acknowledge our helplessness and inability to arise out of the pit. This realization starts us in the right direction. This redirects our focus from ourselves and allows us to look to God for deliverance. Humility begins the healing process. Addiction is recognized as a spiritual matter; therefore, we ask God to help us be set free.]*

An ancient Chinese philosopher once said, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”

To begin our ascent, we all must come to the first step of the Beatitude ladder. This step is the most crucial one of all. Without it, we are never going to get out of the Pit of Addiction. But what does it mean to be “poor in spirit”?

The meaning translates as one who is a beggar in spirit. In Jesus’s day, a true beggar was one who had no means to support himself. He was totally reliant on someone else to provide for him because of some physical defect. Perhaps he was blind or crippled, but whatever the case, he was dependent on another to give him something. If someone did not show mercy on him, he went without. Jesus’s ladder begins with this in mind. We must face our own inadequacies and stop trying to fix the issues ourselves. We cannot do this on our own, so we ask God to help us. Consider other support groups as proof of the validity of this statement. *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Alcoholics Anonymous 2010) has been the gold standard of recovery for alcoholics and has been mimicked by countless other programs. Their first step is to admit they were powerless over alcohol—that their lives had become unmanageable. This step is the most crucial step to their recovery and echoes Jesus’s words given over 1,900 years ago. Both confirm a person must not come with too much pride in their life.

Pride is something that obstructs the recovery process. It is a terrible stumbling block to anyone wanting to get help. I have invited countless people who need the Lord to church, but their answer is often “I know I need to, and when I get everything fixed up, I will come.” This is a trick of Satan. If you could fix the problems of life, then Jesus would have never come to set men free. We are unable to fix our problems, and to think otherwise will only aid in our addictions and sins. Some recovery groups even insist on letting the alcoholic or drug addict hit

rock bottom before stepping in to offer help. By letting them hit bottom, they become more susceptible to the truth that is offered to them.

The first step of our program is to simply acknowledge you are an addict who cannot help yourself. If you think you can ascend the ladder based on your good works or actions, then you have no business here. There once was a rich man who went to the Lord asking, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (Matt. 19:16) The answer was certainly not what he wanted to hear, as Jesus told him to sell everything he had and come follow him. He walked away and is probably in hell at this time. He came to Jesus, asking what he himself could do, yet did not trust in Jesus. This never works.

Listen to this quote in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*: “We perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength. Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2019, 21). To think otherwise would be futile. Somehow, we want to take the glory for ourselves and leapfrog the part that brings God glory. Ephesians 2:8–9 says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” If we could do this ourselves, we would have something to boast of. But boasting is rooted in pride, and pride knocks everyone off the ladder. If we recognize we cannot help ourselves, then we have to keep our eyes on Christ.

I find it quite liberating to trust God. Why not? Do we want to be the ones responsible for our success? If that be the case, then why did we grovel in the bottom of the pit for so long? That should shut us up, lest pride fill our hearts. It’s not freedom to think we somehow pulled ourselves out of the bottom of the pit; in fact, thinking we have the power in ourselves should terrify us. If the only thing that changed was a little willpower to succeed, and that drives our recovery, then what happens when we wake up one day without the same gumption or determination? Why couldn’t we find it before? And if we didn’t have it once before, who is to say we won’t have it again tomorrow?

Self-reliance is certainly not the answer. The liberty we can enjoy on the bottom step of the ladder is knowing we asked God to come in and help us with the issues in which we could not help ourselves. This type of thing is illustrated throughout the Bible. The Bible tells us about a woman who had suffered with a discharge of blood for twelve years. She had spent everything

she had on doctors, trying to find help, but she had not gotten better. As a matter of fact, she had gotten worse. One day, she heard that Jesus was coming by, and she decided she would press her way through the crowd and try to touch Jesus.

Imagine the scene that day as she made her way to try to get to Jesus. I believe everything was against her. She was not allowed to be in public with the condition she had, but she stepped out anyway. People probably pointed at her and talked about her as she made her way down the street. And she had spent all of her money on things that had not helped her. She probably had no family, as her condition would have made it difficult to have been around anyone. She was sick and dying, so physical strength would have certainly been absent. She was the very definition of being helpless, but she still pressed through the crowd.

At the time, Jesus was on his way to heal Jairus's daughter. Jairus was a wealthy man, a ruler of the synagogue, a man with prestige and power. His daughter was sick, and Jesus had been summoned to go to her. No doubt the woman with the issue of blood probably felt inferior in every way to Jairus's daughter. Jairus's daughter would have had wealth, family, and potential, the exact opposite of the woman. I believe Satan whispered in her ear, "You're not good enough to interfere with Jesus going to a wealthy man's daughter." But she pressed through the crowd despite her own inhibitions and doubts. Finally, she reached out and touched Jesus.

Everything stopped. She thought she could get by with coming to him and just touching the border of his garment before slipping away, hoping for a healing. Instead, Jesus stopped.

"Someone touched me," Jesus said.

Simon Peter stood there looking at him incredulously. "What do you mean, someone touched you? The crowd throngs you, and you say, 'Someone touched me'" (Luke 8:45).

Jesus was saying someone touched his heart. The woman's faith was made manifest to the Master, and so he called for her. She had doubted her worthiness and feared the opinion of the public. Suddenly, Jesus was pointing her out. What comes out of Jesus's mouth next is one of the most beautiful phrases of scripture. He said, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague" (Mark 5:34). It is the only place where Jesus directly calls a specific woman "daughter." The implication is that, like Jairus's daughter is special to Jairus, that woman, being a daughter of God, was special to Jesus. It wasn't because she was worthy of

her healing—it was Jesus’s love and grace that healed her body. She came as a beggar, and she received her cup full!

Similarly, we read of Blind Bartimaeus, who sat by the wayside, begging. Upon hearing Jesus was passing by, he began to yell into the darkness, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:47). He could not see Jesus, but someone told him there was a man who could potentially help him somewhere in the midst. The Golden Ladder allows for the fact that the one needing help doesn’t know exactly what to do. Like Blind Bartimaeus, we have all been there, where we are undecided about everything. At ARISE, we do not expect someone to come to our program already knowing the ins and outs of theology or having the answer to everything. As a matter of fact, we prefer someone who doesn’t, seeing how it would be hard to even get on the bottom step with that sort of self-reliance. Bartimaeus sat in the darkness of his infirmity. The sun may have well been shining, only in his condition, he couldn’t see it. Instead, he trusted the words of others who told him someone was there with help, and he immediately latched on to that hope.

The Golden Ladder teaches us that, by Step Six, we will see God clearly. At the bottom step, perhaps he is not into view just yet, but by examining the lives of others who have been set free by him, it should make us want the experience they have had. We have heard of those who have been released from the bondage of addiction, and it makes us want that life for ourselves. If we want to be set free, we have to trust God. This bottom step allows nothing except humility and dependency upon God. We have to admit our weaknesses and ask for help. That is what Blind Bartimaeus did. He couldn’t see Christ, so instead, he began yelling blindly into the darkness for help.

And it worked! He never offered anything to Jesus for his healing; he simply begged for mercy. His very life was the acknowledgement of the fact he needed mercy. While yelling, others told him to shut up. He was embarrassing them, and they wanted him to crawl off and be quiet. But that was his life, and he needed Christ. Those who wanted him to hush did not know what it was like to sit in darkness every day and know that tomorrow would be no better. They didn’t know what it was like to have to depend on the pity of family and friends for help. How many times had Bartimaeus thought about how great it would be to not be a burden on his

family—even if he couldn't help it—despite his best efforts? So when help was there, he wasn't about to let it slip by. In desperation, he called out for mercy, and it got Jesus's attention.

What happens next is very important in the story of Blind Bartimaeus. Jesus called for him. It may seem odd that Jesus did not come to him. Instead, Christ called for him. Bartimaeus is described as “sitting by the wayside.” So he had to ARISE. Then he had to put his faith into action by moving in the darkness toward the voice that was calling to him. As he came near Jesus, he was asked a question, “What do you want me to do for you?” (Mark 10:51). Now, it should have been obvious by looking at Bartimaeus what he needed. His clothes were the clothes of a beggar. Wrappings probably covered the place where his eyeballs should've been. And for the distance Bartimaeus had covered, he either groped in the darkness or had someone lead him to the Lord. Yet, Jesus asked him what he wanted. The reason was so Blind Bartimaeus would directly ask for what he needed. The bottom step of the Golden Ladder demands that. You cannot get help without asking for it. This has to be something you want. People may pressure you into coming, and courts may demand it of you, but there is no help if you do not want it. And more than just wanting it, you have to embrace the fact you are powerless over the addiction yourself and need someone to intervene in your life.

Bartimaeus didn't stutter. He knew what he needed, and he asked for it plainly: “Lord, that I might receive my sight!” (Mark 10:51). Two important statements are in that one short sentence. The first is when Bartimaeus called Jesus “Lord.” Two titles were usually used to address Jesus: Master and Lord. Master simply meant rabbi or teacher. Although a word of honor, it did not reverence him as the one who has power over another. By using the word “Lord,” the seeker is acknowledging that they are relinquishing their power to another. When Bartimaeus said “Lord,” he recognized Jesus as the one who had the power to open his blinded eyes. Secondly, Bartimaeus stated his obvious condition out loud. He was asking for help in a very direct way. “I want to regain my sight,” he said, and Jesus immediately healed him.

At this bottom step, let us be specific about what we want. We need to be freed from addictions, and we should not be embarrassed to ask. People may do the same thing to us that they did to Blind Bartimaeus—tell us to be quiet because we're embarrassing them. But we need help. Oftentimes, parents or family or friends will hinder people from getting help because they are too ashamed to admit the people they love need it. We all need help; there is no shame in

asking for it. But I have seen mothers who make excuses for their children who are struggling with addiction. Thinking they are helping when they are actually destroying them. It is a mother's nature to try to help her children. The same is true for wives of husbands and vice versa. After all, "love will cover a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8 [NKJV]). God knows what is best, and justifying a person's addiction is actually selfish and cruel. And Jesus came to give people an abundant life, so please do not get in the way of someone who wants to get help. Don't let anyone stand in your way either. Jesus is passing by, so call on him while he is near (Isa. 55:6).

Another applicable story is found in Matthew 14. Here, we read of a night on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples were alone in a ship out in the middle of the sea. Jesus was not with them throughout the night, but just before daybreak, they saw him walking on the water toward them. Simon Peter, in his zeal to get to Christ, asked if Jesus would let him walk on the water to get to him. Jesus said one word, "Come," and Peter stepped out of the ship. He defied the very law of gravity as Jesus allowed him to walk on the water. (We should note the application here: if you want to get to Jesus, he will do whatever it takes to get you there.) However, as Peter began his famous walk, something happened to his faith. The Bible says that Peter, standing on the Sea of Galilee, began to see the strength of the wind and the power of the waves and started to doubt. That doubt led to him beginning to sink.

In addiction recovery, we have to understand what got us in the pit to begin with. This is helpful for our recovery since we realize the reason we are at the bottom is because we did not have the proper focus. As long as Simon Peter had his eyes on the Lord, he was fine. The strength of the wind and waves had no effect on him whatsoever. But when his gaze was averted and he began to look at the conditions around him, he started to spiral out of control. He was going to drown without help, so he looked back to Jesus!

"Lord, save me!" he cried (Matt. 14:30). At the realization he was unable to save himself, he turned to the one who had the power to do so. If someone realizes they are sinking, they need to come to the bottom step of the ladder and acknowledge the fact they cannot save themselves. Call out, "Lord, save me!" just like Simon Peter did that day, and I can guarantee he will do so.

It was the great preacher Dwight L. Moody who said, “Some people think God does not like to be troubled with our constant coming and asking. The way to trouble God is not to come at all.” It is not a virtue to not ask God for help; it is actually a sin of unbelief. We are commanded in scripture to come to him and make our requests known. The reason we come to him is because we are admitting we are unable to achieve our needs on our own. James 4:2–3 says that we do not have what we need because we do not ask for it. But then, in verse three, it says when we do ask, we don’t receive because we are not asking properly. At ARISE, we want you to have a life of spiritual blessings and peace. That can only be achieved if you start in the right direction. To get started wrong will mean you end up wrong. Therefore, to climb to the second step of the Golden Ladder, we urge you to take the first step quite seriously.

The heart of Step One is to be poor in spirit. We are all incapable of changing ourselves. This fact drives us to Christ. Just like the twelve steps of other programs, Jesus first taught that we must be humble and admit we are unable to help ourselves. The first three steps of AA include (1) admitting powerlessness over addiction, (2) believing in a higher power, and (3) turning our lives over to the care of God (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001, 59). We will affirm these steps from a scriptural basis, else they would have no bearing at all. We are willing to come to the bottom step and admit we need help. We are crying out like Blind Bartimaeus, “Lord, have mercy on me,” and like Simon Peter, “Lord, save me.” We have relinquished our will to be our own authority and call on Jesus as Lord of our lives. In doing so, we take our first steps out of the mud in the bottom of the pit.

Our ascent has begun! We ARISE!

*Application: We admit to ourselves, to God, and to others that we are unable to help ourselves. Being stripped of our pride and self-reliance, we can begin our ascent up the ladder. Use this step as the opportunity to examine past attempts that did not work to free us from the Pit of Addiction and acknowledge the reason they were unsuccessful was because we did not turn it over to God. Begin praying and confessing this to God. Do not worry if you do not “know how to pray,” for God is not impressed with eloquence; rather, he is impressed with honesty and humility. Finally, speak openly to others concerning this. Much like being baptized or going to an altar, this public profession shows we are serious about recovery and are willing to humble ourselves.*



Now, are you willing to confess to the group that you are unable to help yourself? You may not feel the need to divulge too much here; just a simple acknowledgment of your inability to help yourself and your need for God's grace may be perfectly sufficient. \_\_\_\_\_

*\*6[Prayer: Our heavenly Father, we lean upon your grace right now. We are coming to you in complete humility and reverence. We confess openly that we are unable to help ourselves. We are willing to be stripped of any pride or arrogance that would hinder our ascent out of the pit. We rely fully upon you. Being poor in spirit, we realize we are like beggars asking for help. We find it comforting to trust in you since you are unchanging. While everything else changes, your Word says, "I am the Lord and I change not" (Mal. 3:6). Therefore, we come to you and confess that we are unable to help ourselves. We trust you to take us out of the pit because you are gracious and not because we have earned anything. Thank you for your loving kindness! In Jesus's name, amen.]*

## Chapter 5: Mournful

### *Step Two: Blessed Are They That Mourn.*

*We mourn over our addiction. Having admitted we are helpless, we now admit the areas where we have failed. This step focuses on our repentance, which literally means to turn from. We want out of the pit; therefore, we take action to ascend the ladder. This cannot be done if we do not despise the addiction and the damage it has caused. We will not glorify our past but rather unmask it for what it was. If you do not mourn over the addiction and despise it, you will not let it go, plain and simple.*

Now that we have realized our own inadequacies, we can approach the second step. Jesus's second beatitude is "blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). The meaning of being mournful, in this sense, is when one feels remorse over his sin. This step is impossible to get to without first having recognized our weaknesses. Grace has been showed to us, and we are now looking to Christ. This "revelation" of him will only further uncover our own past failures. We must take stock of our life, which will involve seeing how our past has been harmful to ourselves, friends, and family, and most importantly, how it has been in opposition to God and his plans for us.

The litmus test for whether a person has truly realized his pitiful condition and asked God to get him on the ladder is whether he mourns over his sin. I have yet to see a person who has truly gotten help and is not sorrowful for the past. To be an addict or sinner (these two words are interchangeable) means we have lived in opposition to God. Being exposed to the light, we can see all the failures of the past more clearly. If not, then the first step has not been ascended and the person remains in the pit. Jesus's words "blessed are" are spoken as the antidote to the hypocritical religious crowd of the day. In those days, the Pharisees pretended to be holy, but Jesus's Sermon on the Mount revealed their religious activities were only mere externalities. If we are to get help, we must allow God to come into our lives and begin the change in us. Because the addiction is not really being lamented over if it is only a façade or veneer.

One of the terrible tragedies of these programs is some people will come without any desire for change. Pressure from others or fear of being prosecuted under the law will bring some in who have no intention of seeking help. They never mourn over their addiction; they only justify themselves in it. If one is not serious about change, then all the programs in the world will

not produce any result in a person. To be changed means you *want* change. Otherwise, to go through a program is a farce. Why waste others' time and your own if this is not going to be taken seriously?

We must be willing to look at our lives from a critical perspective. Matthew 7, part of the Sermon on the Mount, tells us not to judge others until we are willing to judge ourselves first. Jesus says to not worry about the speck of sawdust in someone else's eye while there is a log in our own. We have not ascended the ladder far enough to judge others until we deal with this all-important step. We have plenty to face just looking in the mirror. By wanting help, we must be willing to allow God to turn the searchlight on in our own heart and expose the hypocrisy and deceit within it first. We have made excuses for our sins: "nobody understands me," "they don't know what I have been through," or innumerable other excuses that can be made in our minds to justify our failures. But that does not instigate change; it merely makes us comfortable in the pit. True change will come with true soul-searching, and that will lead to true repentance.

The word "repent" does not simply mean one is sorry for their actions. The word simply means to turn around, to stop going one direction and start going another. By default, that will inevitably make us sorry for our failures. But if we are not willing to turn, then we are not really serious about change. All of us have committed some sin or indulged in an addiction, only to later feel remorseful for what we did. How many times have we vowed to never do that thing again, only to find ourselves right back doing it? Good intentions will not produce any good works—it takes action. Once we have admitted we are powerless over our lives and come to God as "poor in spirit," we should be ready to look at ourselves critically. If we are seeing ourselves for what we really are, then we will be disgusted by what we see.

Saying we are sorry for our addiction and not intending to set into motion a plan to deal with it means we are not truly sorrowful. Hebrews 10:26 is scripture we can use to illustrate the point. It says, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (NASB). In our case, this means there is no help for us if we think we can continue to indulge in our addiction or sin. It takes complete surrender to God and turning away from the thing we are addicted to. An alcoholic cannot allow himself even one beer. The drug addict cannot justify any drug use whatsoever. This may require going

somewhere to get clean, but afterwards, if we allow leniency on our part toward the addiction, we are only deceiving ourselves.

Hebrews continues by saying if we keep indulging, in this case in the addiction, then we should fear the judgement that is inevitable. To the one who, in his mind, wants to be better but does not have the willpower to stick to a plan that will produce the healing, he can only expect the worst. The status quo must change. If not, the drug addict will destroy his life and body, as will any addict. We know horror stories of those who could not claim victory over their addictions. Whether it be financial ruin, diseases, physical health failures, or even death, we have seen it with our own eyes time after time. Perhaps we think we are the exception? It's doubtful, but remember we are dealing with the spiritual as well here. Even if we could escape the consequences of the physical or mental ailments (which is highly unlikely), there is still the spiritual aspect. To not deal with harmful addictions is a sin against God that will lead to a very real hell. The scripture teaches us, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36 [NKJV]).

Therefore, by taking our place on the second step of the Golden Ladder, we can now examine our addiction and mourn over our past. We face our past honestly since we are not trying to get away with anything at this point. There is no reason to lie to God or ourselves. He already knows, and we, whether we want to admit it or not, know deep down anyhow. But we are looking for spiritual healing that will aid in our addiction recovery. Let's get serious about it.

Do we hate the addiction with everything in us? Do we hate that something has a hold over us and can take us captive at its will? Do we hate that we are powerless over this invisible enemy who has driven us to the depths of despair? If so, there is help. If not, we are wasting our time.

The Bible tells us, in Joshua 7, about a man named Achan. The children of Israel had been commanded to not touch anything from the fallen city of Jericho. It was cursed by God. However, Achan saw something that attracted him. Inside the ruins of the city was a little bit of gold, silver, and a Babylonian garment. The command was "do not touch anything." But Achan thought he could get away with it, so he brought the items into his tent. He then buried them in the floor, thinking no one would ever know. Nevertheless, those "things" ended up destroying him and his entire family.

Now, apply that to the addict. Every person knows better than to touch the thing that causes addiction. Even to the person who does not know God's Word, they still have a soul that is being led away from these "cursed things." The addict, whether they be dependent on drugs, alcohol, sex, pornography, or something else, knows better, yet something tells them they will be the exception. *Others may not be able to handle it, but it won't affect me*, they think. They bring it in, and it seems like nobody knows about it. What's surprising is how deceived they are. The addiction cannot be hidden for long before it begins to be apparent to everyone around them. The addicts are, like Achan, convinced it is concealed. However, also like Achan, it ends up destroying them and their families.

What is so tragic about the story is Achan had time to repent. He knew it was wrong; he was just not willing to face it. Had he confessed his sin, God would have been merciful and forgiven him. Consequently, the curse he brought in ended up affecting not only him and his family but the whole nation of Israel. After thirty-six men died because of his weakness, Achan then had to face the judgment for his actions. Are we oblivious to the fact our sins have repercussions that are far-reaching? Will we acknowledge our addictions are affecting others and could be destructive to them as well? An alcoholic's addiction has an immediate effect on their own life and family, but more tragic perhaps is the lifestyle it promotes in their children and acquaintances. Can we own up to this? If not, we are not on the ladder at all, and this is just a game.

Remember the Prodigal Son? He wanted out of the hogpen. He was sick of living in a famine-infested country and being near the thing he detested. As a Jewish boy, he was forbidden to even touch swine. But he not only touched one, he was practically living with them. His life was consumed by the very thing he knew was disgusting and unfit for him. What could he do, though? As we said before, he made up his mind to go home. And to do that, he had to first take stock of where he was, then he had to be willing to admit his sin. He said in his mind, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Luke 15:18-19). Notice how he had to admit to himself he had failed and knew he was not fit to be called his father's son? This is the second step, mourning over failures.

Likewise, when Nathan the prophet confronted David over his sin, David had to mourn over it. He had to recognize the repercussions of the “visitor” that enticed him to indulge in his addiction. In Psalm 51, David mourns like no one had ever mourned over sin. The Contemporary English Version puts it like this: “You are kind, God! Please have pity on me. You are always merciful! Please wipe away my sins. Wash me clean from all of my sin and guilt. I know about my sins, and I cannot forget the burden of my guilt. You are really the one I have sinned against; I have disobeyed you and have done wrong. So it is right and fair for you to correct and punish me. I have sinned and done wrong since the day I was born. But you want complete honesty, so teach me true wisdom” (Ps. 51:1–6).

The scripture is filled with stories like this. Repentance is part of the plan of salvation. We are dealing with the spiritual, and even to the agnostic, this truth still remains. You must recognize the failures of the past in order to turn away from them. In Revelation 2:5, as John addresses the Church of Ephesus, he commands them to “remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick from his place.” There is no point in a candlestick without something shining on it. Likewise, there is no purpose of trying to ascend out of the pit if we are not wanting to produce something real within us. This takes some true soul-searching and brutal honesty with ourselves, but it is necessary to move forward.

What amazes me about this ladder God has given us is how it lines up with the steps of Alcoholic Anonymous and the offshoots of it (Narcotics Anonymous, Pills Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, etc.). Steps four and five respectively are “made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves” and “admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001, 59). Jesus told us to do this two thousand years ago, and it is part of the bedrock of Christian teachings. To repent puts us on the right track in every aspect of life.

Once we have stepped up onto the second rung, we can look forward to the next one, being humble, meek, or gentle. But Step Three is impossible to reach without mourning over sin. Do not attempt to move forward too quickly. The effects of addiction have been far-reaching. To be humble in this program means we have been stripped of all our pride. We mourn over our sins, only not in some cheap, generic, superficial way. By mourning, we recognize the effects of

our actions and begin the process of healing those wounds. First, we admit to God our weaknesses on the first step of being poor in spirit. Then we mourn, deep down, with heartfelt sorrow over our failures.

Proverbs 28:13 says, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” We are looking to prosper so we can have mercy and show it to others. That comes through confronting our failures and mourning over them. Once that is realized, Step Three is waiting.

*Application: Use this step as the opportunity to confess past failures. As we lament over the past, we are willing to come clean with it. By acknowledging our failures, we can continue to be healed from the damage of the past. First, be brutally honest with yourself. Don't hold back. Secondly, confess your past to God. He is the one who can heal you, so call on him. The Bible says to cast your cares upon him. Finally, confess to others your failures. Use the group to confess your faults and lean upon your confidant for matters that are more personal. James 5:16 tells us to “confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.”*



*Prayer: Merciful God, we confess our failures before you right now. We mourn over our past. We know that everything is open to you, and nothing we have done is hidden from your all-seeing eyes. Yet, knowing how frail and weak we are, you still love us with an everlasting love. You sent your son to pay the penalty for all our transgressions, but we must repent of them to you. By repenting, we are turning away from our addictions and failures and trusting you to lead us in the right way. We are sorry for our past in a very real way, insomuch that we are disgusted by it and wish to leave it behind with your help. Give us the courage to face the wickedness of our own heart, so everything can be brought out in the light. We surrender it all to you right now and ask for your forgiveness. In Jesus's name, amen.*

## Chapter 6: Meek

### ***Step Three: Blessed Are the Meek, for They Shall Inherit the Earth.***

*This step begins our “basic training.” Having done some deep soul-searching, we now are ready to be molded by the Master. Our training is a spiritual matter, so we let the Holy Spirit guide us and train us. We are willing to be changed by one who knows what is best for us. The humility of being meek ensures we are not proud or arrogant; thereby, we are willing to examine each aspect of our recovery and work on our weak points.*

The first step forces us to recognize our inability to climb out of the pit on our own. The Golden Ladder has been discovered, and we humbly approach it. We need help that comes from outside ourselves. We recognize our dependency upon Christ and are ready to ARISE and make our ascent with the help of the Holy Spirit. With the second step, we have honestly looked within ourselves and made confessions of our failures to God. We do not think we are out of the bottom of the Pit of Addiction because of our own good works or abilities. We gladly welcome God into our lives to help us, and we now allow that same God to point out our failures. We have repented to him of our transgressions. By mourning over the repercussions of our addictions, we are now willing to rectify any issues we have (both spiritual and physical).

Step Three should not be misunderstood. To be meek does not mean one is weak. We have dealt with our weaknesses in the first two steps. By now, there should be a strength that has come from our confrontation with our former selves.

Meekness should not be misinterpreted as being someone who is fragile. We have dealt with our fragility before we climbed to this step. The higher we go, the more strength is given to us. To properly understand what it means to be meek is to look at the word in its antiquity. It is the Greek word *praus* (πραεῖς), and some theologians have compared it to a horse being broken for use. But when a wild stallion was tamed, it did not mean its spirit was broken. It simply meant it was disciplined and able to be used for a purpose. In fact, to be “meeked” was the phrase indicating a horse was trained for battle. Their courage and power remained in them while that passion was redirected, making them perfect for riding into battle. They were not afraid; they were simply trained. What fear they had was only the reverential fear of the one who had trained them.

This explains our position on the third step. The only fear we should allow in us is the reverential fear of God. There are only two types of fear; one is the fear of God, which is what the Bible says is part of the duty of man. The other fear comes from Satan and is a tormenting fear. It says in 1 John 4:18 (NKJV) that “there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” The word “perfect” here means full-grown or mature. The third step recognizes our growth, and now there is no former fear. As recovering addicts, our fear tries to tell us we are not going to be completely set free. The enemy will try to convince us that the higher we climb, the farther we will fall. He tries to paralyze us with fear of failure, but this verse guarantees the maturity of the spiritual man can put these fears to rest. That same scripture warns us “fear has torment.” This fear is unjustified. If we keep our eyes on Christ, there will be no need to fear. Remember, meekness is not weakness.

Our proof of being meek as being part of our basic training can also be found in Psalm 25:9: “The meek will he guide in judgement: and the meek will he teach his way.” Likewise, in 2 Timothy 2:24–25, Paul instructs us as servants of the Lord to teach with patience, and “in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.” As addicts, we were certainly ones who opposed God, and by turning to God, we are being instructed how to live.

If we have properly ascended the first two steps, then we will realize we are growing spiritually. We are allowing God to “train us.” Addiction recovery is not lying to ourselves by claiming that addiction is not a temptation. The spiritual war we are in is not one of insensibility, so we do not disregard the fact there is still the lure to go back to the hogpen. But our ascension has placed us in the hands of one who is training us to resist that pull. Do not despair when the “visitor” of temptation comes along. That does not mean a weakness in character or growth. Think of it as an attack. Will you resist it, or will it conquer you? If we are being properly trained, then we should be able to withstand this attack. However, if the attack overwhelms you and you stumble, get up quickly.

This step of the ladder is necessary. We are not claiming to be “out” of the Pit of Addiction at this point; we are just glad to be on the Ladder of Recovery. This step is training us. Having been weak, we now are allowed to be strong. Resistance to addiction is being met head-on. The weapons of warfare are being presented to us, and we now have to learn how to use

them. We are not claiming to be above the temptation of addiction; we are simply learning how to combat the attacks.

In Genesis 4, we read of a man who succumbed to this spiritual attack. Cain, who infamously murdered his brother, had to deal with a temptation—in his case, pride. But God warned him that all he had to do was do what was right, and he would be accepted. However, he was also warned that “sin lies at the door,” meaning sin crouched like a lion at the door, waiting to pounce on Cain. He failed to recognize it, and that sin consumed him. In our case, we are not unaware about our addictions and temptations. It would be folly to not recognize the lion at the door. But our training allows us to see the lion and not be afraid of it destroying us unless we allow it. Addiction waits to jump back on you, but your training will stop that from occurring.

This third step of being meek is explained by Saint Ambrose in the fourth century as a sign of a strong mind. He explains it as being able to govern your passions. The scripture tells us to “be ye angry, and sin not” (Eph. 4:26), which means anger can either manifest as a sin or it can be controlled. To say that we do not get angry is a lie to ourselves and others, but to be able to control that anger to where it does not manifest itself is a virtue. Saint Ambrose says, “It is a noble thing to govern passion by reason; nor is it a less virtue to check anger, than to be entirely without anger, since one is esteemed the sign of a weak, the other of a strong, mind” (quoted in Aquinas 1841).

The denial of addiction as a temptation is not healthy nor helpful. To be trained to withstand it is the proper approach. One of the “fruits of the Spirit” (virtues given to us by God) is temperance, which is the ability to restrain oneself from indulgence of appetite or passion. Step Three of the ladder is crucial to move upward, and temperance is an important part of it. Unless one is able to control his addiction through the help of Christ, the ladder is pointless. Continuing to fail means to continue having to start over on the ladder. If it takes that, then by all means, keep trying. But if we will allow time on this step, we need not fail at all. Addiction does not force the flesh to indulge in it; it is only weakness of character that allows for it. To differentiate between being weak and meek is paramount. It is not weak to allow Christ to train us to resist temptation. Jesus himself had to face the temptations of Satan. In all three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), we are told Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

and there he was tempted by Satan. He overcame the temptations, and through him, we can too. But that did not mean he was weak to face the temptations. In fact, it points out the opposite.

You must recognize the possibility of not going back into the world, or the pit, you came out of. This possibility will drive you to take the precautions necessary to ensure you do not fail. Confront your fears every day, and the lion crouching by the door will not surprise you. You do not take your eyes off it. You recognize it is there, and you allow yourself to be trained, educated, and prepared so you are able to deal with it properly.

The addict need not feel inferior or defective because he or she faces temptation. Realize it is part of the process. Embrace the battle, and victory is guaranteed. Paul tells the Church of Rome in Romans 6:14, “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” Your addiction will not overwhelm you. Let Christ train you, and victory is certain.

To be meek does not mean you are harmless either. In fact, it proves the opposite. Your ascent out of the pit is being assailed by every demon of hell to try to thwart the process. Why? Because the farther you climb, the stronger you are becoming spiritually. The stronger you become spiritually, the more damage you can do to the kingdom of darkness. Your testimony of recovery is the very thing others need to make the climb themselves. Every day, you are becoming more and more equipped to face the temptations of addiction. However, do not feel as though you are above temptation. Perhaps you are—that would be great—but beware of the lion at the door. Your meekness, or training, makes you realize the potentiality of failure while giving you peace of mind so that “no weapon formed against you shall prosper” (Isa. 54:17 [NKJV]).

The first time in the King James Bible the word “meek” is used is in Numbers 12:3 (Notice 12:3—it’s interesting that 1-2-3 are our steps up to this point!). Here it says, “Now the man Moses was very *meek*, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (italics added). To think Moses was weak or harmless would be completely foolish. Moses was one of the strongest men, spiritually, in the entirety of the Word of God.

Actually, when reading the account of the Exodus, we see the steps of the Golden Ladder in Moses’s life as well. In Exodus chapter 4, God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. God told Moses he was going to use him to go and deliver the children of Israel from the land of Egypt. Moses’s life had already been one of turmoil. He had been miraculously saved from the Nile River as a baby and brought up as the grandson of Pharaoh. Although a Hebrew, he was

raised in the palace until he killed an Egyptian for beating another Hebrew. He fled for his life, and forty years later, we see him, once one of the most powerful men in Egypt, watching sheep he didn't even own. In a sense, he was in the pit.

But God told him to go back into Egypt and demand Pharaoh let God's people go. Moses stood on the first step of the ladder as he confronted his own inadequacies. "Who am I, that I should go," he said, realizing no king should even listen to him. "They will not believe me," he argued, only to be commanded again. "Lord, I cannot speak well," Moses continued, to which God reminded him he is the one who makes men's mouths. So we see Moses certainly did not think of himself as able to do anything (Step One). Then he asked God to "send someone else." God became angry and commanded Moses to go. Moses complied, recognizing his own sin (Step Two).

After Moses had ascended the first two steps of the ladder, he stepped up to the third. Described as the meekest man on planet Earth, Moses was used by God. That man was certainly no coward or weakling as he, at eighty years old, walked into the imperial court of Pharaoh with nothing more than a shepherd's rod and demanded the most powerful man sitting over the mightiest army in the world at that time to "Let my people go!" (Exod. 5:1). That took a backbone! Then, one by one, Moses called down the plagues that practically destroyed Egypt. Finally, they were told to leave the country, and three million Hebrews were looking to him for guidance. At the Red Sea, with mountains on either side and the mighty enemy army ready to attack, Moses stood there in the face of adversity and told everyone to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" (Exod. 14:13). The sea parted, allowing all the Hebrews to pass over, then swallowed up the armies of Pharaoh. My point is, Moses was no weakling. He was the strongest and the meekest man on Earth! Never think that being meek is a sign of weakness.

Finally, we are to remember that Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). To be weak means to *lose* everything. To be meek means to *inherit* everything. This blessing is guaranteed to anyone who is properly trained and spiritually maturing. To the addict who has felt their world slip out from under them time and time again, it is a beautiful promise. Here, Jesus is assuring a future to the ones who are meek. As addicts, we once held no such view. We struggled day-to-day through the darkness of the pit. But now the light is dawning. Upon realizing there is a future for us, we finally understand that the lies of

Satan concerning our addictions were means by which he kept us in shackles. Once, we had no hope and felt doomed to a life of defeat. But now, we are comprehending we can inherit the earth, and it is a wonderful thought!

Our eyes are opening more and more. The ascent out of the pit is leading us closer to the light, and it is an astonishing thought that we, who once felt hopeless, now have a destiny. Our fate is not to die in the gutter of our addiction but to have life both here and in the world to come. Tomorrow now has meaning, and the prospects are endless. The meek shall inherit the earth. Our training is guaranteeing that!

*Application: Focus on the areas you are struggling with. By examining them critically, you can, with God's help, begin working on a plan to correct these problem areas. Your goal should be developing a solid foundation to build on. Allow him to lead you and correct you as you move forward.*

**Journal**

**These pages can be torn out upon completion if you feel they are too embarrassing or personal. The point is to formulate your thoughts and ideas and physically write them down so you become engaged in the program.**

As you are being trained, what issues do you feel need to have a little more attention? By Step Three, you are probably becoming aware that some things are coming easier and some are harder. What is it you feel needs to be addressed at this step? (Ex: temperament, impatience, frustrations with yourself or others, idle time, etc.) Use this opportunity to evaluate your training so you can focus your efforts on correcting them.

---

---

---

---

What are the areas you feel progress in? Maybe a relationship with someone has improved, or you're able to focus on your work or daily routines better. Maybe you feel closer to God or more spiritual. Write these down. This is not boasting; it is just encouraging yourself! David, we remember, encouraged himself in the Lord. We should do that too!

---

---

---

---

*Prayer: Oh Lord, our God, we thank you that you have taken us under your mighty hand to train us to walk this good path. We need you every day to help us, guide us, and correct us as necessary. Having submitted to you, we are leaning not on our own understanding but completely upon you. As Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is my shepherd." You are the one leading us, and we know your rod and staff are a comfort to us. When we need it, you will take your shepherd's hook and pull us back in line. Help us to not be resentful when you correct us as we know you are doing it for our own good! Train us as you see fit! In Jesus's name, amen.*

## Chapter 7: Hunger After Righteousness

### ***Step Four: Blessed Are They Which Do Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness, for They Shall Be Filled.***

*This step focuses on replacing the former “hunger” with a new “hunger.” Our past addiction needs to be replaced with another “addiction” to Christ. Nature never allows a vacuum, so the previous desires must be substituted at this point. Remember, this is the second part of your “basic training,” and you must be active in it.*

Up to this point, we have been becoming established with a type of root system. Having been brought low, we now are encouraged to reach up. The scripture tells us, “He that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:12). No person who is at the fourth step would dare claim where they are now is by their own power. If they do, then they are on the wrong ladder. Pride has no place on this ladder and is the means by which the enemy keeps many in the Pit of Despair. So many will not humble themselves and admit they are unable to help themselves. They waste precious time and effort on things that only produce death or substitute one addiction for another. A person on our ladder has embraced their own inability and welcomed Christ to come and help them. This experience will lead to a deep sorrow over past failure, thereby mounting the second step. Having been set free from the weight of addiction and sin, they are now ready to be trained in meekness to combat the desires of addiction.

By this point, Satan may attempt to discourage those at the fourth step by getting them to measure themselves by others. This is foolish. Our race is not against one another. Some may seem to be mounting the steps of the ladder faster than others, but that matters little. Your race is against the world, the flesh, and the devil. You are becoming stronger each day, and the purpose of being here is to get control over your addiction. Therefore, we weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice, as Romans 12:15 says. We are a family, and when one fails, we should be there to weep over their failures with them. When someone gets a victory, whether it be small or large, we should rejoice with them. If we are not there, then we need to remain on the third step.

We may feel jealousy at times. It is not the end of the world to feel emotions like this. But a simple examination will reveal the heart of the matter. What makes us jealous? Does it not reveal to us that we, somehow, feel like we deserve what others are receiving? If so, then the

question is why? Have we ascended too quickly from the bottom step? Have we forgotten that everything we have received is a gift from God and not due to our goodness? Do not throw in the towel if jealousy arises or our ascent seems static. It is normal and is a reminder to focus on the steps of the ladder properly. When the time comes, we can ascend on up. Establish the root system of the first three Beatitudes, or steps, and we can mount the fourth.

To hunger and thirst after righteousness means there is a desire to be in right standing with God. This is in unison with step number eleven of Alcoholics Anonymous, which states we have “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” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001, 59). Let us be clear here, when we make this declaration, we are not acknowledging a “higher power” but rather Jesus Christ as the source of our deliverance. Again, we appreciate the works of AA and all other addiction recovery groups, but we, as a completely Christian-based ministry, want to keep Jesus Christ as our focal point. We believe it is paramount to complete recovery.

This step represents where we focus our attention toward the spiritual more than ever. As we said earlier, we will not be arbitrary in our suggestions. If we want to be set free, then we must fill the void left by the destructive addiction, and that void must be filled with Christ. I cannot overstate the importance of hungering and thirsting after God. As anyone can tell you, if they have been serving God for any amount of time, each person who makes a start for God will then have to become established in the faith and seek after a closer walk with him. If not, then people fail, and sadly enough, we have seen this countless times. This is why we have spent so much time focusing on the root system. A tree cannot grow bigger than its roots allow, else it falls. I have seen many come to church and were seemingly set free only to fall away. They cannot understand it, but it is no surprise to the onlooker.

How many times have I talked with those who call and ask for help? We get very technical about their spiritual lives and find it lacking. The answer is always available, but some do not want it enough. They skipped through the steps too quickly. Some came and felt like God owed them salvation, which of course he does not. We do not deserve to be set free from addiction; it is a gift of grace from a merciful God. Maybe they came to the bottom step properly then failed to truly mourn over their addictions or sins; therefore, they fell. Mainly, they fall

because they are not properly trained in temperance. It doesn't help that in an effort to make addicts or sinners happy, people allow them too much latitude in their habits. But Steps Three and Four, if properly scaled, will produce converts who hunger after God. These people will not have to be babied or handled with kid gloves. They will embrace this hard teaching and diagnosis, knowing their very lives are at stake.

In 2 Timothy 4:3 (NLT), it tells us, "For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear." The ones who honestly want to get out and stay out of the pit will not be offended by the truth. We are presenting the only way we feel recovery is possible: by climbing onto the fourth step of the Ladder of Recovery and seeking after Christ and his righteousness. There has been a debate as to whether the step strategy within certain programs is productive or not. We believe the only way they can be truly effective is through Jesus. Therefore, hungering and thirsting after righteousness is nonnegotiable.

One may ask, "How, then, can we hunger and thirst after righteousness?" We are not promoting a denomination in this book, but rather a relationship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are only too aware that there are many "hypocrites" out there who pretend to be religious. Hypocrite comes from the Greek word *hypokrités*, which means "actor on a stage." (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) We do not advocate *acting* like anything. This is not an act. The truly penitent addict is not trying to pretend to be something. I fear those with ulterior motives will only be hypocrites sitting among us; however, we minister to each one alike. Jesus's ladder allows room only for those who *are* and not those who pretend to be. Each blessing is conferred upon those who *are*. It would be safer to be "blessed are the poor in spirit" on the first step than to supposedly be on the top step but only pretending. Do not lie to us or yourself for it is a waste of time. If we are focused on becoming what Christ wants us to be, then the addiction recovery is a guarantee.

We can also give practical advice to the one who really wants to know about seeking after God. Like we said earlier, there are those who have fallen away and, upon examination, can pinpoint the issues that caused the failure quite easily. Now, do not think that simply performing these recommendations will produce anything in you if they are not coming from the heart. But

to the one who has truly ascended the four steps to this place, I can give you three basic principles in the Christian life.

Number one, read your Bible. This is God's guidebook and love letter to his church. Forty authors, over a 1,600-year span, wrote this book under the inspiration of the Spirit. The Bible says they were "moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). Their occupations ranged from shepherds to kings, from prophets to fishermen, and everything in between. Despite this, not one word stands in contradiction to another. Bible reading is imperative to the one who truly hungers after righteousness. This Holy Library contains sixty-six books of how to live a Christian life. There is no need to fail when the road map lays the way out so perfectly.

Not only should we read our Bible, but we should also study it. Try to interpret the Bible properly. It doesn't matter what your subjective opinion is. Do not try to bend the scripture to suit your own interpretation; God didn't stutter when he spoke them. If you want to truly be righteous, which you will have to be in order to be completely set free from addictions, then you need God's Word. When you get to a scripture you do not understand, do not skip over it. Meditate on it. Read Bible commentaries when available to find what the original meaning is. There are those who teach that only certain versions are sufficient, but I have found that to not be the case. The point of reading is understanding, and the Word of God is worth taking the time to understand. If you will take the time to hunger after righteousness in his Word, you will never be disappointed or at a loss for an answer, both for your own problems and those of others.

Secondly, *pray!* Leonard Ravenhill preached that "no man is greater than his prayer life." Take the time to pray every day. Sometimes the heavens will feel like brass—cold, hard, and unhearing. Pray anyway. Everything will try to distract you, but pray anyway. It is the one thing the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to do. They did not ask how to cast out demons, heal the sick, or raise the dead. Instead, they asked him to teach them to pray. Prayer is a most crucial element to being in right standing with God. Ask him every day to direct your path. Ask him for the opportunity to share your story with another, perhaps one who is facing the pit you were once in yourself. Use the time in prayer to make your requests known, but also take the time to listen from your heart. Prayer is a conversation, and if we open our hearts, God will speak to us. The addict has listened to the voice of Satan for years. Now focus that attentive heart on Jesus and listen closely for him to speak to you.

Thirdly, find a church that preaches the truth. Do not be enamored by the crowd or church size. This means nothing. Some of the biggest churches in the world and some of the smallest are preaching heretical doctrines. Find one that has a strong pastor (which is the Greek word for shepherd) and sit under their leadership. A good church is worth its weight in gold. Less and less are standing on the bedrock principles of the faith. Find a church that preaches the truth of the Word of God. The singing ministries, the youth ministries, and other ministries are important, but none equal the teaching that comes forth out of the pulpit. Churches that are focused on the souls of men and women are precious. As the old saying goes, “a church alive is worth the drive.” If you want to seek righteousness, you will find it difficult to do so while sitting under the leadership of a church that either has no backbone to tell the truth or has turned the church into a business to exploit God’s people. These do not “feed the flock of God” as 1 Peter 5:2 commands us. Remember, we are to hunger and thirst after righteousness. If the preacher isn’t feeding you, then you need to go where you can be fed. For those who sit under the preaching and are not being fed, it is their duty to go where they can.

Now, we could go on and on with recommendations of how to hunger and thirst after righteousness, but these three principles are a good start. Remember we are replacing the “hunger” of addiction with the hunger for righteousness. The spiritual roots are now producing spiritual limbs that are reaching after God. The hard work has already been put in; just be cautious that we are not lulled into becoming too comfortable. I have seen many get to this fourth step who have fallen. Paul, in addressing the Church of Corinth, warns them not to think too highly of themselves despite their previous successes. He says, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). We have been brought up from the bottom of the Pit of Despair by this Golden Ladder; but remember, we haven’t made it home yet. As one old preacher put it, “We are saved but being saved.” Think about it as a man who has been rescued from a raging river. He has been saved. However, the same river could still drown him if he does not take it seriously.

The point of this step is to refocus our attention from our previous addictions to Christ. We have been doing this in the first three steps, and now we are more equipped to do so than ever. This step of hungering and thirsting after righteousness comes with the guarantee that we will be filled. Just like the natural man who gets hungry or thirsty, he will search for something to fill that void. Now that we have been purged from our addictions, the root system and the

limbs are growing out and looking for spiritual food. The hunger for the addiction is replaced with the hunger for righteousness. This all-important step must be faced and accepted to move forward.

*Application: This part of your training will stay with you for the rest of your life. By growing spiritually, you will be able to overcome everything life throws at you. We cannot overemphasize these three important areas of your recovery: prayer, Bible reading, and church attendance. If these three things are focused on properly, you will be successful not only in addiction recovery but in every aspect of life. Use moderation here. Do not burn yourself out with too lofty of goals. Set a reasonable goal, and do not deviate from it. To begin with, set a goal of five minutes of prayer and one chapter a day in scripture. And make sure you attend a church that preaches the truth of God's Word. Do not look for entertainment or convenience. Look for a place where you can feel the Lord.*

**This section differs from that of the other chapters as this is a sample of a log to keep track of your training. We have emphasized the importance of reading your Bible, prayer time, and attending church. This page can be used from now on as a guide to go by.**

Scriptural reading: Start with the New Testament. Find a version of the Bible that you feel is speaking to your heart. The King James Version is my go-to, but I read other versions quite often. Read at least one chapter a day. List what chapter you read and anything it said that you feel is applicable to your life. Perhaps you read something you feel God is speaking to you directly about. Write it down, or even write down things you are confused by that you can come back to or share with someone else for help.

**Scripture:** (This is just a sample.) I randomly selected a passage: Mark 10. Something that stood out to me in this chapter is where Jesus said those who follow him will receive not only eternal life but also a hundred times more in this world. That shows me serving God is not a burden but a blessing. I have only one brother physically, but in Jesus, I have millions of brothers and sisters. By laying the addiction down, I can enjoy life and the fellowship of people who care for me and want me to succeed.

A question I need help with is understanding when Jesus tells his disciples they will drink from the same cup he drinks from. What exactly does that mean? Is it a cup of blessing or a cup of persecution or something different?

*See, by writing this down, I am learning to focus on the scripture and apply it to my life while also keeping my mind engaged on the things I need help with. Don't just read the Bible, **study it!***

**Prayer:** Talk to God and allow him to talk to you. Write down what you prayed for that seemed important and if you felt God speaking to your spirit in any way.

Sample: I prayed this morning for my lack of focus. I seem to be in a fog sometimes while reading the Bible or listening to the preacher, and I would like God to help me in this area.

I felt him speaking to my heart that there is something up ahead that is going to come against me, but his warning gave me assurance that he will be there to help me when the trial comes.

*By writing this down, we are formulating our petitions to God more clearly. Sometimes, we get in the habit of praying only in our minds and find ourselves getting distracted quite easily. By forming the words on our lips, even at a whisper, we are focusing on what we are doing. Writing the heart of our prayers down will give us clarity. If we were to keep these, we could go back to them later on and see how God worked these issues out for us, increasing our faith in him.*

**Church Attendance:** Attend a strong church that stands on God's Word. Takes notes during service. I can tell you that as a pastor, I have the utmost confidence in those who take notes so they can study them later. This shows me they are engaged and eager to hear from God as opposed to worrying when they can get out and go home.

Write down things during service that stand out as important. It may be the lyrics of a song that touched your heart. It may be one of the preacher's points that hit close to home. Perhaps a testimony gave you encouragement or revealed someone is struggling and needing prayer. Whatever it is, just remember this is your training, and you need to take it seriously.

Sample: This morning I attended service and the song "Amazing Grace" touched my heart like it had not before, as I thought of how amazing God's grace has been in my own life. The sermon on Jacob wrestling with God reminded me of my own struggles and made me realize I must not let go until God gives me what I am seeking.

*By staying attentive to what is going on, you will not get distracted by everything. Each song, testimony, and sermon can be beneficial to you if you are focusing on the message and not the messenger. Don't count anyone out. The singer who cannot carry a tune in a bucket may bless you more than the lead singer, or a testimony of a child may touch you more than the greatest evangelistic message. I preached at a church once where afterwards, a little boy got up and said, "I got saved, and it feels good." His testimony of seven words was a greater blessing to that church than my forty-five minutes of preaching probably was.*

## Chapter 8: Merciful

### ***Step Five: Blessed Are the Merciful, for They Shall Obtain Mercy.***

*This step focuses on forgiving others. We have been shown mercy; now we show that to others. This is for our own growth. You cannot run a race properly by being weighted down. Unforgiveness is a weight that will hinder you. Let go of the past. You have been a victim while in the pit, but now you are made victorious through Christ. Romans 8 says we are “more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37 [ESV]).*

The fifth step of the Ladder of Recovery involves our dealings with others. We cannot claim to be at this section of the ladder if we are not interested in showing mercy to other people. The previous step involved hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and that will inevitably lead to helping those around us. This step of the ladder is in keeping with the steps of other programs. For instance, the last step of AA says, “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” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001, 60).

We readily acknowledge we were unable to help ourselves at the first step and each subsequent step thereafter. There is not one ounce of pride in us as we mount the second step, realizing we did not ascend (even to the second step) without the good Lord’s help. By the time we have reached this fifth step, we understand our past addictions were a spiritual matter and not merely a physical one. With God’s grace, we are now well on our way to full recovery. We are still aware there is a danger of falling harder than ever at this level, but we, through our hungering after the spiritual, are confident we will succeed. Because of this, we look to help others out of the Pit of Despair too. If we are not concerned with others, then we climbed steps we had no business being on.

A religious scribe once came to Jesus, inquiring what the greatest commandment of all was. The man was one who studied the Law of Moses religiously. But when Jesus answered the question, he dealt with the heart of religion and not simply commandments and rules. Jesus said the greatest commandment is to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Mark 12:30–31). He continued by

saying, “the entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments” (Matt. 22:40 [NLT]).

Jesus’s teaching was very simple. We are to first love God, and then we will inevitably love our neighbor. This fifth step puts that love into action. We are not checking off a list of steps to get through a program; we are wanting complete freedom from addiction. If we are experiencing a spiritual redemption, then we will want others to experience it as well. Now we can put into operation the mercy that was shown to us by showing it to others. Can we remember the elation of being set free from addiction? Shouldn’t everyone else in the Pit of Addiction experience it as well? That is our job now! We are to proclaim the freedom Christ alone can bring.

One time, there was a woman who went to the well of Sychar in Samaria, and Jesus was sitting there, waiting for her. The scripture tells us in John chapter 4 that Jesus needed to go that way, so our inclination is to think he was in a hurry to get somewhere. But his purpose was to be there at the exact time the woman was going to draw water from the well. She wasn’t the best woman in town. She had a horrible reputation, having been married five times, and was living with a man who wasn’t her husband. She did not know theology, as she argued with Jesus about where people should worship. The Samaritan blood that flowed through her veins was despised by the Jews of the day, and Jesus himself was a Jew. By all accounts, Jesus could have not even looked at her and been justified in doing so. And yet, our loving, merciful, gracious Lord did not do that. Instead, he began to tell her about “living water” (John 4:10) that would fill every void of her life. What she had always wanted was suddenly within reach. Sitting right there that day, not in a synagogue or a church but outside on a workday, Jesus saved her soul! The same can be true for anyone who will come to him. They do not have to be at church, or in a revival, or talking to a preacher. They just need to realize their need for him and accept this fact, and God can save *anyone*!

What did the woman do then? She went and told everyone! She forgot her water pot at the well and ran into the city yelling, “Come and meet a Man!” (John 4:29). This man, she explained, could be the Christ, the very one they had been waiting for. That is what we, who stand on this fifth step and beyond, want to proclaim to every individual we can. This Jesus is the answer to every addiction and every problem of your life! Because of the woman’s declaration,

everyone rushed out to see him! And for two days, Jesus preached to them and set others free as well. In John 4:42, the people tell the woman that they now believe, not because she told them, but because they “heard him [themselves] and *know* that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world” (italics added).

To us, this is the most important thing—that people will have an experience with Jesus Christ themselves. We do not want people to follow us blindly, for the Bible says blind leaders will lead blind followers to destruction (Matt. 15:14). The mercy we are showing by telling others about Jesus is not our attempt to save someone by our own power. We have already accepted the fact we cannot even save ourselves (in Step One and up), so how could we save others? By simply presenting Christ to them, they too can be pulled out of the Pit of Addiction by the same ladder that helped us out. But—and we cannot overstate this—all the programs in the world will not be able to set a man or woman free if they do not want help. A person has to want to meet Christ or else this program is in vain.

We show mercy because we have been shown mercy. All of us who are here to help others are not looking for financial gain or recognition for our work. We simply want people set free from addiction by the one who set us free. There is no condemnation among us. We have let that go in this process of climbing the Ladder of Recovery. We do not think ill of anyone who comes to our program, and we respect the fact you have been brave enough to step forward and acknowledge the addiction. It is not a virtue to remain silent when you need help; it is insanity. People are depending on you, and you owe it to them, yourself, and God to get the help necessary. Mercy is here!

The second portion of Step Five is more technical. We have been thankful for the mercy that has been shown to us; now, we must be ready to show mercy ourselves. Oh sure, telling someone about Jesus or this addiction recovery program is merciful, but let us not fool ourselves here. It is easy to merely tell friends, neighbors, and even strangers about Jesus and the help he can offer. Where it gets difficult to show mercy is to those who have harmed us.

The technical definition for mercy is “compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone who it is in within one’s power to punish or harm.” (the editors of Encyclopedia.com, n.d.) True mercy is shown when we forgive those who do not deserve it. But human nature loves to hold on

to grudges and hurt feelings. After all, we can easily justify ourselves in doing so. However, it destroys the ladder. One cannot be spiritual and unforgiving. It is impossible.

The reason Jesus saved this step of the ladder until the fifth step is because it takes spiritual maturity to forgive those who have hurt you. The bottom two steps are self-reflective. At that point, we are simply dealing with the spiritual issues between us and our creator. Steps Three and Four are training us to be spiritually minded. Meekness, as we previously explained, is like breaking a horse to ride. The spirit or power of them is not destroyed; it is simply redirected toward God as opposed to our own destruction in addiction and sin. Hungering after righteousness confirms our passions now lie in godly pursuits and are in right standing with God. If we have, indeed, reached this step, we are now ready to face some hard issues. Since we love Christ, we want to love our neighbors, which can be friend or foe.

Jesus explained this concept to a lawyer once. In Luke 10, the man came to Jesus, questioning him. He wanted to know what he had to do to “inherit eternal life.” So Jesus asked him, “What does the law say?” The lawyer did not repeat the Law of Moses but instead used Jesus’s own words of loving God with all the heart, loving your neighbor as yourself, etc. Jesus told him to do that, and he would be guaranteed entrance into heaven. However, the lawyer was trying to tempt Jesus, so he asked him a very technical question: “And who is my neighbor?”

The issue with the man is he wanted a loophole on who his neighbor was. He knew he had to love some people but others not so much. Jesus then told the famous parable of the Good Samaritan. The story tells us of how a man lying by a roadside had been wounded and left for dead by thieves. Two religious men saw him and did not want to get their hands dirty, similar to a lot of people today. They know there are people out there who need help; they just don’t want to “waste” their time on people like us. In the case of the injured man, those religious men “passed by on the other side” (Luke 10:31–32) of the road. Eventually, a Samaritan, one who would have been considered an enemy of the hurting, dying man, came along and saw him and ministered to him. Long story short, the Samaritan saved the man’s life when “holier-than-thou” people wouldn’t get their hands dirty.

Jesus then asked the lawyer, “Who was a neighbor to the hurting man?” The lawyer had to say, “He that showed mercy on him.” So Jesus commanded, “Go and do likewise.” The point

here is that an enemy showed mercy to someone who really didn't earn it or deserve it. Can we relate to this story?

Is there anyone in our lives who has wronged us? Anyone who we blame for our previous conditions or hurting? Is there someone who we have not been able to forgive? Now is the time to deal with it.

“But you don't know what they have done to me,” you might say and be fully justified in doing so. We want to be very clear concerning this step. We know some of you have been hurt by people you loved. Family lives have been hard for many who will come through this program. Physical, mental, psychological, and sexual abuse may have scarred you. We cannot fathom the horrors many who will sit in this program have faced. We understand the hurt, and we are not, in any way, excusing the actions and behavior of others. This program wants you to find healing from addictions that have been brought on by situations that were out of your control. Abusive and neglectful parents, perhaps, have done damage to you that you feel can never be excused. Or maybe spousal abuse, physical and every other kind, drove you to the addiction as a way of escape. We understand.

With that being said, standing here on the fifth step of the Ladder of Recovery, you must be willing to show mercy. They don't deserve it! We will not for one second even pretend some “deserve” forgiveness. That is why it is called mercy. To advance any farther, we must be willing to do this. Remember, *blessed (happy)* are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. The Pit of Addiction keeps many in it and pulls many others off the ladder because they cannot or will not forgive people for their transgressions.

In the previous step, we encouraged you to develop a prayer life. Now you can understand why. When teaching us to pray, Jesus instructs us to pray to our heavenly Father that he will forgive us of our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors. Different translations may shine more light on this issue. One says, “Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us” (Matt. 6:12 [NLT]). Another says, “Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs others have done to us” (Good News Translation). Quite simply, we are looking for mercy, and therefore, we should be ready at this step to show it to others.

This does not mean we put ourselves back in situations and circumstances to be hurt again. It just means we release the hold this spirit of anger and resentment has held over us. We

have been set free from the bondage of addiction, and now the power of Satan is being broken as we climb the ladder closer to God. If we are ready to mount this step of mercy, then it is apparent that the previous steps have been properly ascended.

Mercy is an attribute of God. I love Ephesians 2 that says,

But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved! And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might display the surpassing riches of His grace, demonstrated by His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life. (Ephesians 2:4–10 [BSB])

Notice the ladder here? Paul said we are being “*raised up*”! Grace is recognized as the gift, and mercy is shown as one of God's many wonderful attributes. Since we are “seated *in Christ Jesus*,” these attributes have to be part of us as well.

Make sure you deal with Step Five properly. Forgive everyone who has hurt you. Show mercy to them. Again, I am not saying they deserve anything from you. But God deserves it from you. He has forgiven us all so much! We have sinned against him in innumerable ways, yet he is willing to manifest his mercy toward us. We don't deserve his mercy. If we were thrown back into the Pit of Addiction, or even into the bottom of hell, we would deserve it. But God is merciful, and we will be blessed when we are merciful as well.

Finally, a word to the Christian well-established in the faith. Do not forget where you were brought up from. It is your duty to help others because somewhere along the line, you were helped yourself. I think sometimes we get spiritual amnesia and forget the addict we once were. If there is any self-righteousness or disdain for an addict or sinner within you, you are in worse condition than they are. We have told of the Prodigal Son and his decision to *ARISE*. Let us not forget that the Prodigal had an older brother who would not forgive him, although the father did. The brother was mad because the father forgave the sins of the younger son. His heart was not

right—that is really the moral of the parable. The Pharisees were mad Jesus was eating with sinners, and Jesus warned them of their wrong attitude of religion.

Our commission is to make disciples of everyone. We are commanded to go into the “highways and hedges” so that God’s house may be filled. The addiction recovery ministry is just as important as any other. Remember the words of Jesus in John 3:16–17: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” The most famous song ever penned was by a man named John Newton, who had previously been a slave trader and the worst kind of addict and sinner. But God, out on the high seas, saved his soul. From his heart came the words “amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a *wretch like me!*”

We have all been shown mercy. Now, let’s show it to those who either don’t deserve it or don’t know about it!

*Application: Forgive everyone who has hurt you in the past. This may be very tough, but remember Christ also forgave you. This is for your own good. Love is a Christian virtue, and we are told to love even our enemies. Make a list of those whom you harbor ill feelings toward and work on forgiving them. If you think it will help, go and talk to them. If you are struggling with forgiveness, you probably should speak with a minister or a qualified professional. Unforgiveness is a deadly poison, so get rid of it, both for their sakes and yours.*

**Journal**

**These pages can be torn out upon completion if you feel they are too embarrassing or personal. The point is to formulate your thoughts and ideas and physically write them down so you become engaged in the program.**

Who or what has harmed you in the past? Face these issues—do not sweep them under the rug. Perhaps a bad home life, bad parents, abusive relationships? We often choose to bury them in the back of our minds, but we have never forgiven or forgotten them. Write these down, and it will force you to deal with each one properly.

---

---

---

---

---

Now that you have acknowledged the issues, what do you feel needs to be done so you can show mercy? Maybe going to a particular person or addressing them in a message, or maybe you just need to cry out to God for him to give you a forgiving heart. Evaluate each situation in the proper way, and do not opt for the easier route if you feel in your heart you need to go further.

---

---

---

---

---

Are you willing to forgive everyone? \_\_\_\_\_

*Prayer: Dear God, we could use the Lord's Prayer here as we are instructed to ask you to forgive us as we forgive those who have transgressed against us. Help us forgive each person, as we know that unforgiveness is a weight that will hinder our climb out of this pit. Give us a heart that holds no bitterness and resentment toward others. You know what we have had to deal with in life, and you are touched by our problems. Please give us the strength to forgive everyone*

*who has harmed us and to give it all to you. Help us forgive, and although we may never forget, we know that you can make the pain more tolerable for us. We are not bringing up old wounds to relive them but to lay them on you so we can be healed. Thank you for your mercy, and help us show that mercy to others. In Jesus's name, amen.*

## Chapter 9: Pure in Heart

### *Step Six: Blessed Are the Pure in Heart, for They Shall See God.*

*Here, we examine our lives to make sure our motives are pure. We look in the spiritual mirror for defects of character or unresolved issues, so we can enjoy the relationship with God as he intended.*

By now, we have realized our recovery is only made complete through Jesus Christ our Lord. A quick recap of the steps of the ladder will show us that the first two have to do with our weaknesses. These two steps involve self-reflection. At Step One, we realize we are powerless over our addiction, and at Step Two, we repent, or feel remorseful, for our actions. We start this program by realizing the spiritual aspect of addiction and turn our focus *toward* one who can help. At these two steps, we are following the rules in hopes of finding help. Our focus has been recalibrated, but perhaps we did not see the Lord, or if we did, maybe it was just vaguely.

The next three steps (meekness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and being merciful) could be viewed as training that is illuminating Christ in a greater way. By now, we should be able to see God better than before. The reason is because our heart has been cleansed. When the revelation of God comes to us, as we ascend this ladder, we realize the work put in throughout the steps is paying off. Let us use this step, Step Six, to examine our progress thus far.

In Jesus's great Sermon on the Mount, he deals with a religious crowd who were only concerned with keeping a set of rules (the Law) and *acting* like they were righteous. We have stressed throughout this program we do not want people only pretending to be something. To put on an act will only produce hypocrites. Jesus's entire sermon (found in Matthew 5–7) reveals the true from the false. While he points out one hypocrisy after another, perhaps the best application for us is the parable about two men building houses, one built on a rock and the other on sand. The one built on sand fell during a storm because it only had the look of being built on a firm foundation. To the one who goes through this program, or even to the casual churchgoer, be careful that you ascend the ladder properly. The race is not won by the fastest runner; it is won by the one who finishes the course. Each step has to be considered carefully and prayerfully. By Step Six, we are hoping you will be "pure in heart" so this relationship with God is not a put-on front but a reality.

The foolish man's house fell. Why? Because it was not founded upon a rock. It looked fine, but when the storm came, it couldn't stand. Think of the temptation of addiction as the storm. It will inevitably come both to the one built on the rock and the one on the sand. What makes one able to stand and the other to fall is whether you have made your recovery serious or not. We have all seen addicts (and perhaps done this ourselves) try pretending they're okay, but it is only a mask they are wearing. I have heard addicts who you would think, just by listening to them, are saints as they condemn other addicts and speak of the ills of addiction in others. But all the while, they are under bondage themselves. We are not impressed with rhetoric or philosophical ideas; we are concerned with results. Take the time to dig in. Get established properly, and when the "storm" hits, you will be able to stand.

We are not, like Jesus warned the religious crowd, concerned with whether you can follow the rules properly. We are concerned with you being set free. Jesus pointed out he was concerned with the heart and not the outward appearance. If our heart is right, our motives will be pure. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart." The word "pure" and the word "clean" are interchangeable in this context. We often speak of addicts as "getting clean." To us who look at addiction as a spiritual matter, we know the person who's truly clean can only be so when the heart is pure. The addict wants help and can find it only if they truly want to be free in their hearts. Court mandates and family pressure may well help this person, but only as a kickstart to an issue that is already in the heart.

The "heart" Jesus speaks of denotes our affections and desires. The purity represents the issue of our affections and desires being pure. This is one area that causes many to not trust addicts because they have been fooled too many times. Empty promises and bad motives have calloused a lot of people toward addicts. Now, Jesus is showing that the one who is pure in heart can see God. These addicts have moved beyond the externalities of attempting to appear clean for people. Now, they are focused on God and have a desire to please him with a pure heart.

The one pretending to be clean is not pure in heart. The one following a set of rules or steps for the purpose of appearing changed is not pure in heart. Everyone who suffers from addiction should want to change for the better. That is commendable. We appreciate all addiction recovery efforts as they attempt to give people meaning in their lives and heal the damage caused by addiction. But the Christ-centered recovery groups move into another realm. This type of

recovery is one that can guarantee success because it promotes a relationship with God. The “pure in heart” can see God. To those who ascend to this portion of the ladder, their addiction has been replaced with an addiction to Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 16:15, Paul mentions those who have “addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” In this scripture, the word “addicted” means devoted. To be on this level of the ladder means you have replaced the affections of a former life with the affection for Christ. You have a love for others because the love of Christ has filled your heart. You want other addicts to know the freedom you now enjoy because your spiritual eyes are on Jesus. By now, you should feel your addiction was in a former life because your “new birth” has made you a new creation in Christ. We do not want to feel as though we are not susceptible to going back into addiction, but we can have confidence that as long as we look unto Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2), we will not live in fear of that.

That said, what does it mean to see God? Let’s consider the scripture Exodus 10:28 where Pharaoh warned Moses he would never see his, the Pharaoh’s, face again. Pharaoh was angry, as the plagues had practically destroyed his nation. His angry command of not “seeing his face” means Moses would not be allowed back into Pharaoh’s presence since Moses would need to be close to see his face. When Jesus tells us the ones with pure motives will see God, he implies the one who comes to God with a pure motive will be allowed access to him.

We could look at the words of Jesus in Matthew 7, where he says there will be those at the judgment seat who will call him Lord only to be denied access to his kingdom. Why? Because he says, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Matt. 7:23 [NKJV]). Their hearts were not pure, meaning their affections and their motives were bad while on earth; therefore, they could not “see God.” We emphasize this same issue over and over in this book. You do not have to come to God knowing all the ins and outs of theology. God is not expecting one of his children to never make a mistake. We have all stumbled and fell and will continue to do so. But God sees a man’s heart and doesn’t judge by the outward appearance. He is not fooled by masks of religion, and he will never misjudge motive. He knows why you are here, and if that motive is pure, you are in his presence.

If our spiritual ascent has brought us to this step of the ladder, we should rejoice. We are not cynical or resentful over our past and problems we have experienced; after all, it has led us to

the presence of God. Therefore, we are blessed. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” If we truly believe that, then we can trust in a sovereign God who has a plan for our life and has allowed things to transpire that would bring us to this state of blessing. To those on the lower steps of the ladder, this may seem strange, but those who are in the presence of God as his children will not question the trials and tests we have faced as much as the one who has not matured spiritually to this point. It does not mean we are any more saved or free than the one on the lower steps. What it does mean is we are now seeing God more clearly and beginning to understand the past as it relates to the present and the future.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13 that when he was a child, meaning not fully mature, he acted and thought like a child. Once he became a man, though, his childish thoughts and actions were replaced with those of a man. At this higher level, we have matured to better understand how God works things out for our benefit. Continuing on, Paul says we see through a “glass darkly, but then face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12). He is speaking of a mirror that is tarnished but, upon polishing, allows the person to see themselves better. This is what we are going for—to see ourselves more and more clearly.

The Bible is filled with people who have had the awesome experience of seeing God. Each time, the person was affected in a very profound way. If your ascension up this ladder has truly brought you into God’s presence, you will be changed too. An addict will know they are not the person they used to be.

Let’s take Jacob for an example. All through his life, he had manipulated others to get his way. In Genesis 25, he cheated his older brother out of his birthright (a special right given to the firstborn), and then in chapter 27, he stole the blessing of his brother. When he was forced to leave because his brother was going to kill him, he went to a relative’s farm, where he cheated him out of his livestock. But in Genesis 32, God got a hold of him. That night, as Jacob fought God down by the Jabbok River, God found out how badly he wanted to be delivered. Now, do not misunderstand. God could have killed Jacob with the flick of a finger if he so desired. The point of wrestling was so Jacob could realize that unless he fought, he would never change. Jacob, for the first time in his life, “manned up” and fought for what he wanted. The next morning, God changed Jacob’s name to Israel and left him with a limp for the rest of his life.

Everything changed for Jacob. Suddenly, he was blessed. The limp was a reminder of where God brought him from. Perhaps we could learn from this. The toll of being in the Pit of Addiction may remain on us, but let it be a reminder of the blessedness we can now enjoy in the presence of God. Jacob saw God, and he never forgot it.

How about Job? His name will forever be used in conjunction with someone who is suffering. Job's family, finances, and health were attacked by Satan. His so-called "friends" accused him of everything (we have all had these kind). Even his wife turned on him and told him he should "curse God and die" (Job 2:9). Yet Job kept trusting God. Finally, at the very end of the book of Job, God revealed himself to him after having lamented previously that he was looking for God and couldn't seem to see him. When God answered Job out of a whirlwind, he was letting him know that although Job had not been able to see him, God had always seen Job and had been there all along. I love what Job says in the forty-second chapter: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5).

Had it not been for the trials, Job would have never seen God. Think of it like this: if you had never been in the lowest pit, would you have ever turned to God? Suppose you had lived a comfortable life and had never faced the hardships you have faced. Perhaps it took all that to get you here. As a Christ-based recovery group, we know the most important thing is to leave this world with your name written in the Book of Life. If you hear Jesus say, "Well done," then your life has been a success, regardless of wealth, popularity, prestige, or anything else. But if he says, "Depart from Me, I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23), then it would have been better to have never been born.

You, who are pure in your motives and affections, are truly blessed because you are allowed access into the presence of God. You can see him! Use this step as the opportunity to examine your motives and affections. If they need some work, then you know it is God who is showing you what you need to be working on. Our next step will focus on making peace with others. That can only be done properly by first examining our lives before God.

*Application: This step involves us looking at our motives. A person with the right motive can be somewhat wrong theologically and still be allowed in the presence of God. Evaluate your motives honestly, though. Ask yourself what your motives are in different aspects of life. Work on any area where you feel the motive may be selfish or narcissistic. Our lives are made to glorify*

*God, so we need to properly evaluate our motives. Write down your goals, dreams, and aspirations. As you go along, you may want to add to or take away from that list based on your examination. God wants you to be happy and blessed, so personal goals are good; just examine your motives and allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in every decision.*

*Journal*

**These pages can be torn out upon completion if you feel they are too embarrassing or personal. The point is to formulate your thoughts and ideas and physically write them down so you become engaged in the program.**

What were your motives when you began this program, and how do they differ now? For example, your motive may have been to not go to jail, but now you want your family restored and a closer walk with God. Maybe they are no different. That's okay. But what are they right now?

---

---

---

---

---

If they have changed, what caused that change? Is it God revealing to you that your life can be better through him? Maybe it is your association with the ARISE group, and you see examples of what you would like your life to be. Write down here what has changed.

---

---

---

---

---

Have your pure motives helped you "see God" more clearly? Has your spiritual life changed since the program began? If so, explain how.

---

---

---

---

---

*Prayer: Gracious God, help us to have pure motives. Our desire is to get closer to you and enjoy the life you have blessed us with. Search us, oh Lord, and see if our ways are pure before you. We realize we all stumble and fail you, but help us know our heart is pure, and our motives are right in your sight. If there is anything in us that needs to be dealt with, then please do so. We know your Word says that if we are truly your children, then you will correct us when we are wrong. Moses asked you so long ago to “see you,” so we too ask to be allowed entrance in your presence. We understand we cannot deceive you, for you know our hearts. Therefore, examine our hearts and purge out anything that would make us impure! In Jesus’s name, amen.*

## Chapter 10: Peacemakers

### ***Step Seven: Blessed Are the Peacemakers, for They Shall Be Called the Children of God.***

*In this step, we face one of our toughest challenges yet. This is where we make amends with others. Many other groups deal with this step much earlier, but we feel we must have forgiven others first before we could dare ask others to forgive us. Our training and ascension up the Golden Ladder have brought us to where we can “see God” because of our pure motives. With the right motives, we reach out to others to make peace with them. The scriptures demand we try to make peace with all men if possible.*

Jesus saves the seventh step for those who are his children. Up to this point, we have gone through three stages on the Ladder of Recovery. We started the bottom two steps by looking only at our life as it related to our recovery. We acknowledged our helplessness and addiction.

The second stage, Steps Three through Five, worked on our conditioning. This was our basic training, if you will, and can be viewed as the rules of living life out of the pit. We may not have fully understood why we were doing what we were doing, but we trusted the process as we ascended the Ladder of Recovery. By Step Six, we moved into a different stage in our recovery, for now we can “see God.”

Seeing God then brings us to Step Seven, which calls for us to be peacemakers. This may be the most challenging step of our recovery. Once upon a time, before the first step on the Ladder of Recovery was attempted, we were the polar opposite of peacemakers. We were “peace-takers.” We should have long lamented this by now. Think of how our actions have affected others during our addiction. How many people were harmed because of our selfish actions as addicts? How many sleepless nights did a mother, father, spouse, or friend have because of us? How many have suffered because of our “disease”?

We have been working on getting out of the Pit of Addiction with the help of Almighty God, but are we willing to right every wrong? For those who we stole peace from, are we now willing to make amends to restore that peace? The pride in us does not want to face this. After all, wouldn't it be better for us to let bygones be bygones? No! Just because you have moved on

does not mean you can sweep things under the rug. We have already forgiven others. If not, then we did not progress past Step Five and cannot claim to be “pure in heart” in Step Six. Keep in mind, each step is contingent upon the other steps. As scripture teaches us, we will not be forgiven by God as long as we have not forgiven others. If God is not pleased with us, then this whole ladder is useless. All he has to do is remove his hand from us, and we will fall back down to the bottom of the pit.

Therefore, since we have forgiven others, we have to go to those who need to forgive us and attempt to make peace with them. This is not a light task we are talking about here. Maybe you have hurt people in a very real way, but you are still obligated to them to make amends. If you owe people money, you need to discuss it with them and work out a plan to start making that right. Perhaps they will forgive the debt—that would be great! But what if they won’t? Are you willing to try to work it out anyhow? What about having to go to ones you have wronged and say “sorry”? Pride should have been swallowed a long time ago, but religious people can develop pride worse than anyone. We started a process to be “healed” of the “disease” of addiction. If we were serious, we would have done anything to make it right. Does that still apply now?

This Golden Ladder is based on the Beatitudes found in Matthew 5. That being said, we have to read things in context. Continuing in this great sermon, Jesus commands us to deal with the heart of certain issues. For instance, Jesus warns of those who have hatred or lust in their hearts, and he compares those feelings to murder and adultery, respectively. When he speaks of dealing with people, he warns us not to take relationships lightly. Let us carefully examine this portion of scripture. Matthew 5:23–26 (AMP) says,

So if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and *while* there you remember that your brother has something [such as a grievance or legitimate complaint] against you, leave your offering there at the altar and go. First make peace with your brother, and then come and present your offering. Come to terms quickly [at the earliest opportunity] with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way [to court], so that your opponent does not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you are thrown into prison. I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid the last cent.

He begins by saying that the relationship with an offended person needs to be dealt with before you can really offer anything to God. So do not take it for granted that just because you have asked God to forgive you it is completely finished. God will forgive a person based on the heart and not the outward appearance. Whenever possible, we need to make right any wrongs we've caused. If that person refuses to forgive you, God can still forgive you and wipe the slate clean but will only do so if you have made an honest attempt at reconciliation.

Jesus then continues by saying you are to come to terms quickly with the wronged person. But you cannot dictate the terms of the agreement. You wronged them, so it must be dealt with on their terms. There is no point in trying to be a peacemaker if you want to justify your wrongs. This whole ladder has brought you to this point. That is why we present this, as Jesus did, near the top of the Golden Ladder. By your spiritual growth and training, you have entered the realm of the spirit where you should be able to honestly evaluate your past actions and work toward fixing them.

Jesus says to do this so that the judge does not throw you into prison. Here, Jesus likens a person not agreeing with an adversary to a person who will be put into prison. True freedom can be found when you have honestly and objectively faced your past and righted every wrong you feel needs to be confronted. Until you work to fix the past, you will feel like you are not truly free. The "prison" many recovering addicts are put in holds them there by their past. Addicts do not want to face rejection, ridicule, or even humiliation from their past sins; thereby, they are kept in bondage. It took humility to get on the ladder, and it will take humility to reach the top.

Jesus also says the person will not be liberated from the prison until "they have paid the last cent." This wording leaves little room for unconfessed sins or unresolved issues. Again, we want to be objective in our steps, so we would recommend a person take the time to reflect on anything that needs to be worked on. Write it down and do not neglect any area you feel needs attention. It will be tough to do, but you have faced tough situations before. You can do this.

What if they won't forgive you? This is a possibility. To be free, you do not have to rely on the actions of others. They need to be apologized to and attempts must be made for reconciliation, but that is not a guarantee they will accept it. Where does that leave you? If you have truly tried to right the wrongs of the past, then these people have no hold over you. Your

ascent has always been between you and God. Now that you have put your faith into action, you can be assured God is pleased.

That being said, let us also take this peacemaker step very seriously for the sake of the offended party. We have forgiven everyone who wronged us, thereby releasing them from having any hold over our recovery. But what if we do not take this step seriously and only go through the motions of asking for forgiveness? You can say everything right but have the wrong attitude or spirit in saying it and make the person resent you all the more. What does that do to them except put them in danger themselves? The Bible says we must forgive in order to be forgiven. And if we do not show contrition in repentance, then it is in vain. God knows our heart when we confessed our wrongs against him in Step Two. If the confession was not sincere, then the step was not beneficial. The same holds true for Step Seven as we confess our failures to others in an attempt to reconcile them to us. If this confession and admission of guilt is only superficial, then the person should not forgive us.

For instance, let's say I owe someone one hundred dollars, and I go to them and ask them to forgive me. Should they? If they were where they should be spiritually, they would readily do so, but some are not at that level. Suppose they say, "I will forgive you once you pay me the hundred bucks." They would not be wrong to demand it. And if we were really looking for resolution, we would agree to their terms and work toward redress. If we refuse, then we are not really earnest in our actions. Faith requires works, otherwise it is dead (James 2:26).

Our goal is to be peacemakers. We do not want to do anything that would be a stumbling block for anyone. We want people to forgive us for our sake and theirs. Unforgiveness on their part could destroy them spiritually. Therefore, we must do everything to merit peace. Jesus explains in the same chapter of Matthew that we are to turn the other cheek if slapped, give someone our cloak voluntarily if they have taken our coat, and carry his pack two miles instead of one. Now these are hard sayings! It's why we stress the importance of a relationship with God before we can fully follow difficult teachings. For our application, Jesus is commanding us to go above and beyond for the person who is at odds with us. Don't justify your own shortcomings because others have them. Instead, realize they have a soul that will probably be destroyed if their heart is not forgiving. Since this is the case, do everything in your power to make a forgiving heart their reality.

Despite having done everything in your power to fix the problems, there will still be some who will not forgive or forget. You are still free at this point. Consider Romans 12 as Paul warns “never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:17–18 [NLT]). Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul writes we are to try our best to live peaceably with all men. But sometimes our best will not be enough for people. That is okay as long as you know you have tried.

Regardless, this does not make them your enemies. They may resent you, but you are above that. This is why Romans 12 continues by saying, “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads” (Rom. 12:20 [NLT]). They have chosen to not forgive you; that is their problem now, not yours. Keep trying to make amends when possible and remain open to reconciliation. Who knows when God will touch their heart and set them free from their bondage.

Finally, Paul says, “Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good” (Rom. 12:21 [NLT]). Your climb up the ladder has brought you to the spot where you have overcome the evil one. The next step will put you into the heat of the battle as you face persecution. But by now, you have donned the spiritual armor and are ready to face anything Satan tries to throw at you!

*Application: Use this step as the opportunity to right the wrongs your past has caused. Make a list of those who you feel you have hurt and reach out to them for forgiveness. This will be extremely difficult, but you are prepared. Your life in Christ has conditioned you to be humble and understanding. Having forgiven those who have wronged you, you can now understand where your actions in the past have hurt others. Go to each one and work toward making amends with them. This may be more than saying “I’m sorry” and may require you to work toward fixing the issues. Do whatever is in your power to be the “peacemaker.”*



*Prayer: Merciful God, we call upon you right now as we deal with the hardest step of the program. Just as you came to bring peace to mankind, we long to be peacemakers as well. We do not want our lives to be a stumbling block to any person. Just as we acknowledged our transgressions against you, we now are willing to face the fact we have hurt others. Lord, whatever it takes to right these wrongs, please help us have the humility to deal with each one directly. Help us face the consequences of our past actions. Our pure heart longs to rectify any issue anyone would have with us, and though we may be rejected, we are willing to try to restore broken relationships with anyone we have offended. God, give us the strength and courage to face this task before us! In Jesus's name, amen.*

## Chapter 11: Persecuted

### ***Step Eight: Blessed Are They Which Are Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake, for Theirs Is the Kingdom of Heaven.***

*Recognize there are many enemies out there who will attempt to destroy you in any way possible. Be aware of the outward dangers that are working to destroy your recovery. Your righteousness (or right standing) makes you a target for every fiery dart of hell. Stand guard! Your training has made you a soldier, and you will have to “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” according to 2 Timothy 2:3. You can handle it—just stay alert!*

Having started the ladder with a promise that the “poor in spirit” can have the kingdom of heaven, we end with the same promise. Our humility, training, and dealing with others properly have led us to this step. Now we are warned we will face persecution! We would like to think we will be celebrated for ascending out of the pit, and for many, that will be a reality. The changed life of an addict will lead to restored relationships, careers, homes, and many more wonderful things. However, there is always going to be someone who will try to bring you back to the bottom of the pit. Be on guard for it!

Notice that Jesus says the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who have made it to this level. We know as long as we live in this earthly body, we will have to face the temptations of the flesh. However, that doesn't mean we are miserable; in fact, we are blessed (meaning happy). Jesus did not say the kingdom of heaven will someday be for those who are persecuted. He said, “Theirs *is* the kingdom.” Now, we know there is a place waiting for us called heaven, where there will be no more sorrow, crying, or pain. In Revelation, John describes it as having streets of gold, walls of jasper, and gates of pearl. Heaven is a place there is a River of Life, a Tree of Life, and the light of the city is God himself.] That is waiting for us. But we do not have to live a miserable life here to experience that there.

Jesus said he came so men “might have life and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). The bottom step started us out of the bottom of the pit where we could have life. By the eighth step, we can have the abundant life Jesus spoke of. He also said in Luke 17:21 (Aramaic Bible in Plain English) that the kingdom of God is “within some of you.” This life and joy we can experience through being set free from the pit is only a down payment of what is to come. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:22 (NLT) that God has “identified us as his own by placing

the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything he has promised us.” That is not to say we have the fullness of these fruits, since we do still have to live in a fallen world that makes us vulnerable to attacks from Satan that trouble our minds and bodies. This life isn’t always going to be “tiptoeing through the tulips.” But we can experience a peace and joy the pit had taken from us by serving God and being on the Ladder to Recovery.

With that being said, we must look back at John 10:10, where Jesus said we could have life and “have it more abundantly.” He says this after saying the “thief comes to steal, kill and destroy.” Satan is our thief, but success is a guarantee for those who can endure the battle against him. Although we have climbed the ladder this far, do not think you are impervious to the attacks of Satan. He wants to destroy you more than ever. He hates the fact you have, with God’s help, broken the bond of addiction that had kept you as his servant. Satan now turns every gun on you. What do you do? You stay alert and watch for his attacks. They may be, and probably will be, subtle in their nature.

Let’s look at how Satan is described in scripture. Before the formation of Earth, Satan was in the spiritual realm as probably the most powerful angel ever created. His name was Lucifer, which means the “light-bearer.” He is described as the model of perfection concerning created beings and as “full of wisdom and exquisite in beauty” (Ezek. 28:12 [NLT]). He probably once led the worship of heaven toward God. But pride was found in him (Ezek. 28:17; Isa. 14:13–14). He wanted to be equal with God, so he led a rebellion against God that caused him to be thrown out of heaven.

How does this affect us? Lucifer was so influential and deceiving his manipulation caused one-third of the angels to follow him (Rev. 12:4, 9)! Those angels had seen the throne of God and him in all his majesty, yet they were deceived and thrown out of heaven. Do not be naive concerning Satan’s power and influence. Upon Lucifer’s banishment, his name was changed to “Satan,” which literally means “adversary.” Satan is the enemy of mankind. He hates man with every fiber of his being. That includes you! He is described as a “roaring lion looking for someone to devour” spiritually (1 Peter 5:8 [NIV]). Why does he hate you? Number one, because you are created in the image of God. Number two, you still have the opportunity to go to heaven and are not yet doomed for hell. And number three, your ascension of this ladder leads to the top where Jesus says, “you are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). You have replaced

Lucifer as the “light-bearer” since it is now you who carries the light of God within you. This light in you shines into a dark world and down into the pit for others to see where God has brought you from, giving them hope. At the same time, it has also caught the attention of Satan, and he hates that you have been delivered from his grasp.

He seeks to destroy you now more than ever. This eighth step is a reminder you are blessed while being persecuted because if Satan is fighting you, it means he doesn’t own you. The addiction you once were a slave to is not your master anymore. But Satan is not going to let you go that easily.

To some, this may seem too theological, and for that I apologize. I simply want you to be aware addiction is spiritual, and the one who is sending the attacks your way is a force to be reckoned with. However, if this seems too hard to understand, let us look at it from a practical approach. You are aware of your progress on the steps. You have systematically followed the rules and advice of Jesus and the ARISE program. Now you are at the top, and success seems inevitable. Our warning here is to remind you that as long as you live, you will never be able to move off this final step until your “enemy” is thrown into the bottomless pit of hell (Rev. 20).

You must be constantly on guard for things that will drag you back. Again, these attacks can be very subtle, so be alert. In Ephesians 6, Paul explains the nature of the enemy as being spiritual and warns us “having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:13). This is often misinterpreted with people saying Paul meant when you can’t go any further, just stand. They will explain it as someone climbing a rope, and when they can’t muster the strength to go any higher, they tie themselves off. Good advice perhaps but not at all what Paul is commanding. He is saying that once you have overcome every wave of attack from these spiritual forces, do not let your guard down. Instead, be ready for the next wave of attack. It is coming, and if you are not prepared, it may destroy you.

When looking at statistics of relapse among alcoholics and drug addicts, you will find the greatest threat in the first year: between forty to sixty percent will relapse. Each year that a person is successful, these numbers drop dramatically. After five years, the chance of relapse is only fifteen percent! However, that still means more than one in seven will relapse after five years of being successful (Manejwala 2014). So the threat is still out there. We do not say that to

be negative but as a reminder to not let your guard down. When warning us of Satan being like a lion looking for prey, we are told to be “sober and vigilant,” meaning awake and disciplined.

Let’s use Samson as an example. We all know the story of Samson. This mighty judge of Israel was physically the strongest man who ever lived. He could perform supernatural feats of strength a host of men could not equal. He once picked up the huge gates of a city, probably weighing thousands of pounds, and carried them miles away when his enemies tried to lock him into a place. One time, a ferocious lion attacked him, and “he tore the lion apart with his bare hands” (Judg. 14:6 [NIV]). Another time, a thousand Philistines attacked him, and he killed them all with only the jawbone of a donkey. Samson was an amazing man.

However, one little, beautiful woman did to him what armies of Philistines couldn’t. She seduced him and began to question where his great strength could be found. Samson had been blessed by God from his mother’s womb, but it was contingent upon keeping the Nazarite vow. One of the stipulations was he could not cut his hair. When the woman, Delilah, began questioning his strength, he first played games with her and lied about what it was that made him so strong. After multiple lies and many attempts by Delilah to destroy him, he finally told her his strength lay in his long hair. With that knowledge, she convinced him to fall asleep then held Samson’s head still while a Philistine cut his hair. When he woke up, Samson realized how weak he was, and he was put into a pit by the Philistines. There, his eyes were gouged out, and he was mocked by his enemies.

How and why did this happen? There are two reasons: he revealed what his weaknesses were, and then he fell asleep. I always warn people not to divulge more information to Satan than is necessary. Satan is not omniscient, meaning he doesn’t know everything. He cannot read your mind. If you constantly speak of your weaknesses, he will capitalize on them. Now that does not mean we don’t speak with each other about our addictions. It’s a necessary part of the recovery process. But be on guard about divulging more information than necessary. And even if we do need to tell others about our weaknesses, that does not mean we will fail. After all, the Bible tells us to confess our faults to one another and to pray for one another so we can be healed (James 5:16). We will only fail if we are not awake and alert to ward off the attacks of Satan. Any addict, whether present or former, has already shown our hand to Satan. He knows where we

struggle, but now we are recovering and “new creations” in Christ. As long as we stay alert, we will not fail. Though we are persecuted, we will be victorious.

From the practical side, how does this apply to us? We discussed in Step Seven that we are to try to make amends and be reconciled to those we have hurt. We also affirmed there will be some who will not forgive and forget. Perhaps it is because we hurt them too badly, which is a possibility. On the other hand, there will be some who persecute you because they are being influenced by Satan. Think about Simon Peter, who at one moment was called “blessed” by Jesus and the next moment Jesus said, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to Me” (Matt. 16:17, 23 [NKJV]). That was one of Jesus’s best friends, but when Peter stood in the way of his divine destiny, Jesus recognized Peter as being influenced by “the adversary.” Do not get angry at those who stand in your way to recovery. Instead, be alert to what their actions, words, or motives are. Sure, they may not be aware, but this can be an effective tool against your recovery.

Some people will never let you live down what you once were. This can be subtle or blatant. I recently talked with a man who had once been addicted to drugs and made a complete recovery. He was telling me about a woman who would not let it go, though. She constantly brought up his past. Even though it seemed innocent enough, it stressed him out that fifteen years later, she still considered him an addict who was going to stumble at any time. This is a form of persecution. Others will doubt your sincerity and never let their guard down around you. Perhaps they have legitimate reasons for thinking so, but you know where you are now. Persecution can come in many forms, so always be alert!

Still, the worst persecution for the recovering addict will come through the temptation to go back into the pit they came out of. People and situations will be placed in your path to try to draw you back into the life you escaped. They have to be met with objectivity. It is during this step you evaluate everything. Are there places you need to avoid so you do not feel persecution? For instance, a recovering alcoholic should not subject himself to being in places that would cause him to be tempted by his addiction such as bars, parties, etc. A person who has been addicted to pornography must be on guard for things that would trigger their desire such as websites, television shows, etc. The person driven by sexual urges should take stock of themselves honestly. Where can a person go that pacifies these urges, and where is it that fuels them? The drug addict previously had “friends” who aided them in their addictions. It may seem

heartless, but these people must be avoided as their addiction presents a very real problem to recovery. If they want to get clean like you did, welcome them to come to you, and you can help them. Otherwise, you are playing with fire.

While we, as a Christ-centered recovery group, affirm that a person can be “born again” and made a “new creation” in Christ, we are not naive. We have no problem with a recovering addict speaking of themselves as such. Those who have been in the bottom of the pit are trying, with everything in them, not to go back. Whatever it takes to achieve this, by all means do it. Now that we stand on the top step of the Golden Ladder, our heads are out of the pit. We do not think or act like the people we once were (1 Cor. 13). And we are still aware that while our hearts are out of the pit, our feet are still on the ladder. Let’s keep it that way. We are not trying to pretend to be anything we are not. We are saved but being saved from the pit. We are being persecuted, but we are blessed. The bottom of the pit remains a possibility for us if we let our guard down. But if we remain vigilant and awake, we are guaranteed success, and thereby, we can help others out of the pit as well.

*Application: Evaluate everything. This step will be where we stand for the rest of our lives on this earth. There will be one wave of attack after another, trying to knock us off the ladder back into the pit. But we are strong in the Lord and ready for whatever comes our way. Make sure not to let your guard down. Satan’s greatest tactic is his tricks, so watch everything carefully. Some of the mightiest men of God have been knocked to the bottom of the pit by the “wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11 [NKJV]), so be watchful, and do not be discouraged because you have to face the attacks. You are **blessed** by persecution since you are under attack because you are no longer in the pit, and Satan considers you a threat!*



---

---

*Prayer: Gracious God, our heavenly Father, we thank you for the abundant mercy you have shown us. We rejoice that we can suffer persecution because we are your children. Help us understand each attack and counter it properly. Help us to always be on guard for even the most subtle attempts to thwart our progress. As we stand on the top step of the Golden Ladder, do not let us become arrogant or self-sufficient. As the words to the beloved hymn “Amazing Grace” by John Newton say, “’tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.” We still realize we cannot do anything by ourselves. As the Apostle Paul said, “by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10). So dear Lord, help us stay humble in your sight. But also enable us to remain vigilant at all times. Help us see the adversary afar and be able to “stand against the wiles of the devil”! We have trusted you up the ladder, and we will trust you until the day we hear you say, “Well done, good and faithful servant...Enter thou into the joy of the Lord” (Matt. 25:23). Until then, help us fight this good fight of faith! In Jesus’s name, amen.*

## Chapter 12: Salt and Light

Now that we have ascended the Golden Ladder and reached the top, what is it we are to do? Jesus's beautiful Sermon on the Mount is given early in his ministry as a juxtaposition between what the self-righteous religious system of the day was and what true Christianity should be. Throughout his famous sermon, Jesus pointed out hypocrites who did things only for show, including prayer, fasting, and giving money to the church. Remember, the word "hypocrite" comes from the Greek word *hypokritēs*, which means actor. But their acting, their hypocrisy, was not hidden from Jesus. Throughout the rest of the sermon, he compared the good and the bad. He spoke of a path that appears right and leads to heaven but is actually a phony way that leads to hell. He compared good fruit and bad fruit. Jesus also compared a weak house and a strong house based solely upon their foundations. What he is pointing out is there are those who want to convince others they are doing things right but are only pretending. However, it will not work.

Jesus said something that, to me, is one of the most frightening passages of scripture in the Bible. He said there will be those who say, "Lord, Lord" and will not enter heaven. They mouthed the words, but their hearts were not changed. The crowd even argued they had done all those "wonderful works" only to be told "I never knew you"! The people had lied to others for so long they even believed it themselves. May we not be those people. This program allows no room for hypocrisy. If it takes the rest of your life to mount the first step, then focus on that. Do not pretend to be something you are not.

No one could have really ascended this Golden Ladder and remained only an actor. That should have manifested itself long ago. The motions of ascension could have been acted out, but the true seeker will have been changed during this program. As we stated earlier, there is not even a shred of doubt as to the validity of our process because it is the words of Christ himself. His words will never fail (Matt. 24:35). The way we know in our hearts that the program has worked is because it has changed us. Maybe we came because it was suggested to us or even mandated. That is good. But to be exposed to Christ will not leave a person indifferent. If the program has worked, then there will be fruit from it.

Jesus says over and over the words "**Blessed are,**" not "blessed is the one who acts like..." Each step can be properly mounted because Christ is fulfilling the steps in us. If we *are*

poor in spirit, then we can progress to the second step of mourning. If we *are* one who mourns over our failures, then we can ascend to the third, and so on. All are based on what we “*are*.” This is why we focus on Christ. We cannot make ourselves anything, but he can! If he makes us what each step constitutes, then we can have boldness to progress forward. If we will take time and surrender to Christ, we can be fully assured we, as new creations, are not going to go back to the addict we once were. Our whole spiritual DNA is being transformed into the image of Christ.

After we have reached the eighth and final step, Jesus pronounces yet another blessing upon us as we are able to help others. He says now we “are salt and light”! True Christianity involves helping those who are less fortunate than we are. James 1:27 (NASB) tells us that “pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God” is to help those who are in need, which in our case, relates to those still in the pit. Our testimonies can be of utmost help to them. The addict will not have as much confidence in someone who has not struggled as they will in a former addict who has been delivered. Your recovery should be an encouragement for others, and it helps to keep you active in your own recovery.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:13–14, immediately following the eighth step, that those who are blessed are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world.” Our ARISE logo shows the ladder ascending up, and it’s topped with a lighted candle. Since we have made it up the Ladder of Recovery, we now sit atop as the candle to light the way for others. We still have the attributes of Step One that acknowledges we are unable to help ourselves, all while having confidence that our relationship with Christ illuminates us. Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun insomuch that it appears to shine itself, we too reflect the Light of the Son so it appears we are the Light. We realize we may be the only Bible someone might ever read. People who need help are looking at us, and the change we have found needs to be readily available to them as well.

Jesus warns that men do not light a candle just for it to be put “under a bushel.” Instead, it is placed on a candlestick to give light to all who are in the house. Those standing firmly on Step Eight will shine out into a lost world, especially down into the Pit of Addiction for others to see. To shine our light means we are willing to be reviled by men and persecuted for our conversion while knowing that hiding away will cause others to not find the help they need. Jesus was willing to die for us so that we might find help. Therefore, we, as true converts, must be willing

to be put in harm's way so others can find help. The light we have become will attract both enemy and friend. We accept that.

There is an old saying that goes, "A ship is safe in the harbor, but that is not what ships were made for!" Having recovered from addiction, we have the greatest testimony. Being lights, we need to embrace our usefulness. A hidden candle is no use, and neither is salt that has no flavor. The flame of a lit candle is quite small, but the manifestation of that light is enormous based upon its surroundings. Too many people want to only shine their light among those who are lights themselves—what use is that? One candle among one hundred other candles is not very effective. But take that same candle and put it in darkness, and the impact is unbelievably potent. A single flame on a dark night is said to be able to be seen as far as seven miles away! Never doubt your usefulness. There are those who are counting on you to reach out to them.

The same could be said of salt. A few grains of salt can take a dish from bland to savory. Likewise, the witness of a recovering addict can often be more effective than a thousand sermons preached. Sometimes, theological and hypothetical statements will not affect the person in the bottom of the pit as much as a short personal testimony of someone who has recovered. Our adversary will try to convince us we are somehow worse than others and don't belong among "good people." But the Bible says no one is good except God. That is why everyone who is a true Christian will affirm they were brought out of the pit as well. They may not have suffered from the same addiction as others, but there was that "thing" in their life that kept them in the pit until they too called out for help.

Since that is the case for all of us, now we can be the "salt" that adds the flavor. We all have a past, and by sharing it, we add flavor to those around us. Let's be careful here with our testimonies, however, to avoid glorifying our former addictions and sins. Most of us have heard those who aggrandized their past. They seem to look back at it longingly, making some wonder as to why, if it was so great, they ever wanted out. We know better than that. The pit is a horrible place of hopelessness and misery. That's why we wanted out. No one can ascend the Golden Ladder unless they truly hate the pit. When we do scale the ladder, let's not try to glamorize the addiction.

There is a historical account in the book of Genesis concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. God warned Lot to get out and even sent two angels to get him and his family.

As they fled the city, fire and brimstone began to fall on those ungodly cities. However, Lot's wife looked back. It appears she was not ready, in her heart, to let go of her past life. They were all warned to not look back, knowing that action would be an act of unbelief. She did it anyway and was immediately turned into a pillar of salt! However, it wasn't just her doubt but also her inability to let go of the past that turned her into an immobile salt statue. If we are always looking back at the pit wistfully, we will be stopped in our progress. Even more consequentially, we may very well be pulled back into it. We are called to progress and looking at the past through rose-colored glasses will cause us to halt in our advancement. Jesus said in Luke 9:62, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." In context, Jesus is speaking to a man who had made a promise to him but wanted to go back home first and then later fulfill that promise. Jesus is saying when we make up our mind to do something, we need to not make provisions to go back. The past has nothing for you to go back to except misery. That does not mean we shouldn't remember what it was like so that we can bear witness to others about our recovery.

Think of our past as the "salt," the symbolism being Lot's wife looking back to her past. Yes, we have a history that can be used as a testimony to aid others who are struggling. But we have to be "salt" in moderation; that is, we acknowledge our past so we can learn from it. Think of it like this: you have a nice thick steak that needs a little salt to make it perfect. And when you go to sprinkle salt on it, the lid falls off, and you dump the entire contents of the saltshaker on your steak. You have ruined it unless you clear off as much salt as possible. The key is moderation. When we are testifying about our past, we need to make sure it is in no way glorifying it. We do not want to make the pit attractive or appealing to anyone. It is a place of death and destruction. Remember the past and speak of it only in the sense that we can relate to an addict who needs hope. While a former drug addict may need to establish some credibility with the one needing relief, we do not want to pour too much salt on, lest we ruin the testimony. An alcoholic may need the former alcoholic's story as proof of their prior life. The same is true for any addict. But salt lightly. Focus much more on God, who can deliver you from the pit, than on applauding the life in the pit. Anyone who comes to you has already realized they have hit rock bottom. They are looking for help, and you have it. Establish some credibility with a little salt, and then shine the light for them to climb the Golden Ladder out of the pit.



## Conclusion

As we come to a close, we want to examine one more passage of scripture. One of the most famous stories in the Bible is the story of Daniel in the lion's den. The king, Darius, was tricked by Daniel's enemies into signing a petition that would outlaw anyone from praying to man or God for thirty days. Daniel, being a godly Jewish man, prayed three times a day every day. So the petition was signed, but Daniel prayed anyhow. The king realized he had been tricked, yet because he had signed the decree, he could not recant. He loved Daniel, but by the law of the Medes and Persians, he had to have him arrested and thrown into the den of lions as punishment. Death seemed inevitable.

Darius spent all night worried about Daniel. He would not let the musicians come and entertain him, nor did he eat anything. All night long, he tossed and turned on his bed. The next morning, very early, found Darius down at the den of lions. He imagined the worst as he called into the pit, "Was your God able to deliver you?"

Somewhere out of the darkness of the pit, a voice yelled back, "O king, live forever! My God has sent His angel and has shut the mouths of the lions so that they have not hurt me" (Dan. 6:21-22 [AMP]).

The application here is that we too have been in the den of lions. The Pit of Addiction has killed many men and women who were in our same condition. To those outside who have worried about us, they probably, like Darius, imagined the worst. How many mothers have spent all night long praying that the pit did not consume us? How many friends have worried themselves sick over us as we faced the pit?

The hungry lions, no doubt, wanted to consume Daniel. Likewise, Satan is called our "adversary" who as "a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). But we have turned to God, like Daniel, and made our petition to him. Those who have worried could ask us the same question Darius called out that morning: "Was your God able to deliver you?"

Our answer can come back, "My God has sent an angel, and he has shut the lion's mouth." The pit that has drowned so many others can be conquered through Jesus Christ our Lord. Daniel did not make one boast of himself as the reason why he had been delivered. Instead,

he gave God all the glory, knowing without divine intervention he would have been consumed. We, too, realize this.

We started the ascent by simply ARISING. The status quo had to change; therefore, we made up our mind to try. The Golden Ladder was presented to us, and we climbed onto the first step by realizing our inability to help ourselves. We put our trust in God and started climbing. Each step involved deep soul-searching and honesty, but little by little, we were growing and becoming trained to think in spiritual terms. Our pure motives brought us into the presence of our Lord in a greater way with each step. And now, we stand on the eighth step, shining the light for others to make their ascent, while facing the persecution that accompanies a victorious life.

We started this with the vow we would ARISE and go to our Father. Now, we proclaim to everyone who needs help that our God can shut the lions' mouths and deliver them (those in need) from the pit, just as he did for us! As Peter said so long ago, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right" (Acts 10:34–35 [NIV]). If you have a pure motive and a willingness to ARISE, you will be delivered with the help of Jesus Christ. I guarantee that!

## References

- Acoholics Anonymus. (2019). *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc.
- Alcoholics Anonymous. (2001). *Alcoholics Anonymous*. New York City: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.
- Alcoholics Anonymous. (2010). *The Book That Started It All: The Original Working Manuscript of Alcoholics Anonymous*. Center City: Hazelden Publishing.
- Bible, B. S. (2016). *Berean Study Bible*. Retrieved from Bible Hub: <https://bereanbibles.com/>
- Bibles, C. (2007). *ESV: Study Bible: English standard version*. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Bibles.
- Bill, W. (1939). *Alcoholics Anonymous: The Big Book*.
- Donne, J. ((1624) 2007). "Meditation XVII" in *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*. Retrieved from Project Gutenberg: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23772/23772-h/23772-h.htm>
- Felman, A. (2021, June 3). "What is addiction". Retrieved from Medical News Today: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/323465>
- Holy Bible. New International Version*. (1984). Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Holy Bible: Contemporary English Version*. (1995). New York: American Bible Society.
- Manejwala, O. (2014, February 13). "How Often Do Long-Term Sober Alcoholics and Addicts Relapse?". *Psychology Today*.
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). "Addiction". Retrieved May 16, 2022, from Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/addiction>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *The Origin of 'Hypocrite'*. Retrieved from Merriam-Webster: [merriam-webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com)

Ryrie, C. C. (1995 update). *Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press.

Society, A. B. (1976). *Good News Bible: The Bible in Today's English version*. New York: American Bible Society.

*The Amplified Bible: Containing the Amplified Old Testament and the Amplified New Testament*. (1965). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House.

the editors of Encyclopedia.com. (n.d.). *mercy*. Retrieved October 21, 2022, from The Oxford Pocket Dictionary of Current English. Encyclopedia.com: <https://www.encyclopedia.com>

*The Holy Bible: New King James Version*. (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Thomas. (1841). *Catena aurea: Commentary on the four gospels: collected out of the works of the fathers*. Oxford: J.H. Parker.

Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House Publishers.