

TWELVE STEPS TO RECOVERY

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STEP EIGHT:

MADE A LIST OF ALL THE PERSONS WE HAD HARMED, AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL.

STEP NINE:

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE WHEREVER POSSIBLE, EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS.

The eighth and ninth steps in our recovery is the point at which we begin to “turn the corner” spiritually. By this we mean it’s the point at which we begin to give serious consideration to our relationships with others. In the first three steps we are seeking to establish a relationship with God. In steps five through seven we are drawing from the power of that relationship to develop a healthy relationship with ourselves. The proof that we have begun to recover from our insanity is always seen in the quality of our relationships with others.

The biblical basis for this step is found in all that Jesus said concerning our ability to share the love of God with other people. Based on our receiving the love of God for ourselves it is now time to begin to share that love with others. Although it may seem somewhat pointless to bring up past hurts and relational wounds, these steps are essential to our recovery, since no recovery can truly be complete until we learn to love others like Christ. Remember we agreed at the beginning “we would go to any lengths for victory over our addiction”.

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Steps eight and nine are “action steps” that demonstrate the reality of what we say we believe. As James put

it, “Faith without works is dead.” If we really do believe that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity, then our faith will motivate us to take the action necessary to make amends with those we have hurt. If we really do believe our own personal needs are satisfied in Christ, the hope that we have concerning ourselves will free us to actually love others. We made a list of those we have harmed when we took inventory, now it is time to repair the damage we did in the past.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION AND GOALS

When considering those we have harmed in the past, we naturally begin to think of a multitude of reasons why we should not go to them. We may experience a degree of embarrassment or even begin to feel old resentments creeping in again. It is at this point that we must chose to examine ourselves once again before we go to another. We must look inside ourselves and ask God to reveal the hidden bitterness that makes us anxious about making amends and to literally “send it away” through his forgiveness. This is what Jesus meant in those graphic words, “If your hand or your foot offend thee, cut them off!” He was telling us to confess our own past faults to God no matter how justified our actions may appear to be. We must deal with our own issues before we can go to another.

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By the time we are ready to take the eighth and ninth steps we have done just that. We made

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a list of all those resentments in step four. We confessed to God, ourselves, and another human being in step five. We were entirely ready to have God remove our own faults and asked Him to do so in steps six and seven. Now we are ready to actually contact those we have hurt in the past. But we must keep in mind our true goal in doing so. "Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of

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maximum service to God and the people about us." We are not going to make amends with the hidden agenda of justifying ourselves. Neither do we go seeking to convince the other person of

our new spirituality and character. We are going "in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret."

In seeking to make amends we have certain spiritual goals to keep in mind. First, we are seeking to make amends by discussing our own faults, not theirs. Under no circumstances should we seek to justify, rationalize, or even explain our own faults that have hurt them. Second, we are not there to "preach" to them concerning our new way of life, even if it may be obvious that they could benefit from the things we have learned. This does not mean that we shy away from our convictions, but that we do not make it our goal to convince them of the truth. Third, we are not there to criticize or argue, but to do whatever we possibly can to straighten out the past.

HOW FAR DO WE GO?

Most people in recovery owe money. We cannot afford to dodge our creditors, but must seek to make amends with them being honest about our

financial responsibilities. The fear of facing creditors must be overcome if we are to continue on the road to recovery. Being willing to make amends with our creditors not only requires the integrity to be honest about our debts, but also the courage to make whatever arrangements are necessary to solve the problem. A failure to do so, however, puts us at risk of retuning to our full addictions.

Likewise, many in recovery are also in trouble with the legal system. Failures to comply with the legal requirements of business, domestic, traffic, or criminal entanglements often hang over our recovery like a dark cloud of gloom. These "skeletons in the closet" must be faced and eliminated no matter what the personal costs may be if we hope to enjoy any real benefits of recovery. Our faith in the gospel that says we are secure and significant by what God has done for us is the only way we can find the strength and direction to do the right thing regardless of the personal consequences.

Undoubtedly the list of people we have harmed includes family members as well as friends coworkers. Of course we must be willing to go to any length to make amends with wives, husbands, children, and parents. The same preparation and goals apply to reconciliation with our family members as to anyone else. We must be careful to be as honest as we can about our own faults even if theirs are obvious. We must not seek to minimize or spiritualize away our shortcomings, but seek to make amends by being totally honest about our own failures regardless of their reactions to them. It is recommended "we sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Daily meditation and prayer for guidance is necessary to display a genuine love for our family.

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THE BENEFITS OF MAKING AMENDS

he hopes of all who are seeking true recovery begin to be realized when a real effort is made to love others. Having received the divine love of God in the first seven steps, we are now ready to follow His instructions in sharing it with others. The command of Jesus to love others as He loves them is not a religious duty we must perform to be accepted by God, but a radical lifestyle based on faith in the gospel that continually works itself out in love for others. Those who are diligent in this phase of their development reap tremendous personal benefits in realizing their true potential in Christ.

The Big Book describes these benefits as follows:

“We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience may benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations that used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.”

The biblical explanation for all these benefits is summarized by the concept of God’s amazing grace, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:11,12). Steps eight and nine are essential steps of faith that must be lived daily in order to realize the practical meaning of personal security and significance in this world.