

“What Would Jesus Say to an Addict/Alcoholic?”

Romans 6:1-23 and 8:1-15

Dr. Jerry Nelson

No words could be more encouraging to all of who are Christ-followers than the following:

Romans 8:1-15 “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,<sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.<sup>3</sup> For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,<sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.<sup>5</sup> Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.<sup>6</sup> The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;<sup>7</sup> the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.<sup>8</sup> Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.<sup>9</sup> You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.<sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.<sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.<sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,<sup>14</sup> because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*”

In this first message in our summer sermon series on “What would Jesus say...?” I want to address the question of “What would Jesus say to an addict or alcoholic?”

I am quite aware that many who hear this message will be very self-conscious; they either have or are struggling deeply with alcohol or drugs.

This subject is very personal to them.

I am also aware that many others will consider themselves above this subject, unaffected by it.

This subject is very impersonal to them.

But the truth is that most people, Christians included, have negative behaviors that are so ingrained that they feel incapable of overcoming them.

Paul described that desperate feeling in Romans 7:15-18 “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do... For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”

So what the Scripture presents on this subject applies, I believe, to all of us.

But today I am going to speak most of all to the powerful and pervasive experiences of alcohol and drug addiction.

What **would** Jesus say to an addict or alcoholic?

I want to start with what to many of us is the quintessential statement of Jesus regarding **his purpose** toward us.

John 3:16-18 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

Do you think you know what those verses are about?

“Yes,” you say, “they are about becoming a Christian. Believe in Jesus and you will go to heaven when you die.”

Is that all they mean? Is this eternal life merely about life **after** this life?

No! Jesus said in John 17:3 “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Jesus said to the woman at the well, who had had five husbands and who was living with a man who was not her husband and apparently was addicted to dependent relationships, John 4:13-14 “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Jesus is offering more than a “get out of jail free” card.  
**He is offering a relationship with him that changes us from the inside out and that changes our lives now and for eternity.**

The Bible says there is evil, there is a devil; there is an enemy of your life that would like nothing better than to keep you enslaved.

And I suspect there is no more effective weapon in his battle for your soul than discouragement and despair— getting you to believe you are hopeless.

But Jesus said in John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

**Do you want to be different?** Or as Jesus asked it of two blind men begging his help, “What do you want me to do for you?” (Matthew 20:32)

Don’t be too quick to answer that.

Many addicts and alcoholics don’t want life to be different.

Oh, they may not like some of the negative consequences of their actions but they do like how the drugs make them feel.

The rich young ruler came to Jesus wanting something more than his riches provided him but when Jesus gave him an option, he refused it. (Luke 18)

He liked what he had too much to give it up.

Until a person is desperate, he or she won't likely give up the drugs or alcohol they have depended on for so long.

So I ask again, "Do you really want it to be different?"

**Another question: Are you convinced you need help or do you think you can change with a little more effort?**

Don't be too quick to answer that either.

Most of us continue to believe we can make the changes necessary with just a little more effort.

We convince ourselves that this is the last time we'll take a drink or take that drug, or whatever.

We lie to ourselves that next time we'll have the will power to say "no."

But when the Apostle Paul said in Romans 7:18 "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out," he was talking about the same issue the Apostle Peter describes this way in 2 Peter 2:19 "a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him."

Do you know you are powerless to make the change you desire?

In Matthew 9:27-30 we read "As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"<sup>28</sup> When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you"; and their sight was restored.

Like many others in the NT, those two men knew they were powerless, powerless to overcome their blindness.

Are you convinced you can't change it on your own?

Let me take a minute to address an issue about alcoholism and drug addiction that seems to bother many Christians.

True or False:

- • Alcoholism and drug addiction are sins that must be confessed and stopped.
- • Alcoholism and drug addiction are diseases over which you have no control.

Are alcoholism and drug addiction sins or diseases? The answer is “yes.”

To be sure, it was probably the sin of self-centeredness that got you into your habit - maybe you just liked the way it made you feel or you used the drug to mask some pain.

It is equally true that many of the results of your habit are sin - abuse of yourself and others.

But once you got into the habit, you became a slave to it.

I think there is widespread agreement that some alcoholics are born with a genetic predisposition or weakness to alcoholism so that when they drink it triggers that something in their physical makeup that enslaves them.

But no one made them take that first drink and no one made them keep on drinking until they became enslaved.

But is also agreed that many other alcoholics have no genetic predisposition but do, nonetheless, become physically enslaved.

The sin of self-centeredness kept them drinking until it became a disease.

Regardless of what got the person into the slavery of drugs or alcohol, no one can rationally deny the powerful physical and psychological effects that follow.

The terrors of withdrawal are varied but real.

Arguing about whether alcoholism and drug addiction are sins or diseases is to miss the point.

It is moral, it is psychological and it is physical and the way to deal with the slavery once it has taken over is the same.

**So back to the real issue:** Are you truly ready to change and are you convinced you can't do it on your own?

If there is an ounce of self-confidence left in us, we will turn to that every time.

We may say we want God's assistance but our dependence is still on that one ounce of self-ability.

Are you desperate?

If the answer is yes, then you are ready for the next question:

**Do you believe there is anyone who can help you?**

Gerald May in his excellent little book *Addiction and Grace* wrote, "Sooner or later, addiction will prove to us that we are not gods. Then we realize that we are our own worst enemies; we cannot (overcome) ourselves. At that point, when we have exhausted all the available false repositories for our hope, it is possible that we will turn to God with a true sense of who we are, with an integrity that is both humble and confident, and with a dignity that knows itself because it has met its limits." (Gerald May, *Addiction and Grace*, 20)

**Will you come to Jesus for help?**

In Mark 1:40-41 we read, "A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." **Filled with compassion**, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," (Jesus) said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left (the man) and he was cured."

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

**The one who turned water into wine, who healed a blind man, who raised a dead man to life, is ready to change you; are you ready?**

Earlier I spoke of Jesus desire to give us "eternal life."

Jesus would convince us that no one is more concerned **about** changing us and no one is more powerful **to** change us than he is.

But we must understand that **Jesus' goal for us is far larger than ours often is!**

He is not interested in just freeing us from the penalty of sin (from hell) – his goal is to free us from slavery to sin.

It is his purpose – to recreate in us the image of God – for God's glory.

Listen to his intention for us:

Titus 2:14 (Jesus) "gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Revelation 1:5 "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father

Galatians 4:19 "I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, (See also 1 John 1:7; Ephesians 5:25-27)

If your goal is merely to avoid the negative consequences of your alcoholism or addiction then I'm afraid you are on your own.

As with Simon Magus of the book of Acts, you can't have the gift without the giver.

So Jesus' goal is **not merely for you to be sober.**

Jesus doesn't just want a dry drunk!

"A "Dry Drunk" has been described as "A condition of returning to one's old alcoholic thinking and behavior without actually having taken a drink." Or as one wise old drunk put it, if a horse thief goes into A.A. what you can end up with is a sober horse thief. Or a personal favorite: you can take the rum out of the fruit cake, but you've still got a fruit cake!"

<http://alcoholism.about.com/cs/info/a/aa081397.htm>

Jesus' goal is for you to be a renewed and renewing person – to be like him.

**What I wish to show you next is a vital doctrine of Scripture.**

It is the very foundation of freedom from our slavery to an addiction.

It is **what Jesus has already done** for you to free you.

In Romans 6 Paul is writing to Christians – those who are trusting in Jesus as saving-Lord of their lives.

Paul says I want you to know something that is true even though you can't see it or feel it.

6:6 When Jesus died on the cross, we were joined to him in his death so that it can be truly said we died in him.

6:7 It is obvious isn't it that anyone who has physically died is no longer a slave to sin and its destructive consequences?

6:6 When we died in Jesus, the power of sin to irrevocably enslave us was broken.

6:5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.  
Has Jesus been raised from the dead? Yes!

6:4 "Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

6:11 So God says through Paul, "Count yourself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Understand what God did through Christ!

He paid the penalty for our sin and he broke the power of sin to enslave us.

Oh to be sure sin is still present in the world and in us - our own sinful desires and habits didn't automatically go away.

And to be sure sin is still a power – continually trying to court us or coerce us back into the old ways.

But sin's back has been broken – in Jesus, we now have the ability to say no to sin and to those destructive habits.

You may feel powerless, but God says I want you to realize that you are not.

Wait a minute you say, “Is this simply an issue of mind over matter - wishful thinking? NO!

God says he wants us to believe the fact that when we were joined to Jesus and he died; he broke sin’s ability to enslave us.

This is now a matter of trust; will you believe God that this is true?  
You didn’t accomplish this, God did.

Look at what he says next: Romans 6:12-14 “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”

Because God has broken the power of sin to enslave you, you are now free to act differently and you are called on to act differently.

“Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.”

One addiction expert said, “I have said before that the only way to break an addiction’s power is to stop engaging in the behavior. Anything more complicated than that is likely to turn into a mind trick.” (May, 146)

Again you ask, “Do you mean I’m simply supposed to stop?”

Not “simply” but “stop,” yes.

That’s what God says.

But you say, “I’ve tried that a dozen times (or a thousand times)!

I believe Jesus would say, “Yes, you’ve tried but have you trusted me to enable you? You keep falling back on yourself to make it happen; will you trust me to empower you?”

Again from Gerald May, “The measure of faith, then, is the degree to which one is really willing to risk the truth of grace.” (May, 130)

Do you see Jesus as the only source of the grace you need to change? Will you throw yourself on him?

In Romans 6 we find **what Jesus has already done** for us in uniting us with himself in his death to sin and resurrection to life.

**And in Romans 8 we find what Jesus is doing now to enable us.**

And in this passage we discover that God has placed within us his own Spirit to empower us.

Romans 8:9 “You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but **by the Spirit**, if the Spirit of God lives in you.

Romans 8:13-14 “If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if **by the Spirit** you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

What does it mean to be controlled by the Spirit, put to death the misdeeds of the body by the Spirit and be led by the Spirit?

In practical terms it means to live in a moment-by-moment conscious dependence on the Spirit of God to enable us to obey him in all areas of life.

And that conscious dependence on the Spirit includes taking advantage of all that Jesus is giving us now to empower us.

Listen to the Bible describe the means that God uses to enable us.

Jesus gives us his Spirit

1 Corinthians 10:13 “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

When temptation first strikes, God’s Spirit is there to remind us of his provision and call us to obedience.

Yes, it is true that at that point we have a decision to make – do we want his help or do we want more what is tempting us.

He will provide a way out, if we will take it.

Jesus gives us prayer.

He taught us to pray: Matthew 6:13 “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’

Step 11 of the Alcoholics Anonymous’ 12-step program reads:  
We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with, praying only for knowledge of His will, and the power to carry that out.

The Creed of Alcoholics Victorious reads, in part: “Because the presence of God is manifested through continued prayer, I will set aside two periods every day, morning and evening, for communion with my Heavenly father...

Jesus gives us his Word.

King David declared, Psalm 119:11 “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

Hear God’s promise in Isaiah 55:11 “My word that goes out from my mouth... will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

In God’s description of our warfare against temptation, the only offensive weapons he mentions are prayer and the Word of God, which he calls “The Sword of the Spirit.”

And lastly I mention that Jesus gives us each other in the body of Christ.

Colossians 3:16 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish **one another** with all wisdom...”

God never expected us to make it on our own.

We must have Christian friends (true friends) who come alongside to talk, pray, ask questions, expecting success and challenging failure.

Among other reasons why AA helps many people is that it is a safe place to admit real struggles.

Someone wrote, too often “problems are shared usually only after they have been overcome; shared for the purpose of instructing others, and not often (shared) during the struggle for the purpose of asking for help.” (Jeff Van Vonderen, *Good News for the Chemically Dependent...*, 198 See especially Chapter 12 of this book “Grace-Full Relationships: The Environment Needed for Health.”)

I want you to get with one other Christian or group of Christians who will be honest with each other about the struggles they have.

You need the body of Christ to fight for you.

I strongly appeal to you to join our own group - Alcoholics Victorious – an intentionally “Christian” adaptation of the AA program.

Listen to their creed speak to the same issues I have just mentioned.

#### The Alcoholics Victorious Creed

“I realize that I cannot overcome my addiction by myself. I believe that the power of Jesus Christ is available to help me. I believe that through my acceptance of Him as my Savior, I **am** a new person.

Because the presence of God is manifested through continued prayer, I will set aside two periods every day, morning and evening, for communion with my Heavenly father. I realize my need for daily Bible reading and use it as a guide for my daily living.

I recognize my need of Christian fellowship and will, therefore, have fellowship with Christians through the church of my choice. I know that in order to be victorious, I must keep active in the service of Christ and His Church and I will help others to victory.

I do not partake of any beverage containing alcohol; I know it is the first drink that does the harm. Therefore, "I do not drink."

I can be victorious because I know that God's strength is sufficient to supply all my needs.

It is written that the first AA meetings, which were held in Akron, Ohio, could be described this way:

“Recovered drunks visited the patient (the patient being the one who admitted his need for help) and told their success stories. The newcomer had to identify and admit that he too was licked, and that he would do whatever it took. (The alcoholic would be asked) two questions to which there was only one answer: (1) Do you believe in God? (2) Are you willing to get down on your knees and pray?

“It is a myth that they recovered in an afternoon or in four easy lessons. They shook. They shivered. They fidgeted. They forgot. They were ashamed, insecure, and guilt-ridden. But they learned what a loving God had made available...

“It took abstinence. It took God. It took the Bible. It took a life-change decision. It took living consistent with the decision. And it particularly emphasized witnessing to others. It took fellowship. And it took time--lots of it. And it was all just that simple—no steps and no textbook. Just abstaining from drink and avoiding temptation. Relying on the Creator and coming to Him through His son. Obedience to His will—both in eliminating sin and in living love and service. Growing in fellowship through Bible study, prayer, (and) asking wisdom..”

What Early A.A. Was Really Like From Dick B's Website <http://www.dickb.com/index.shtml>

**Another very important perspective on this issue of overcoming addictions is the matter of timing.**

Oh, how we long for God to do his work in us instantaneously.

We read in the NT of the blind receiving their sight and we wish God would just take all the desire for that destructive substance or habit away from us.

And sometimes God does.

Friends of mine in this church and relatives of mine give testimony to having addictions instantly fall away when they became Christians.

Just a few weeks ago Joe Davidson spoke of a three-pack-a-day nicotine addiction gone the day he trusted in Christ as saving-Lord.

Others in our church can speak of other stronger drug addictions gone with no withdrawal or other symptoms – healed as quickly and as surely as the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda. (John 5)

But the NT is clear that the more usual way God deals with us is over the “long haul.”

As we saw before, God is not only interested in breaking your destructive habit or addiction; he is interested in changing you.

**Putting to death the misdeeds of the body, as Paul called it, is a life-long struggle.**

Sin will always be present and it will always be powerful.

What God calls us to is a life-long battle whereby with the Spirit’s enabling we gradually weaken sin in our lives and are changed to be more like Christ.

Alcoholism and drug addiction are not the unpardonable sins.

Even if you fail, God is not done with you!

“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6

Yes, God wants you to be free of that addiction, but he wants so much more.

Trust him; let him do his life-changing work in you as you follow him.

What would Jesus say to an addict or alcoholic?

- • I love you more than you love yourself.

- • I have died for you that you may be forgiven and that the power of sin over you may be broken.
- • I have the power to enable you to break free from that addiction.
- • I will work in you to make you whole and holy.
- • Will you believe me, trust me, and act in that faith to follow me?
- • Will you confess your sins when you fail and accept my forgiveness?
- • Will you accept my grace given to you daily in prayer, the Word, the sacraments and my people?

Freedom from the tyranny of addictions is not wishful thinking.  
It is our inheritance through the powerful person and work of Jesus.

John 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

I have made some excellent resources available to you in my notes that you can find at Sound Living on our SGC.org website.

Sources follow below:

Jeff Van Vonderen, *Good News for the Chemically Dependent and those who love them.*

Claire W. *God, Help Me Stop*

Gerald May, *Addictions and Grace*

## **Theology of Christian Recovery**

<http://www.soberrecovery.com/forums/christians-recovery/4411-theology-christian-recovery.html>

The primary distinctive that differentiate Christian Recovery from other approaches to life change lie in our approach to spirituality. Here are some of the major theological tenants of the Christian approach to Recovery.

**RECOVERY IS TRULY CHRISTIAN ONLY IF GOD IS PART OF IT.**  
This God is not just a nebulous "Higher Power", but rather is the Creator of the Universe. Who has revealed Himself in the Bible. Additionally, this God is a loving God, who showed His love by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, into this fallen world to save us. See John 3:16\

**THE WORD OF GOD IS THE AUTHORITATIVE RULE AND GUIDE FOR OUR RECOVERY.**

We believe there is, indeed, some objective TRUTH in this world and that it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. (Hebrews 4:12)

**THERE IS A REAL DEVIL.**

He is a real entity, who through the power of deception, is fighting for the minds of men. Truth is therefore the ultimate weapon in the spiritual warfare of Christian recovery. (John 8:31-32)

**SIN IS DECEPTIVE, POWERFUL AND ADDICTIVE.**

Sin is the root of all addictions and compulsive disorders. (Romans

7:15-25)

#### THERE IS A REDEEMER.

Jesus Christ has won the victory over sin, and death, and the devil by His death on the cross.

(1 John 3:8) Therefore, the message of the Gospel brings forgiveness and the power to experience real change in our lives through God's power. (Romans 1:16)

#### THIS IS A FALLEN WORLD.

Not only are external things warped, perverse, confused, and corrupt, believers in recovery must still contend with their own fallen natures, as well. (Romans 7:21) All human beings need spiritual rebirth.

Because spiritual death is a reality, we must assume that everyone needs to experience new life for God. (John 3:3)

#### THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GUILT AND "TOXIC SHAME"

Guilt is a response of the conscience to specific sinful actions. On the other hand, destructive (or "toxic") shame is an inner sense of being unlovable, unredeemable, hopeless, irreparably flawed, incomplete, and worthless. Everyone who struggles with a compulsive disorder experiences this to some degree. The Gospel provides the answer for both of these dilemmas. Confession and forgiveness are God's way to overcome guilt. And, growing in relationship to Him and other healthy people enables us to accept ourselves as loved and lovable. (1 John 4:9)

#### THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TERMS "DRUNKARD" AND "ALCOHOLIC."

According to the Bible, drunkenness is a moral condition. On the other hand, alcoholism is a therapeutic condition. What separates the alcoholic from the non-alcoholic is not how often they drink or how much they drink, but what happens when they do drink - the loss of control - (or powerlessness). Once an individual becomes addicted, he can never be a social drinker .

(Ephesians 5:18)

#### GOD WORKS IN PROCESSES

"Recovery" is not a one time, once-and-for-all thing- it is a process

(Romans 12:2). Recovery is not just fixing ourselves, but rather it is gaining the "tools" to succeed in working out what God has already put within (sanctification). (Philippians 5:18)

### GOD WORKS THROUGH HIS SPIRIT

The Greek word "paraclete" is used in the Scriptures to refer to the Holy Spirit. this term means "counselor" or "personal tutor." To succeed in recovery, believers must learn to respond to God's Spirit and walk in His will for their lives. (John 16:13-15)

### GOD WORKS THROUGH PEOPLE

"The deepest wound of "toxic shame" is the inability to develop meaningful, intimate, human relations." The message of Christian Recovery is that God's grace is experienced as a process which involves intensely honest and nurturing relationships with other people. They serve as agents of his grace to unravel our woundedness and reshape our thinking. (Hebrews 10:23-25)

### CHRISTIAN RECOVERY IS "INTENSIVE DISCIPLESHIP"

"Putting the cork in the bottle" (not using drugs or alcohol) is no guarantee of any lasting change in an individual's life. What addicts need is a systematic commitment to an ongoing process of personal growth. Christian Recovery means gaining new tools that enable us to live a new sober life and to remove all the "stumbling blocks" to a life of Christian victory. (2 Peter 1:5-11) We might also consider "recovery" as another word for what the Bible refers to as "sanctification".

### REPENTANCE IS MORE THAN SIMPLY CONFESSING OUR SINS TO GOD

We must all own up to our own sin if we are to experience forgiveness. (1 John 1:9) Still an additional step is necessary - repentance. The Greek word for repentance is "metanouia" which implies a complete change of mind. New thinking comes from new attitudes that have been formed by new perspectives. (Acts 3:19)

### "RIGOROUS HONESTY" IS ESSENTIAL FOR TRUE SPIRITUALITY.

Jesus declares that the truth will set us free. (John 8:32) So we must make a commitment to "walk in the light". (1 John 1:5-9)

THERE IS A THERAPEUTIC VALUE TO TALK.

Self-revelation in a safe environment is a tremendously healing experience. Support Groups provide an environment that promotes this process. (James 5:16)

GRACE FLOWS FREELY THROUGH UNCLOGGED CONDUITS".

Christian workers cannot bring people to a place they have not come to themselves. Therefore, if we want to reach out to hurting people, we must be in the process with dealing with our own issues first.

(1 Corinthians 11:31, 2 Corinthians 4:12) Source: International Union of Gospel Missions, Reprinted with permission.

### **12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous & Biblical References**

- 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol ... that our lives had become unmanageable.*** "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." (Romans 7:18)
- 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*** "... my grace is sufficient for you, for my POWER is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)  
..for it God Who works in you to will and act according to His good purpose.. (Phil. 2:13)
- 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of GOD as we understood Him.*** "... If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:23\*\*)
- 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*** "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord." (Lamentations 3:40)
- 5. Admitted to GOD, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*** "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." (James 5:16)
- 6. Were entirely ready to have GOD remove all these defects of character.*** "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land." (Isaiah 1:19)
- 7. Humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings.*** "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up." (James 4:10)
- 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.*** "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23, 24\*\*)

9. ***Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*** Give and it shall be given you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Luke 6:38\*\*)
10. ***Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.*** "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith GOD has given you." (Romans 12:3)
11. ***Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with GOD as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will, and the power to carry that out.*** "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." (Psalm 19:14)  
"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..." (Col. 3:16)
12. ***Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and practice these principles in all our affairs.*** "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2)



Founded in 1948, Alcoholics Victorious support groups offer a safe environment where recovering people who recognize Jesus Christ as their "Higher Power" gather together and share their experience, strength and hope. AV meetings use both the [12 Steps](#) and the [Alcoholics Victorious Creed](#).

## **The Alcoholics Victorious Creed**

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I realize that I cannot overcome my addiction by myself. I believe that the power of Jesus Christ is available to help me. I believe that through my acceptance of Him as my Savior, I am a new person. ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#))

Because the presence of God is manifested through continued prayer, I will set aside two periods every day, morning and evening, for communion with my Heavenly father. I realize my need for daily Bible reading and use it as a guide for my daily living. ([Psalm 27:11-15](#))

I recognize my need of Christian fellowship and will, therefore, have fellowship with Christians through the church of my choice. I know that in order to be victorious, I must keep active in the service of Christ and His Church and I will help others to victory. ([Hebrews 10:23-25](#))

I do not partake of any beverage containing alcohol I know it is the first drink that does the harm. Therefore, **"I do not drink."**

I can be victorious because I know that God's strength is sufficient to supply all my needs. ([Philippians 4:19](#))

## **Alcoholics Victorious - Philosophy of Addiction & Recovery**

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We accept the [American Medical Association](#)'s definition of alcoholism as:

...an illness that is characterized by significant impairment in the emotional, psychological, spiritual, physical, and social areas that is directly associated with the persistent and excessive use of alcohol. Impairment may involve psychological, or social dysfunction. Alcoholism also is manifested as a type of drug dependence of pathological extent and pattern, which ordinarily interferes seriously with the patient's mental and physical health and his adaptation to his environment.

We recognize alcohol as a powerful and addictive drug. We further believe that alcoholism has a genetic basis in many individuals. In others, it is the result of repeated heavy drinking, even in the absence of a genetic predisposition.

Concerning the spiritual implications of alcoholism; we believe it has its roots in alienation from God and the violation of conscience. We accept the Biblical definition of "drunkenness" as a sin which prohibits those who practice it from entrance into the Kingdom of God ([Galatians 5:19-21](#)) [Romans 7:21](#))

We believe that God's power is able to deliver individuals from the compulsion to drink, and to set them free from the emotional, psychological, social, spiritual, and physical consequences of an alcoholic lifestyle.

Although an individual may be delivered from the compulsion to drink (and is no longer a "drunkard" in the spiritual sense), we recognize that he is still an alcoholic in the therapeutic sense. We believe the continued use of alcohol results in changes in the emotions, mind, and body that do not disappear upon an alcoholic's salvation. On a physiological level, he will always be "sensitized" to alcohol. Total abstinence, therefore, is a must; any use of alcohol can "activate" the chemical mechanisms of addiction leading to compulsive drinking and behavior.

We believe this physical aspect of the disease of alcoholism will remain with the recovering alcoholic until he is glorified and receives his new body from the Lord. With the acknowledgement of this fact, the Christian alcoholic will be all the more diligent to abstain from drinking, recognizing the dire consequences of alcohol use. We further believe that, if he never drinks again, this physical aspect of the illness will have no other actual effect on his life and Christian walk.

We believe that professional counseling and therapy is usually necessary to help individuals to overcome the consequences of alcoholism. Also, we recognize that alcoholism is a "family illness," and believe that all of the members of the alcoholic's family need to be a part of the recovery process by receiving specialized help themselves. We accept the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous as a reliable and orderly approach to recovery from alcoholism. We also believe that there are some very specific scriptural principles that must be applied to such an individual to assist him in a victorious and fruitful Christian walk.

Many of the attitudes, temptations, feelings, and patterns of thought resulting from the alcoholic lifestyle are not immediately removed upon an alcoholic's spiritual rebirth. We believe these things constitute elements of this "sinful nature," or "flesh," that he will struggle with as long as he remains in this world. Therefore, through a process of discipleship, he must "transformed by the renewing of his mind" ([Romans 12:2](#)) and must learn to "walk in the Spirit that he might not fulfill the desires of the flesh." ([Galatians 5:16](#))

- Learn more about addiction recovery and the Christian faith in our [FAQ Section](#)
- [Doctrinal Statement](#) of Alcoholics Victorious

## What Early A.A. Was Really Like

From Dick B's Website <http://www.dickb.com/index.shtml>

You won't learn this in A.A.'s basic text today or in our meetings. But the simplicity of early A.A. will really astound you! And we are here speaking to the pioneer A.A. Christian Fellowship in Akron that developed our program and was led by Dr. Bob. Usually there was hospitalization or at least medical help to save the newcomer's life. Only the Bible was allowed in the room. Recovered drunks visited the patient and told their success stories. The newcomer had to identify, admit that he too was licked, and that he would do whatever it took. Dr. Bob visited daily. Then, he would explain the "disease" as it was then understood; and, on the final day, Dr. Bob asked two questions to which there was only one answer: (1) Do you believe in God? (2) Are you willing to get down on your knees and pray? The newcomer then gave his life to Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. Many were too sick to venture far; so they lived with the Smiths (and later others) in Akron homes. It is a myth that they recovered in an afternoon or in four easy lessons. They shook. They shivered. They fidgeted. They forgot. They were ashamed, insecure, and guilt-ridden. But they learned what a loving God had made available. At the homes, they had daily Quiet Time (Bible study, prayer, asking guidance, reading a devotional, and discussing Anne Smith's Journal). They shared their woes and problems with Dr. Bob, with Anne (his wife), and with Henrietta Seiberling. They also had personal Quiet Times in their individual lives or at their home. They had one meeting a week. No drunkalogs. No whining. No psychobabble. Just prayer. Reading from Scripture. Quiet Time. Use of The Upper Room or similar devotionals for discussion. Then surrender upstairs for the newcomer in a prayer session resembling that in James 5:14-16. He confirmed his decision for Christ. [This confession of Christ by which the newcomer became born again has been confirmed as a "must" by four different and well-known A.A. old-timers—J. D. Holmes, Clarence Snyder, Larry Bauer, and Ed Andy.] At that time, the "elders" (usually Bob and T. Henry and one other) prayed with him that alcohol be taken out of his life, and joined him in asking that he be guided to live according to God's will. Following that, downstairs there were announcements about newcomers at hospitals. Socializing. And it started all over again. There were sessions with Dr. Bob involving a moral inventory (as to adherence to the Four Absolutes), confession, prayer to have the sins removed, and plans for restitution. Did it work? You bet it did. 75% documented recovery rate in Akron. Soon, a documented 93% in Cleveland. That's why the principles

and practices in early A.A.—the principles that were already working in the Salvation Army, the Rescue Missions, the YMCA, and Christian Endeavor—need to be part and parcel of our own A.A. learning. As reported to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., by Frank Amos: It took abstinence. It took God. It took the Bible. It took a life-change decision. It took living consistent with the decision. And it particularly emphasized witnessing to others. It took fellowship. And it took time--lots of it. And it was all just that simple—no steps and no text book. Just abstaining from drink and avoiding temptation. Relying on the Creator and coming to Him through His son. Obedience to His will—both in eliminating sin and in living love and service. Growing in fellowship through Bible study, prayer, asking wisdom, and study. And helping others without thought of pay.

July 1, 2007