

## **Step 3: Decide to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God, the Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ.**

### Key Principle: Trust in God

Step 3 is the decision step. In the first two steps, we acknowledged what we could not do for ourselves and what we needed God to do for us. In step 3, we were introduced to the only thing we could do for God. We could decide to open ourselves to Him and surrender our entire lives—past, present, and future—and our wills to Him. Step 3 is an act of agency. It is the most important choice we make in this life.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell made the following statement about this most significant decision: “The submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar. It is a hard doctrine, but it is true. The many other things we give to God, however nice that may be of us, are actually things He has already given us, and He has loaned them to us. But when we begin to submit ourselves by letting our wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something to Him” (“Insights from My Life,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2000, 9).

President Boyd K. Packer described his decision to yield his will to God and the freedom that decision gave him: “Perhaps the greatest discovery of my life, without question the greatest commitment, came when finally I had the confidence in God that I would loan or yield my agency to him—without compulsion or pressure. ... In a sense, ... to take one’s agency ... and say, ‘I will do as you direct,’ is afterward to learn that in so doing you possess it all the more” (*Obedience*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Dec. 7, 1971], 4).

When we first attended recovery meetings, we may have felt pressured or even forced by others to be there. But to work step 3, we had to decide to act for ourselves. We realized that changing our lives had to be our own decision. It wasn’t about what our families and friends thought or wanted. We had to be willing to stay in recovery regardless of anyone else’s opinions or choices.

As we worked through step 3, we learned that recovery was far more the result of the Lord’s efforts than our own. He worked the miracle when we invited Him into our lives. We chose to allow God to recover and redeem us. We decided to allow Him to direct our lives, remembering, of course, that He always respects our agency. We put our lives in His hands when we decided to continue this spiritually focused program of recovery.

When we took this step, we felt terrified of the unknown. What would happen if we humbled ourselves and surrendered our lives and wills completely to God’s care? For many of us, childhood was very hard, and we were terrified of becoming as vulnerable as little children again. Because of past experiences, we were convinced that committing to recovery was nearly impossible. We had seen other people break too many commitments, and we had broken too

many ourselves. But we decided to try what our recovering friends had suggested: “Don’t use. Go to meetings. Ask for help.” Those who had walked the steps of recovery before us invited us to experiment with this new way of living. They waited patiently for us to become willing to open the door to God just a little bit.

Jesus Christ extends the same invitation: “I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

At first, our efforts were anxious and halting. We kept giving Jesus Christ our trust and then taking it back. We worried that He would be displeased at our inconsistency and withdraw His support and love from us. But He didn’t.

Gradually we allowed Jesus Christ to demonstrate His healing power and the safety of following His way. Each of us realized that we not only had to give up our addictions, but we also had to turn our entire wills and lives over to God. As we did so, we found that He is patient and accepting of our faltering efforts to surrender to Him in all things.

Our ability to withstand temptation is now anchored to humbly submitting to God’s will. We express our need for the power of the Savior’s Atonement, and we begin to feel that power within us, fortifying us against the next temptation. We have learned to accept life on the Savior’s terms.

Submitting to God can be hard for us. It requires us to rededicate ourselves to His will each day, sometimes every hour, or even moment to moment. As we are willing to do so, we find the grace and enabling power to do what we cannot do for ourselves.

Continually submitting to God’s will reduces stress and brings more meaning to our lives. We are less irritated by the little things that used to bother us. We accept responsibility for our actions. We treat other people as the Savior would treat them. Our eyes, minds, and hearts are open to the truth that mortality is challenging and that it will always have the potential to bring us sorrow and frustration as well as happiness.

Each day we renew our commitment to submit to God’s will. This is what most of us mean when we say, “One day at a time.” We have decided to let go of the self-will and self-seeking that were at the root of our addictions. And we have decided to enjoy another day of the serenity and strength that come from trusting in God and in His goodness, power, and love.

Steps 1, 2, and 3 help us understand how to exercise faith. One of the clearest indications of working step 3 is that we are willing to trust God enough to continue to the next step.

## Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as “working the steps.” The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

## **Decide to trust and obey God**

These words—adapted from the “Serenity Prayer” by Reinhold Niebuhr—help us as we decide to trust and obey God: “God, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.” These words beautifully harmonize with the Prophet Joseph Smith’s words in Doctrine and Covenants 123:17: “Therefore, ... let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed.”

God grants us serenity when we trust in His ability to help us. We accept that although we cannot control the choices and actions of others, we can decide how we will act in each situation we face. We courageously decide to trust our Father in Heaven and act according to His will. We turn our wills and lives over to His care. We decide to obey Him and keep His commandments.

In our recovery, we have found that we need to practice step 3 often. Sometimes it seems that we need to recommit each moment or each day. It doesn’t matter how many times we need to do it. Each time we do, we feel God’s help and His love, and we are strengthened in our recovery. Elder Neal A. Maxwell reminded us: “Spiritual submissiveness is not accomplished in an instant, but by the incremental improvements and by the successive use of stepping-stones. Stepping-stones are meant to be taken one at a time. ... Eventually our wills can be ‘swallowed up in the will of the Father’ as we are ‘willing to submit ... even as a child doth submit to his father’ (see Mosiah 15:7; 3:19)” (“Consecrate Thy Performance,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 36).

## **Review and renew covenants with God**

Trusting God in all things can be like putting on a new pair of glasses and seeing everything clearly. When we decide to turn our wills over to God, we begin to experience the comfort and joy that come from seeking and doing Heavenly Father’s will. One way we show our willingness to trust God is to prepare to worthily take the sacrament.

Speak with your bishop or branch president about your addiction and your decision to follow God’s will. Do your best to attend sacrament meeting each week. As you worship, listen carefully to the sacrament prayers and consider the gifts that Heavenly Father offers you. Then renew your commitment to accept and follow His will for your life by partaking of the sacrament if your bishop or branch president agrees that you are ready to do so.

As your recovery progresses, you will find yourself more willing to be among those who honor the Savior’s sacrifice. You will begin to experience the reality that “with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

## Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. Our nature is to find the easiest and softest option for recovery. But we now know that being honest and specific is more helpful.

As we review our answers to the following questions with our sponsors and others, we clearly see our perspectives and motives.

### **Find harmony with the will of God**

“Reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved” (2 Nephi 10:24).

- What does the word *reconcile* mean?

Create a Note

- What does it mean to live my life in harmony with the will of God?

Create a Note

- How can I feel God’s enabling power in my life as I turn to Him?

Create a Note

- How do I feel about letting God direct my life?

Create a Note

- What prevents me from allowing Him to direct my life?

Create a Note

### **Submit to the will of God**

“The burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:15).

God could have removed the burdens of Alma and his people. But instead, He strengthened them to “bear up their burdens with ease.” Notice that they did not complain but submitted cheerfully and patiently to God’s will. Think about the humility it takes to be willing to have a burden lightened gradually rather than immediately.

- What does it mean to submit to God?

Create a Note

- How do I submit?

Create a Note

- How do I feel about submitting willingly and patiently to God's timetable?

Create a Note

- How can I gain the courage to keep trying to follow His will?

Create a Note

### **Fast and pray**

“They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God” (Helaman 3:35).

- This verse describes people who yielded their hearts to God. How can fasting help me yield my heart to God and abstain from addiction?

Create a Note

- Will I commit to pray in the moment of temptation for humility and faith in Christ? Why or why not?

Create a Note

- How strong is my willingness to yield my heart to God instead of to addiction?

Create a Note

### **Humble ourselves before God**

“But behold, he did deliver them because they did humble themselves before him; and because they cried mightily unto him he did deliver them out of bondage; and thus doth the Lord work with his power in all cases among the children of men, extending the arm of mercy towards them that put their trust in him” (Mosiah 29:20).

Humbling ourselves is a decision. We may be tempted to believe that although God has helped others, He won't help us because we are helpless and hopeless. We can recognize this lie for what it is. In truth, we are children of God.

- How does this knowledge help me humble myself and seek God’s help?

Create a Note

- What other thoughts and false beliefs about God and about me have kept me from crying mightily to God for deliverance from bondage?

Create a Note

### **Choose to trust God**

“I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive” (Alma 7:23).

Trusting God is a choice. Recovery happens by God’s power but only after we choose to submit to His will. Our decision then opens the channel for His power to flow into our lives. This scripture describes the qualities we need to surrender our lives and wills to God’s care.

- Which of these qualities do I lack?

Create a Note

- Who can help me develop the qualities I lack?

Create a Note

- Which qualities can I work on today?

Create a Note

- What can I do now to start developing these qualities?

Create a Note

### **Become as a child**

“The natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things

which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19).

Many of us experienced unkind treatment from parents or guardians, so becoming “as a child” is challenging, maybe even terrifying.

- Is this the case for me? Do I have unresolved problems with a parent?

Create a Note

- What can I do to separate my feelings about my parents from my feelings about God?

Create a Note

### **Commune with God**

“[Jesus] kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:41–42).

In this prayer, the Savior demonstrated His willingness to submit to Heavenly Father. He expressed His desires, but then He humbly did the will of His Father. It is a blessing to be able to tell God our feelings.

- How does knowing that Heavenly Father understands my fear, pain, or whatever I am feeling help me to say honestly, “Thy will be done”?

Create a Note

Create a Note