

## **Step 6: Become entirely ready to have God remove all our character weaknesses.**

### Key Principle: Change of Heart

Many of us found success and healing through step 5. We were amazed by and grateful for the transformation in ourselves. Most of us found that our addictions tempted us less intensely and less often. Some of us had already started to see the blessings of recovery. We all felt closer to Heavenly Father and had more peace in our lives. With such mighty changes, some of us wondered if this was all we needed to do. But we still needed more healing to continue and maintain our recovery.

We noticed that abstinence made our character weaknesses more visible. Because we no longer used addiction as an escape, we could see our issues more clearly. We tried to control our negative thoughts and feelings, but they continued to reappear, haunting us and threatening our new lives in recovery. We were tempted to use our addictive behaviors and self-will to try to control our character weaknesses and cope with stress as we had in our past.

Those who understood the spiritual implications of recovery urged us to recognize that while all the outward changes in our lives are wonderful, Jesus Christ has more blessings for us. Others helped us see that if we want to not only avoid our addictions but lose the desire to return to them, we must experience a change of heart. This desire for a change of heart is the purpose of step 6.

You may wonder how you can accomplish such a change. Step 6, like the steps before it, may feel like an overwhelming challenge. Don't be discouraged by these feelings. As painful as it may be, you may have to admit, as we did, that recognizing and confessing our character weaknesses in steps 4 and 5 does not mean we are ready to give them up. We may still cling to our old ways as we try to cope with stress.

The most humbling thing to acknowledge is that we may be trying to change ourselves without God's help. Step 6 requires us to surrender to God all remnants of pride and self-will. Like steps 1 and 2, step 6 requires us to continually humble ourselves and admit our need for the redeeming and transforming power of Christ. After all, His atoning sacrifice has enabled us to work through each step up to this point. Step 6 is no exception.

As we come unto Jesus Christ and ask for help with this step, we will not be disappointed. If we trust Him and have patience with the process, we will see our pride gradually replaced by humility. He will wait patiently for us to weary of our efforts to change on our own without help. As soon as we turn to Him, we will again witness His love and power. Instead of clinging to old patterns of behavior, we can have an open mind as the Spirit gently suggests a better way of living. Our fear of change will diminish as we realize that Jesus Christ understands the pain and hard work required. Again, this happens over time and is different for each of us.

This is an exercise of continually giving our wills to the Lord. It is a process, not a onetime event.

As the process of coming unto Christ takes hold in our hearts, our false beliefs that fueled our negative thoughts and feelings will be replaced by truth. We will grow in strength as we continue to study and apply the word of God. Through the testimonies of others, the Lord will help us learn that we are not beyond His power to heal. The desire to blame others or rationalize our way out of this challenging process will be replaced by the desire to be accountable to Him and be submissive to His will. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord declared, “A new heart ... will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

The Savior wants to bless us and change our natures. As we let Him do so, we will become more united with Him, just as He is united with Heavenly Father. The Savior wants to give us rest from the isolation and fear that contributed to our addictions. He wants to bless us with His grace and power available to us through His atoning sacrifice.

As we yield to the promptings of the Spirit and look to God for salvation not only from addiction but from character weaknesses, He will change our disposition and character if we are willing. A growing desire to be sanctified by God will prepare us for a change in our very natures. President Ezra Taft Benson described this change as follows:

“The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of people, and then they take themselves out of the slums. The world would mold [people] by changing their environment. Christ changes [people], who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature. ...

“May we be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, choose to follow Him, be changed for Him, captained by Him, consumed in Him, and born again” (“Born of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 6–7).

## 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.

### **Be willing to change through the power of God**

When we first learned of step 6, some of us said, “Of course I’m ready for God to remove my weaknesses!” We felt defeated by our many failed attempts to overcome our weaknesses on our own. However, as we pondered and received input from our sponsors, we realized we were more reluctant to let go of our weaknesses than we thought.

The Holy Spirit and others helped us see that we often used our weaknesses as defense mechanisms or as ways to boost our egos. For instance, some of us resorted to resentment and

a sense of superiority when we felt threatened. We liked feeling right although we were often wrong.

Some of us put ourselves down and diminished our divine nature to keep others from hurting us. We assumed that if we could insult ourselves first, then anyone else who demeaned us had simply come to the same conclusion we'd already reached.

But these unhealthy responses to challenges came from our character weaknesses, not our strengths. We were afraid that if we let go of our weaknesses, we would be more vulnerable. But as we let God remove our weaknesses and worked with our sponsors, we discovered how much God cares for us.

We invite you to awaken to your true worth and put your confidence in God's care rather than in your own defenses.

### **Find connection with others in recovery and at church**

As we became more comfortable with other people in recovery, we started to see that they were more like us than we had assumed. As we shared our stories and listened to other people share theirs, our compassion grew. We began to recognize the common condition of all of God's children and felt more at home around them. Family, friends, and Church leaders invited us to come back to church or to strengthen our current commitments. Instead of resisting or making excuses, we decided to attend church. We gradually found that many things we loved about recovery meetings were also part of worship at church.

When we were baptized, few of us understood the lifelong process of true conversion. However, President Marion G. Romney explained it plainly: "In one who is really wholly converted, desire for things contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ has actually died. And substituted therefore is a love of God, with a fixed and controlling determination to keep his commandments" (in Conference Report, Guatemala Area Conference 1977, 8).

As we experience the miracle of ongoing recovery—first from addictive behaviors and then from character weaknesses—we will experience true conversion. We will awaken and come to ourselves just as the prodigal son "came to himself" (Luke 15:17).

## 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. We must remember to be honest and specific in our writing to gain the most benefit from it.

### **Give away all your sins**

"The king said: ... [W]hat shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy? ... I will give up all that I possess, ... that I may receive this great joy. ...

“The king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried mightily, saying:

“O God, ... I will give away all my sins to know thee, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day” (Alma 22:15, 17–18).

- Reread these verses carefully. What obstacles, including attitudes and feelings, keep me from giving away “all my sins” and more fully receiving the Spirit?

Create a Note

### **Participate in the fellowship of the Church**

“And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7).

As we take upon ourselves the name of Christ and are strengthened by His Spirit, we begin to identify with the Saints—brothers and sisters who have been baptized and have entered into His family on earth.

- As I have come to know my fellow Saints better, how have I become more willing to participate in the fellowship of the Church?

Create a Note

### **Experience redemption**

“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” (Mosiah 3:19).

Many of us become Saints in name only at baptism and spend the rest of our lives struggling to “put off the natural man [or woman]” and develop the characteristics listed in this verse.

- How has this struggle prepared me to accept that it is only through the Atonement of Christ—by becoming one with Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father—that I can experience redemption?

Create a Note

### **Come unto Christ**

Elder Richard G. Scott taught: “No matter what the source of difficulty and no matter how you begin to obtain relief—through a qualified professional therapist, doctor, priesthood

leader, friend, concerned parent, or loved one—no matter how you begin, those solutions will never provide a complete answer. The final healing comes through faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and obedience to His commandments” (“To Be Healed,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 9).

No amount of support or fellowship—even in recovery groups or congregations of the Church—will bring salvation. Other people may support and bless us in our journey, but eventually we must come unto Christ Himself.

- How did my journey of recovery begin?

Create a Note

- Who was instrumental in helping me get on the path to repentance and recovery? How has their example pointed me toward the Savior?

Create a Note

- What have I learned about the Savior that has helped or influenced my desire or ability to change my behavior?

Create a Note

### **Be patient with the process**

“Ye are little children and ye cannot bear all things now; ye must grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth.

“Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world; ...

“And none of them that my Father hath given me shall be lost” (Doctrine and Covenants 50:40–42).

Sometimes we become impatient or discouraged that recovery is an ongoing process. These verses show Jesus Christ’s and Heavenly Father’s patience with us as “little children.” Apply these verses to yourself by writing them out addressed to you personally.

- How can the promises in this scripture strengthen me when I get discouraged?

Create a Note

### **Receive help from Jesus Christ**

“My beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of

Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

“Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:19–20).

- How does Jesus Christ help me along the strait and narrow path?

Create a Note

- How does my growing love for God and other people bring me out of addiction, help me continue in abstinence, and restore my hope of eternal life?

Create a Note

Create a Note