

*He Did  
Deliver Me  
from Bondage*

Using the Book of Mormon and the  
Principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ  
as They Correlate with the  
Twelve-Step Program to Overcome  
Compulsive/Addictive Behavior  
and Other Problems

20th Anniversary Edition

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This book is designed to provide you with information on Twelve Step recovery so that you can deal more effectively with compulsive/addictive behaviors in yourself or those you love. However, results from applying these principles will vary with the individual. As a result, this book is sold with the understanding that neither the author nor the publisher is engaged in rendering specific psychotherapy or other professional counseling services to any individual.

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One Last Acknowledgement:

- I realize that prophetic text cannot be reduced to any single "private interpretation." In other words, no one individual can say, "This is the true meaning of this scripture or quote" or "This is the only way this scripture or quote can be applied." In fact, the Spirit of God often opens the very same reference to me differently at different times in my life. The material in this book represents my personal thoughts and reflections on the scriptures and principles covered.



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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK AS A STUDY GUIDE

In the years since its introduction, this book has been used to aid people in recovering from a myriad of problems—addictions, compulsive behaviors, trauma in childhood and adulthood, as well as coming to a sense of peace and reconciliation with what can't be changed. The material has been implemented in three ways:

First: As a valuable course of study for individuals who have read it and worked through the scriptural exercises in the privacy of their own homes.

Second: As a study guide for use in a workshop or class setting. Usually the course of study takes thirteen weeks, with a two hour class held at a regular time each week, facilitated by a professional or priesthood leader.

Third: As foundational study materials for LDS Twelve Step recovery groups including LDS Family Services Addiction Recovery Program (A.R.P.).

Please note the following clarification for using the scripture study references:

In many books that encourage reader involvement to internalize the concepts discussed, the suggested activities found at the end of each chapter summarize and reinforce the previous chapter's contents. **In this workbook, however, the study questions found at the end of each chapter prepare you for the discussion of the principle to be covered in the next chapter.**

For example, on pp. 12–14, you will find seven suggested scripture references with thought-provoking questions and comments which are intended to establish a scriptural foundation for the chapter that begins on page 15. Although it may be tempting, please do not pass over these exercises. If you must, read the book straight

through and then come back to do the scripture study and journal writing these exercises suggest. If you do this, you will find your journals can be far more than you ever dreamed possible. In fact, like the writings of Lehi, Nephi, Mormon and Moroni, they can become “Another Testament of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

In addition to the supplemental reading included in the appendix of this book, there are other articles suggested for reading from their original sources. They are:

- “Born of God,” by President Ezra Taft Benson (*Ensign*, July 1989)
- “Beauty for Ashes, the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” by Bruce C. Hafen (*Ensign*, April 1990)
- “A Practical Approach to the Atonement: Believing in Christ,” by Stephen E. Robinson (*BYU Today*, November 1990)
- “Beware of Pride,” by President Ezra Taft Benson (*Ensign*, May 1989)

## FOREWORD

You promise you'll never do it again. You promise you'll never overeat again, never hide food again, never bounce checks again, never yell at the kids for no reason again—never, never, never! You promise God and anyone who will listen that you'll never repeat your destructive behavior. And you are sincere—heartbreakingly sincere. But repeat them you do. And you do. And you do. And day after endless day, your life repeats itself. You are caught in a cycle of repentance and relapse. You are in bondage.

Does any of this sound familiar to you? Have you ever found, or do you now find, yourself in bondage too? Are you swept up in a similar cycle of bad habits, self-defeating behaviors, self-destructive and insane behaviors—compulsive, addictive behaviors? Do you ever wonder if there is a way out?

Several years ago, I took a good look at my life and realized that I was in a spiritual shambles. No matter what my good intentions were, no matter how I longed to change, and no matter how strongly I willed myself to change, it just wouldn't happen. I was a mess of "socially acceptable" compulsive, addictive behaviors and it was killing me. I had lived what I believed to be the gospel of Jesus Christ and I was still miserable. And I was almost hopeless.

I remember reading the Book of Mormon and thinking that there was an important message hidden in those words of wisdom and I just wasn't getting it. After weeks of pleading with the Lord for guidance, I was introduced to the Twelve Steps. I found some recovery in the fellowship of a Twelve Step group, but true recovery began when I turned back to the Book of Mormon. After learning the concepts and the principles in the simple, everyday language of the Twelve Steps, I returned to the Book of Mormon, and its mysteries opened up to me. The Twelve Steps were everywhere within its pages. That was when the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ really

began to work in my life, and I began to be freed from the chains of emotional bondage, one link at a time.

I continued my fellowship in a Twelve Step group for some time, all the while wishing I were free to share the extra light that the gospel and the Book of Mormon shed on the principles behind the Twelve Steps. Fortunately, I wasn't alone. This same desire in the heart of another led to the publication of this book, *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage*.

*He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* illustrates the true principles that underlie the Twelve Steps with passages from the Book of Mormon. I have found that the Twelve Steps are nothing more (or more accurately, nothing less) than a bare-bones, step-by-step guide back to the Lord, Jesus Christ—the same step-by-step path found in fullness and glory in the Book of Mormon. I believe the Twelve Steps are a set of “baby steps” that lead to the “giant steps” found in the gospel. *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* bridges the gap between the two.

I am very grateful for the recovery and the deliverance from bondage the Lord has orchestrated in my life thus far. Only He can lead us to that “mighty change of heart” of which Alma speaks. I pray that you will find Him and that this book may help you along the way.

— Karlene B.

## AUTHOR'S "FOREWORD"

Hi, my name's Colleen; I'm an addict. In other words, I'm a mortal struggling with the effects of the fall. Without conscious contact with a power far greater than my own, even the Spirit of Truth, the Lord, Jesus Christ (**D&C 93:9**), I cannot maintain anything resembling sanity or serenity.

Today, thanks to the twelve principles discussed in this book, learned first at Overeaters Anonymous, and later enhanced and magnified by corresponding scriptural validation, I have found that peace which passeth understanding, which only Christ can give (**Philippians 4:7**). In him I have found a perfect brightness of hope that shines through even the deepest darkness. I have sanity and serenity because of His living presence in my life.

When I remember Him and keep my eye single to His glory, and to the glory of the Father who sent Him to be my Savior and closest Friend, I experience a remission of lies in my mind and of sin in my life. I lose my desire to do evil; to do that which separates me from God. I lose my desire to turn to the things of this world for counterfeit solace and comfort. I stop eating extraneous food; I lose weight. I stop spending money I really don't need to spend; my checkbook stays balanced. I stop trying to fix others; my relationships calm down. I stop fearing; I start hoping and trusting. My depression disappears.

When I apply these true principles in my life I am free—free of the lie of pride, free of the lie of self-sufficiency, free of the lie that any sin, either my own or another's, is more powerful and permanent than God's power to heal and atone. When I use these principles or steps in my life on a daily basis, I am not empty, and I am not alone. I am filled with a sure witness of Jesus Christ and of His personal love for me. Using these principles or steps, I am able to draw near unto Him, and unfailingly find that, as He promises in **D&C 88:63**,

He draws near unto me. I feel His encircling arms of love (**D&C 6:20**); I recognize His words conveyed to me through the Holy Ghost (**2 Nephi 32:3, 5**); and I know that according to His own will, I may see His face (**D&C 88:68**).

When *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* was originally written in 1991, there was no recovery support group for Latter-day Saints who were struggling with the more “socially acceptable” compulsive, addictive behaviors such as overeating, overspending, workaholism, perfectionism, and so forth. Nor was there a group in which I could introduce myself using the religious terms I have used in this foreword. Today there are such groups, based firmly in a combination of the Twelve Step concepts and the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These groups were not created to compete with the Church or with other Twelve Step groups; rather they complement them all. This study guide, which was originally written for use in the Heart t’ Heart Twelve Step program, has also been used by several other programs, including LDS Family Services Addiction Recovery Program (A.R.P.).

The most exciting result to come from the development of LDS programs using the Twelve Step model of recovery is we are free to study the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in harmony with and support of the principles in the Twelve Steps.

— Colleen H.

## PREFACE: FIRST EDITION (1991)

In 1981 I tipped the scale at over 300 pounds. Believe me, I was the most miserable “active” Latter-day Saint I knew. Of course, I didn’t know many people, Latter-day Saint or otherwise, because of the isolated, imprisoned lifestyle I lived. I walled myself in with cleaning, cooking, canning, sewing, even with children and husband and, of course, with eating. I’m not saying there’s anything wrong with cooking and cleaning—they are the necessities of life. Sewing and canning are worthwhile activities too. They are good basic skills that every person should know to be prepared for hard times when life might be scarce instead of abundant. The only problem was that I *made* my life scarce doing those very things. While my children languished around me, I sewed and canned and crafted my way through 16 years and 11 pregnancies. I made my energy and time so scarce that there was a “famine in the land” emotionally, while I obsessively tried to fit into the Mollie Mormon mold.

And my husband and children? In my obsession to make everything perfect, I created a prison out of something as potentially exalting as my *family*. I used their lives as an excuse to never get around to my own life. Even their cleanliness came before mine. I went to bed when they went to bed (11:00 p.m. because of someone’s just remembered school project), stayed awake until they fell asleep (12:00 midnight with my husband), got up when they got up (3:00 a.m. with the baby), and started the day before they did so *their* foundation got properly laid (6:00 a.m. to fix breakfast, conduct scripture study).

And what was I doing to sustain this concentrated pretense of perfection? Was I pursuing a course of daily personal prayer and scripture study to receive God’s direction and power in my *own* life? Heavens, no! After all, I had no life outside my husband and children—cleaning for them, cooking, sewing, canning; thinking,

planning. And besides, I'd been to Gospel Doctrine class. I wasn't a *total* scriptural illiterate. I knew that it was *only* after *all* that I could do to be perfect that I should turn to God, and I knew that if I ate just one more batch of cookie dough or one more helping of dinner I could *do* more. If and when I ever got through doing all I could, then I would rightfully seek God and worthily receive His input.

I mean, put yourself in my place. I didn't want to ask prematurely, as Oliver Cowdery did, and get rebuked (**D&C 9:7**). What if I turned to God and instead of comfort received chastisement? What if, instead of direction, I got recriminating memories about temple and visiting teaching assignments I either missed or did with a weary, grudging heart? Thanks, but no thanks. A doughnut or four extra dinner rolls promised to help me forget, if even for a few moments, instead of remembering anything more I needed to do to be "busily engaged." Eating was the one thing I consistently did for myself. Mother, the supreme nurturer and caretaker, finally got around to nurturing and taking care of herself at midnight by consuming food she had deliberately hoarded and hidden earlier.

It's pretty obvious that I had a problem—a *serious* problem. It's obvious to me today, but it wasn't then. Back then I didn't have time to recognize any problems in my life. All I needed was another Twinkie and I could make it; I could be there for *one* more act of service or hour of self-sufficient sewing or canning.

Didn't I ever diet? you might ask. Certainly! Constantly! At least constantly between that "last supper" of hoarded goodies at midnight and about 10:00 a.m. the next morning when the leftover pancakes from breakfast needed to be cleared. After all, how could I justify eating the eggs or fruit my food plan called for when I could feed them to the children tomorrow? How could I let these perfectly good pancakes go to *waste*! Hadn't I just attended a homemaking lesson in which one sister demonstrated three dozen ways to use the lint from our dryer screens to avoid wasting it?

I was in deep trouble, and digging myself deeper with every effort to get out. Even diets that lasted any length of time were only

getting me into a worse mess metabolically. No matter how healthy the written plan of eating was, I could, with my perfectionistic, all or nothing, black or white thinking, pare it down to a third of its author's original intent and lose twice as much *twice as fast!* And I would! I would lose a *lot* fast. Who wouldn't on 500 calories of cottage cheese and lettuce leaves a day? Ten pounds in ten days. Wow! At this rate I would be a size ten by Christmas—and I could even overeat on my birthday in September, Halloween in October, and Thanksgiving in November if I just fasted three days after each traditional binge.

Again and again, I would sit and mark a new calendar with each new resolve, projecting weekly weight loss. I'd chart and rechart my miraculous transformation-*to-come* with bar charts and graph paper, filling little boxes with "x's" for each hour of my success. I would even fill in the boxes for the nighttime hours weeks in advance—after all, I would be sleeping between 1:00 and 6:00 a.m., right? Unless of course I was up at 2:00 a.m. with the baby for a nighttime feeding.

And thus I "dietet" my way *up* the scale instead of down, ending up in the summer of 1981 at about 315 pounds. I never knew for sure, because when the bathroom scale went all the way around the dial and started past the top number a second time, I stepped off forever.

I stepped off the scale and dropped to my knees. It wasn't that I had never done that before either. In fact that was the most agonizing part of this struggle. The entire fifteen years of my insanity—and it *is* insanity to be on such a course of self-destruction—was riddled by times of desperately weeping and wailing to God. Time after time, in the temple and out, I had pledged to God that I would conquer this terrible destructive behavior. Education Week after Education Week sent me home determined to be good for the prescribed 18 (or was it 21?) days that it took to eliminate a "bad habit." Sometimes I even made it through those lengths of time, but inevitably my devotion to my best self would fade, my old emptiness would return, and I

would begin to overeat again. This was more than a habit. No amount of white-knuckled willpower gave me security against that first compulsive bite, which sooner or later led to another binge and complete self-degradation.

This time, in this prayer, though, there was to be no weeping and wailing on my part, no whining and justifying and rationalizing and bargaining. I was down for the count, and I knew it. I knew it because I had *finally* done all that I could do. I had sewn, canned, cleaned, quilted, made babies, served husband and children past a righteous balance (**Proverbs 11:1**) and had held four church positions at the same time. I had stayed up late and gotten up early. I had gone to Education Week classes, read books, made charts, made pledges, gone to every “quick-weight [money] loss” program I could afford. There was nothing left. Nothing. I couldn’t even pray—at least not out loud. I felt much like Joseph in the grove, oppressed under a great cloud of darkness; only mine had not appeared in seconds—mine had taken years to build up.

I literally crawled to my bedside and crumpled there, and the tears finally came—tears of complete surrender to God. No words, no excuses, no pleadings, no answers—just tears. These were not tears of “poor-me” or “why-me.” Instead, these were tears of “not my will—but Thine be done.” Today, I know those tears were, at least in spirit, mingled with blood—Jesus Christ’s own atoning blood; for from that hour my deliverance began. If I had known then how close divine help actually was, I might have heard a spiritual witness, as did Daniel of old:

**Fear not, [Colleen]: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand [instead of dictate], and to chasten [purify] thyself before thy God, thy words were heard and I am come for thy words. (Daniel 10:12)**

I didn’t realize that at that moment of complete surrender, I was about to enter a whole new life, *a life turned inside out*.

After I was finally through crying, I dragged myself up and sat on the side of my bed. Feeling the impression that I needed to invest more than I ever had before, I decided to call a weight-loss clinic I had heard about that offered absolute control over your meals, preparing and delivering them to you, for a formidable price. At least it used to be *formidable* to me. Now a new spirit had come over me. I was now willing to go to any length, to pay any price, to do whatever God wanted me to do. I wasn't running the show anymore, bargaining with life for a penny. I had to be willing to give all, or I would die, and I knew it.

I reached for the phone and phone book. Finding the appropriate number, I dialed. The line rang and rang. Tears sprang to my eyes again. Wasn't I humble enough, desperate enough, willing enough? Here I was in a state of total surrender, ready to be led in all things, and even go *bankrupt*! I didn't think there was a greater depth of humiliation and willingness.

Little did I know then that the course God was about to set my feet upon would require me to admit a bankruptcy far deeper than financial, develop a willingness to do God's will that would require every day of the rest of my life and would catapult me into a life so filled with friends and truly unconditional love that I would even start to feel some love for myself.

The next impression that came was to reach out to a friend, to someone who loved me, who would listen to me.

The friend I called had no answers for me, but that was okay, because God did. I was to realize later that from the moment of my admittance of personal powerlessness, of my absolute need for Him, He had taken over. All my friend could suggest was that she could put me in touch with a neighbor of hers who had been attending a weight-loss program of some type and having a lot of success, and it didn't cost too much.

A quick call to this other person, Latter-day Saint though she was, was another increment of complete humility for me. I, who was

usually terrified of interaction with strangers, found myself already being lifted and sustained by a power far greater than my own.

The lady didn't say much but offered to take me to a meeting the next morning. I couldn't believe it when I heard myself accept her offer. Me? Three-hundred and fifteen pound me was going to walk out in the broad daylight tomorrow morning and get in a car with a complete stranger? And not only a stranger, but one who had lots of recent success at losing weight and was looking great besides! I ate my last pan of brownies that afternoon, trying to suppress the fear of the unknown and of the change I felt. But changed I was—somewhere on the *inside* something was different. Even the pan of brownies couldn't deter it. It was going to be years later before I read President Benson's words: "**The Lord works from the inside out**" (*Ensign*, July 1989, p.4). That day I was living his words.

The next morning came, and it was the proverbial first day of the rest of my life. I walked into my first Overeaters Anonymous (OA) meeting that day and was introduced to a program based on twelve simple steps of recovery. I was praying constantly about this strange new world I had entered. People were mentioning the word "God," and not all of them were LDS. I began to feel anxious. Maybe I was in some sort of danger here. Then I remembered I had been endowed with the gift of the Holy Ghost, and it could teach me the truth of all things (**Moroni 10:5**); that Moroni had assured me if anything taught me to do good and to love God and to serve God, then it was of God (**Moroni 7:13**); that the 13th Article of Faith declared my religion to include seeking after "anything virtuous, lovely, of good report or praiseworthy;" that Christ Himself, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, charged me to seek wisdom out of the best books (**D&C 88:118**); that Brigham Young had once declared that we, as Latter-day Saints, could claim truth no matter where we might find it and should not be afraid to seek it *anywhere* (*Journal of Discourses*, **13:335**). Still I felt concerned. After all, maybe having all these things come to my remembrance as I sat there in that first meeting was a

ploy of the adversary to get me into some kind of cult or something. Maybe I should get up and leave!

Fortunately, God had other ideas. He had me stay long enough to buy an Alcoholics Anonymous “Big Book,” the basic text for every Twelve Step group. There are many such groups, and for good reason—they work.

I took that “Big Book” home, and began to read. As I read I found how true it is that God is no respecter of persons. I read of Bill Wilson (the founder of AA) and his desperate need for a power greater than himself to solve a problem that he could not solve alone. I heard and felt echoes of Joseph Smith’s own deep need which had been answered for him when he read **James 1:5**. It was as if I were hearing the scripture for the first time, caught between a prophet’s witness on the one hand and a derelict alcoholic’s on the other.

**If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to ALL men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. (James 1:5–6; emphasis added)**

“Nothing wavering”—at about the same moment those memorized words passed through my mind, I found myself reading these words:

**There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as he would. I placed myself *unreservedly* under His care and direction. (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 13; italics added)**

And then the next sentence wrung out my heart as it echoed the very words of LDS scriptures:

**I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost. (*Ibid.*, p. 13)**

I had to turn back to the title of the little book in my hands to make sure I wasn’t reading **Mosiah 4:11, Alma 26:12 or Moses 1:10**.

No. This was the AA “Big Book,” and these were the words of Bill Wilson.

I stayed and read and listened. Gradually I began to realize why this program had such a high success rate in its early years. It is totally focused on turning us to God and developing our relationship with Him. (See **Moroni 7:13** again.)

And what have I found in my years of involvement in Twelve Step program since then? Well, first I found that the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions reflected twenty-four of the most basic “true principles” ever captured and arranged into a program of action to overcome destructive behaviors. At every meeting I attend, I watch people beginning to recognize their absolute need for and their own nothingness without God. I see them learn to relax their stranglehold on life and on others they’ve tried to control. I watch them come to trust God. This trust gives them the courage to tackle a fine-tooth comb repentance process for themselves. As I watch this inner cleansing and heart-deep change, accompanied by changes in attitude and behavior, Joseph Smith’s words go through my mind: **“I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves.”**

Second, I have found and joined a fellowship of good people, people who have come to know, as I have, that:

**Crushed by a self-imposed crisis that we could not postpone [any longer], we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything [to us] or else He is nothing. (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 53)**

It’s been good for me to realize that while we as Latter-day Saints do have a corner on priesthood authority and sealing ordinances, we don’t have a corner on God’s love or truth.

Third, I have lost 140 pounds and have maintained that weight loss for over ten years, through several of the most devastating events life could bring my way, including the death of my oldest daughter. I know that the ability to live in these terrifying last days

began when I finally accepted counsel like this: **“You [are] 100% hopeless, apart from divine help.”** (*Alcoholics Anonymous* p. 43)

Needless to say, years later, when I heard President Benson’s words—**“When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives.”** (*Ensign*, May 1988, p.4)—I could only smile and nod as I thought of those 140 pounds. And the greatest blessing of all is that I know that I didn’t do this alone. I know it was by the grace of God that He lifted my broken and bleeding soul from the bedroom floor that day and led me to a program that would turn my face to Him and not teach me self-mastery or self-sufficiency or that I just had to do more. Instead, it taught me that what I have to *do* is *believe* more, *ask* more and *receive* more.

— *Colleen H.*

Fall 1991

## PREFACE: 2002 EDITION

In 1981, I discovered I was an addict. Though I had never used alcohol or illegal drugs, I came to realize that I was indeed an addict in every sense of the word when I read *Alcoholics Anonymous* (also called the “Big Book”) and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous*.

As I read this literature from Alcoholics Anonymous, I found myself identifying with every nuance, every turn and twist of Bill W.’s story. I could relate to Dr. Bob’s experience and to the experiences of most of the other faltering mortals who contributed their stories to the volume from which the AA fellowship took its name. The shocking revelation was that while I could so closely identify with the stories of these addicts, I was also a “tee-totaling, card-carrying” member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I attended church every Sunday, sat on the second row in the chapel with my “quiver–full” of children and equally “faithful” spouse. We each held several callings in our ward. We bought food storage, attended “Know Your Religion” lectures, went to BYU Education Week for our annual vacation, practiced as little birth control as we could,... My list could go on and on to the point of exhaustion. Suffice it to say, being good Latter-day Saints kept us so busy we had no time to admit or contemplate the reality that there was a dark and shameful side to our publicly exemplary life.

**Satan has a powerful tool to use against good people. It is distraction. He would have good people fill life with “good things” so there is no room for the essential ones. Have you unconsciously been caught in that trap? (Richard G. Scott, “First Things First,” *Ensign*, May 2001, p. 7)**

Distracted from what? From those portions of practicing our religion that bring personal spiritual experiences. We were too busy,

too distracted, to acknowledge or participate in personal revelation, personal insight, honesty, wisdom and honor of the truth.

And so, in July of 1981, I read *Alcoholics Anonymous* for the first time and realized I was as self-destructive with my “socially acceptable” behaviors as these first AA members were with alcohol. I saw, also, that although my life was filled to the brim with external religious behaviors, I had never experienced the coming of God into my heart and mind—at least, not to the extent necessary for Him to relieve me of the “desire” or disposition to “do evil.”

For the first time, I saw my self-defeating behaviors as “evil.” In fact, these behaviors were not just self-defeating. They were self-destructive. They were robbing me of serenity, and at times it seemed my very sanity was slipping away also. How did I try to save myself, my serenity, my sanity? Like a true addict, I turned deeper into the very behaviors which created the crisis to begin with. I would eat. I would rage and scream. I would spend money or participate in any number of other “socially acceptable” but self-destructive behaviors, knowing full-well I was destroying myself and my family around me. I lived a cycle of addiction just as surely as Bill W., Dr. Bob, and all of the other addicts described in *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

By 1983, I had achieved two years of abstinence and *some* recovery. True to my former idea of success, however, I had focused on the outward behaviors and subsequent appearance of being better. I attended lots of meetings. I gave lots of service in Overeaters Anonymous. I remained abstinent—often hanging on with white knuckles to the support and example of others. I lost over 150 lbs. I looked like a new woman, acted like a new woman and tried to feel like a new woman, ignoring the fact that on the “feeling” level, deep inside, things weren’t much different. The whirlwind of being thin and admired was pretty heady stuff. Addiction revisited.

The following three years I learned about relapse by doing it. It wasn’t fun and it wasn’t pretty, but it did serve to convince me that I wanted *and needed* more. Looking “sober” wasn’t enough. I wanted to feel sober, to be sober “on the inside.”

I gained back 80 lbs. while trying some “controlled eating” programs (diet plans). They obviously weren’t the answer. When I finally “cracked the books” again in 1985 and began to study the AA literature, I opened the scriptures along with them. Eventually, I read and worked through the powerful workbook, *The Twelve Steps: A Way Out* and became aware of its companion book, *The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey* which incorporated verses from the Old and New Testament. (Both workbooks are published by RPI Publishing, Inc: San Diego, CA.) As I began to apply the Twelve Steps to my life, everything changed. But this time, the change wasn’t about behaviors or appearances; it was about changing my inner life, my spiritual being.

Over the next four years, I listened to the testimony of the prophet at that time, President Ezra Taft Benson. Over and over again, he stressed the gift of the Book of Mormon, calling it the most perfect book ever written, containing the power to bring us closer to God than any other book. He pled with us to sup from its pages daily. He chastened us with the truth that as a people we were under the condemnation of “vanity and disbelief”—the only solution to which was reading the Book of Mormon and living by its precepts.

I believed our prophet. I heard and took his counsel personally, as a single member of the “us” and the “we” of the church. I began a personal study of the Book of Mormon and was staggered at how perfectly its “precepts” harmonized with the “precepts,” or principles in each of the Twelve Steps. I began marking and color-coding my scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon, for each of these twelve powerfully true principles.

By 1989, addiction in several terrible forms had eaten away the heart of my family’s potential for safety and salvation. Sexual addiction, drug abuse, alcohol and the lies so many members of my family told to hide these choices took all the light and hope and strength out of our midst. Finally, the ultimate horror of every mother struck. One of my children died in an alcohol-related accident.

Over the next two years, “after shocks” continued to ravage what was left of our family unit, as child after child began to exhibit behaviors typical of survivors of the worst forms of abuse. The facade of “just fine” Sunday appearances began to crumble. By 1991, with the witness of the Spirit of Truth in personal revelation and the painful, but honest approbation of my bishop, I fled the horrifying abusiveness of my marriage by filing for divorce. I felt numb. Marriage, home and family was everything to me. I felt abandoned and alone... except for the unwavering witness that Christ lived and loved me and would never leave me.

In the midst of all this personal trauma, I clung to the Book of Mormon and used the Twelve Step model to sort out its precepts. Conversely, I used the Book of Mormon to magnify the concepts in the Steps with the glorious power of the Restoration. A vision began to dawn in my heart: how wonderful it would be if other members of the Church could understand the Twelve Steps as a powerful guide for studying the principles of the Gospel! I began to pray for an opportunity to share this idea.

I became a member of the Church in the early 1960’s and brought so much addictive and compulsive bondage with me, right through the waters of baptism. I could only imagine how much more of a struggle to break the bondage of all kinds of addictions new converts, today, had to face. And then there were the “active” families, like my own—only one generation removed from unacknowledged addictive tendencies—whose lives were being undermined by addiction in one form or another. Maybe, if a study guide could be provided that combined the Twelve Step model of recovery with the power of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the Gospel, other men and women, couples, and families could be spared the terrible end my first marriage suffered. I wanted to share my *knowledge* that the Savior’s *living* reality and power was enough to sustain us and save us, even from these terrible developments of the last days.

I began to think of the Twelve Step workbooks mentioned earlier. What if a book similar to those could be composed, with suggested readings and thought-provoking questions to guide the readers' reflections? Using outlines of discussions I had led on each of the "twelve true principles" in the Steps as reflected in the teachings of the Restored Gospel, I was able to finish the original draft of *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* in a matter of weeks. For the next year or so, I spent a lot of time at the local copy shop reproducing the manuscript in 10's, 20's, and then 50's. Then, in 1991, a wonderful benefactor offered to pay the cost of actual publication of the book. From that point its readership has continued to grow exponentially with virtually no "marketing." It has definitely been a pathway of "attraction," not "promotion."

I have received a constant flow of letters and phone calls filled with deeply moving endorsement of the book's positive effect in the lives of LDS members struggling with addiction in their own lives or in the lives of loved ones. I watched in awe as my prayers to the Father were answered. Others were being helped to understand addiction's subtle and spiritually deadly grip. They were being taught a practical application of true principles that were proving to be addiction's antidote. Still, I didn't know the extent Heavenly Father intended to answer my plea.

In the fall of 1995 I received a phone call from what was then known as LDS Social Services. They had been introduced to *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* and felt it might be an asset to the newly formed substance abuse recovery group pilot program. Would I be willing to allow it to be used in that setting? I was in tears as I beheld in awe how far the Lord intended to take His answer to my prayers.

Since 1995, LDS Social Services has become LDS Family Services, and the pilot program has become the Addiction Recovery Program (A.R.P.) program and has been approved for use throughout the Church. I have to admit I feel like the inspired Twelve Step recovery model has now found a most appropriate home in the LDS community. It is my constant prayer that whoever receives a copy of this

study guide will let it lead him or her to the truth that Heavenly Father and the Savior are very real and very interested in each of us personally. With Their living reality in our minds and hearts—in our *lives*—we can be led out of the bondage of addiction and blessed to survive the terrible sorrow of these last days. I bear testimony that if we truly desire to repent, there is no sin so great—whether it be committed by ourselves or has been committed against us—that the Savior Jesus Christ, through power from His Father, cannot heal. I testify of this humbly and in the Name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

— *Colleen H.*

January 2002

## PREFACE: 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

I think if I had discovered *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* in a dusty attic or used book store, I might be able to convince other readers of the fact that in a very real sense I did not write or author this book. It's true that for several months I sat at my computer most mornings before the sun came up for two or three hours, typing in what would eventually become the final content of this book. But I wasn't writing. I wasn't creating. I was taking dictation.

There was no labor to construct sentences, nor to find the prophetic quotes included here, nor even to come up with the insights that complement and enhance the true principles in the Twelve Steps. Instead, I labored to keep up with the thoughts that flowed into my mind, and through my fingers onto the digital pages in front of me. It was not me. It was more than me—and as I typed, I was filled with the witness that a miracle was materializing.

*He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* was written under the influence of the Holy Ghost. Its pages are filled with the Spirit of the Lord. It awakens readers to the living reality of the Savior Jesus Christ in their own lives—even before they've had a chance to repent and turn away from whatever behaviors brought them to the book in the first place. They begin to discover the goodness and mercy of a loving God—a God who is willing to walk with them through the darkness of addiction toward recovery in Him. They realize that His Light and His word accompany them—even while they're just beginning to repent. They find a Savior who, like the father in the parable of the prodigal son (**Luke 15:11-32**), runs to meet them as they stumble toward home, doing all they can feebly do to seek Him.

And so, as I sit here this morning—once again long before dawn—waiting to hear and see what the Lord would have me write as an introduction to this latest edition, I have to ask, How do you introduce a miracle? As these first paragraphs come pouring out in

front of my eyes, I stand all amazed at their plainness and boldness. I have to sit and wrestle with the negative thoughts that assail me. I am tempted to fear that someone will accuse me of writing these words to boast of myself—as Aaron did of Ammon.

**And it came to pass that when Ammon had said these words, his brother Aaron rebuked him, saying: Ammon, I fear that thy joy doth carry thee away unto boasting.**

**But Ammon said unto him: I do not boast in my own strength, nor in my own wisdom; but behold, my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God. (Alma 26:10-11)**

And if I may, I can only continue to borrow Ammon’s words, for they continue to express my own heart perfectly:

**Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold, many mighty miracles [He has brought to pass through these 20 years], for which we will praise his name forever. (Alma 26:12)**

In the twenty years since *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* was first published, over 160,000 “official” copies have been distributed, and there is no way to know how many photocopies have been shared between readers. Thus, there is no way to know how many people have read it or how many lives have been changed by its message, how many addicted mortals have been set on the path that leads to salvation in and through Jesus Christ. And so I feel the Spirit of Truth inviting me to borrow again from Ammon’s exaltation of the Lord:

**Behold, how many thousands of our brethren has he loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love, and this because of the power of his word which is in us, therefore have we not great reason to rejoice?**

**Yea, we have reason to praise him forever, for he is the Most High God, and has loosed our brethren from the chains of hell.**

**Yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and destruction; but behold, he has brought them into his everlasting light, yea, into everlasting salvation; and they are encircled about with the matchless bounty of his love; yea, and we have been instruments in his hands of doing this great and marvelous work.**

**Therefore, let us glory, yea, we will glory in the Lord; yea, we will rejoice, for our joy is full; yea, we will praise our God forever. Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy, and of his long-suffering towards the children of men? Behold, I say unto you, I cannot say the smallest part which I feel. (Alma 26:13-16)**

Neither can I say the smallest part of what I feel as I have spent these twenty years watching the Lord do His own work through this book. I am continually humbled to have had anything to do with it. It was inevitable that sooner or later someone would have written it, or something like it, to demonstrate how the Twelve Steps and the restored gospel are in such perfect harmony. To this day, though, I do not fully understand why it was me. This much I do know for a certainty—it had everything to do with the goodness of God and nothing to do with my genius or worthiness.

Whatever His purposes, as soon as He gave me a vision of His will concerning the Twelve Step program—that it needed to be authenticated and empowered by the Book of Mormon—I found myself with the power to carry out His will, just as Nephi declares:

**I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall**

prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them. (1 Nephi 3:7)

## THE POWER IS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

*He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* is powerful only by association with the Book of Mormon. It is the Book of Mormon that will get a person closer to God than any other book. *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* is just a primer. The 84 daily scriptures (1 a day for 12 weeks) are offered as writing prompts meant to take you on a 12-week crash course through the Book of Mormon. By the time you have completed them, you will have felt the miracle of the Book of Mormon's power and will never again let a day go by without reading it, journaling about it, and applying its precepts to yourself and your life.

**The Book of Mormon is the keystone in our witness of Jesus Christ, who is Himself the cornerstone of everything we do. It bears witness of His reality with power and clarity....It broadens our understanding of the doctrines of salvation. The Book of Mormon...was written for our day. In [it] we find a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming....[The] Book of Mormon teaches us truth [and] bears testimony of Jesus Christ....But there is something more. There is a power in [it] which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. (Ezra T. Benson, *Ensign*, Nov., 1986, pp 5-7.)**

Once again, let me testify: *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* is a way to begin a serious study of the Book of Mormon. This study should be undertaken with the intention of coming unto Christ—personally and specifically. It is a step toward offering our whole souls as an offering unto Him. It will create within us a desire to become His son

or daughter and to find in Him the power to live as one with Him and with our Father in Heaven.

**And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved. (Omni 1:26)**

## CONCLUSION

It has been a most amazing adventure and blessing to have been an instrument in our Heavenly Father's hands to introduce to Latter-day Saints the Twelve Step program of recovery from addiction. But even more amazing has been the way my life changed when I began to study the Book of Mormon using the Twelve Step principles as my template. That is when I began to awaken to the testimonies of Book of Mormon prophets as to just how intimate and central and conversant a God, a Savior, a Friend, Jesus Christ is willing to be to those who seek Him.

The title of this book says it all: He, even Jesus Christ, is my Deliverer, my Savior, my Messiah, my dearest friend. When I began to slow down and really study the Book of Mormon—reading and writing in my journal as I went—I discovered the testimonies and the examples of men who lived their lives in close conscious contact with not only our Heavenly Father, but also with His Son Jesus Christ. As I followed their examples, I began to experience Christ's living presence and administration in my own housewife-life. I learned that He (as one with our Father in Heaven) really is no respecter of person. I learned that God really is "the same yesterday, today, and forever," just as the Book of Mormon prophets testify over and over again.

Behold I say unto you, he that denieth these things knoweth not the gospel of Christ; yea, he has not read the scriptures; if so, he does not understand them.

For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?

And now, if ye have imagined up unto yourselves a god who doth vary, and in whom there is shadow of changing, then have ye imagined up unto yourselves a god who is not a God of miracles.

But behold, I will show unto you a God of miracles, even the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and it is that same God who created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. (Mormon 9:8-11)

In every moment that I have lived a delivered life, He has delivered me. I have not delivered myself through any amount of “good works” of my own: no matter how many Twelve-Step or church meetings I’ve attended, no matter how much service I have given, no matter how many words I have read or written. No matter what I have done—after all that I have done—nothing I have done has delivered me. Only in looking to “my Jesus,” (2 Nephi 33:6) have I found deliverance from my addictions and negative behaviors. Only as I have practiced looking unto Him “every thought” (D&C 6:36-37), albeit so imperfectly, have I experienced recovery.

**And now, I would, with Moroni, recommend to you, my beloved brothers and sisters, that “ye seek this Jesus of whom the prophets have written...” (Ether 12:41).**

It is my prayer that some day, all Latter-day Saints will realize that these twelve steps of “recovery” are also the twelve steps of redemption from mortality. They are valuable and applicable to all of us—whether we admit to being addicts or not.

I remain ever your sister and friend in the worship of our Father  
in Heaven and of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

— *Colleen H.*

2012

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

# I TEACH THEM CORRECT PRINCIPLES

## An Introductory Discussion

### INTRODUCTION

The Prophet Joseph Smith was once asked how he had been able to inspire and govern a people who appeared to be as productive and *happy* as the Latter-day Saints. His answer was short and to the point: “I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves.” As with many prophetic utterances, this statement cuts deep, to the very *heart* of the matter of self-governance, an issue of central importance to addicted people.

Addicts are people with a problem—a problem they can’t solve on their own, a problem they can’t find enough willpower or “intestinal fortitude” to conquer on their own. Sometimes they feel unique in their weakness, that they are the worst of humanity. Sometimes the rest of humanity agrees. Little does the addict, or any of his or her critics, realize that when any of us face a problem of insurmountable proportions, we are actually facing the greatest truth we can ever know in mortality—the nature of our true relationship to God, that of ourselves we are “nothing,” while in God all wisdom and power reside.

It is very humiliating to admit such complete personal powerlessness and neediness, but addicts must admit it or die. The stark and startling truth, however, is all of us, *without exception*, come short of the power to save ourselves. No matter how minimal we’ve been able to keep our list of sins and shortcomings, no matter how much willpower and self-discipline we’ve been able to muster, we still fall short of His glory. Thus, the message of the Twelve Steps, especially

*We cannot believe what  
we will not even consider.*

—Colleen Harrison

*Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems.*

*—Alcoholics Anonymous*

when coordinated with the power and precepts of the Book of Mormon, is a message for *all* who are trying to survive these last days. It is more than appropriate for each of us to examine our lives, not just for alcohol or drug addiction, but for any challenge which leaves us devastated and demoralized, bankrupt of any will or desire to believe in ourselves, in life...and maybe even in God. The Twelve Steps were designed to bring us to a knowledge of God which is more honest, more personal, and more real than most of us have ever thought possible. And so I ask:

Do you have a problem? An insurmountable problem of any nature? Is there some aspect of your life in which you are out of control, unable to “govern” yourself or your life? Is it alcohol or some other drug, legal or illegal? Is it a compulsive sexual behavior pattern? Is it your weight or a disordered behavior towards food and eating? Is it compulsive use of money? Or excessive work commitments that consume your and your family’s lives? Or is your downfall a desperate obsession with trying to help and control and fix other people and their mistakes or die trying? All these problems and literally *any other* can be overcome by the application of true principles especially if applied in a certain order as set forth in this study guide.

I can take no credit for discovering these principles. Nor did I discover this formula for their successful application. The principles are of God, and as we will see, they are totally revealed and supported in the scriptures and teachings of the prophets. The successful formula or order for their application came from, of all seemingly unlikely sources, the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. These are the principles behind A.A.’s powerful Twelve Steps. To those of you who may be puzzled, thinking Alcoholics Anonymous a very unlikely source of guidance for those who already have the fullness of the Restored Gospel, I recommend a prayerful pondering of the following description of the prophet Mormon’s mind and the result of having such a mind:

**...and being somewhat of a *sober mind*, therefore I was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus. (Mormon 1:15; emphasis added)**

If, as Mormon implies, being “sober” is conducive to and eventually the equivalent of *knowing* Christ, it would seem to me that all of us could stand to pursue a course that has proven able to get more people sober than any other, and that we should certainly *not* fear it. According to the first two prophets of this dispensation, we of all people should be open-minded and willing to embrace truth no matter where we find it.

**[Latter-day Saints] should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up. (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 316)**

**I want to say to my friends that we believe in all good. If you can find a truth in heaven, earth or hell, it belongs to our doctrine. We believe it; it is ours; we claim it. (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 13:335)**

## QUALIFICATIONS

What is my motive in sharing this material with you? It is only to share the absolute witness I have found that there is power in the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ:

**...to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. (Isaiah 61:1)**

And how do I presume to be able to do this? What are my qualifications or credentials? They are stated perfectly in Mosiah:

**My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more. (Mosiah 27:29)**

*A new heart also will I  
give you, and a new spirit  
will I put within you...  
And I will put my spirit  
within you.*

—Ezekiel 36:26-27

In the years since I was led into a Twelve Step program, I have continually subjected the Twelve Step model to a gospel interrogation, testing it by the words of the prophets, both ancient and modern. In nothing have I found it lacking. Continually, it proves itself, when correlated with the teachings of the prophets to be "good"—as in, God-given.

**And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good. (Ether 4:12)**

In fact, not only have I not found it wanting, I have found it to be one of the simplest, most straightforward tools for connecting my confused and rebellious heart to the heart, mind and will of the Lord. In the process of coming down into the "depths of humility" (not just skimming its surface), and "becoming a fool before God" (losing every single 'trapping' of the traditional Mormon woman—my marriage and "happy" home), my heart has been purified, freed from idolatry, from reliance on fragile, earthly sources of well-being and validation. Gradually, in a very human, very imperfect, ebbing and flowing process, I have watched my heart transform. Though I have not crossed hundreds of miles of earthly wilderness in my personal trek, I have crossed light-years of mental, emotional and spiritual wilderness. And through the power of Christ, in the course of my scripture-based, Twelve Step-directed recovery, I found a change of heart I can only identify as Zion.

As I struggled through this journey of recovery, I kept extensive journals—and continue to do so. They are my confidante and sounding board as I record thoughts, feelings and even prayers. My journals are my liahona as I record thoughts and impressions from the Lord as conveyed to my heart and mind through the witness of the Holy Spirit.

As other people have asked me to share these things, I have done so with only one reservation. I have expressed this concern to the Lord in these terms, "Please don't let them rely for long on me or

anyone else for inspiration and personal witness. Please let my testimony to them be a taste of the truth and reality of finding their own way through these Steps to a living, working, loving, honest relationship with Thee, dear Lord." You see, while it is true we can *begin* our journey of recovery leaning on others, borrowing light, eventually we each come to a place where we must walk by our own personal revelation. As President James E. Faust testified:

**Some time ago in South America, a seasoned group of outstanding missionaries was asked, "What is the greatest need in the world?" One wisely responded, "Is not the greatest need in all of the world for every person to have a personal, ongoing, daily, continuing relationship with Deity?" Having such a relationship can unchain the divinity within us, and nothing can make a greater difference in our lives as we come to know and understand our divine relationship with God and His Beloved Son, our Master. (James E. Faust, "That We Might Know Thee," *Ensign*, Jan. 1999, 2)**

It is my testimony, because I have lived it through this recovery process in the Twelve Steps, that as we study and liken the scriptures and these true principles to our own lives, we can all come to know the voice of the Lord as it comes into our minds, even as Enos (**Enos 1:5, 10**). And we can perceive Him testifying to us, as Enos did, that our sins are forgiven. This is not the testimony of a therapist, doctor, priesthood leader, parent or friend, but of the Lord Himself, who cannot lie. This is the testimony which breaks the chains of the adversary's lying power over our souls.

Finally, I am very aware of the elements of "priestcraft,"

**That men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion. (2 Nephi 26:29)**

and I have covenanted with God to do three things to avoid it:

*While his religious convictions were very good, in his case they did not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience.*

—*Alcoholics Anonymous*

1.) Never allow myself or others to forget that there is only one name given whereby salvation cometh—Jesus Christ. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of our mortal experience (**3 Nephi 9:18**). I can teach, but I cannot transform. We must all rely “wholly upon [His] merits” (**2 Nephi 31:19**).

2.) To self-publish these attempts to carry the message of recovery and hope in Christ, so that they can be sold as close to cost as possible and the profit can be channeled back into the production of similar materials.

3.) To labor always for the building up of the kingdom of God and the establishment of Zion (the purifying of hearts) in all the earth.

**But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish. (2 Nephi 26:31)**

Back to our basic question: *Do you have a problem? Do you deal with something that you've tried everything you can think of to solve, and yet it continues and even gets worse?*

If you have a problem that fits this description, then this course is for you. If you don't, then you're probably not ready—yet. That's the only requirement for being part of this course—that you have a problem that you can't whip, and you're ready to admit it.

## **THERE IS A SOLUTION**

Don't be afraid to admit that you can't beat this problem on your own. That is the first step to overcoming it. There is a solution, I promise you. And this solution will not solve just the original problem that brought you here but *all* problems you apply it to.

I guess I sound a bit like one of those door-to-door people who sell a liquid cleaner that cleans *everything*. You know, now that I think about it, those peddlers have the advantage over me. Their solution is visible, and the very first thing they tell you to do with it is pour it directly on the problem spot and scrub on it. At least that makes sense.

As illogical as it may sound, what I'm going to do is ask you to stop focusing on the problem you're in a life and death struggle with, and turn your full attention instead in a direction that to the agnostic mind seems totally unrelated.

Wait, before we go on let's deal with my use of this phrase "the agnostic mind." Do you balk at the use of that phrase? Whether active LDS or not, whether self-destructing on work, food, sex or booze, do you still consider yourself a believer in God? Let me tell you, so did I. When I first read *Alcoholics Anonymous*, I totally skipped "Chapter Four: To the Agnostic." Not me, I thought. I'm not an agnostic.

But then, in my second recovery effort, the one where I reopened the basic A.A. texts after three years of relapse, I read the Fourth Chapter and wept as I realized that while I had been so very active in the Church, like the "good son" in the parable of the prodigal son, I had not come to know the Father or His Son, Jesus Christ. I began to realize the term "agnostic"—which applies to someone who only *hopes* God exists, but doesn't feel they can say they *know*—was actually true of *me*. I had to stop denying the fact that I had serious doubts about God's capacity to love and help someone as "messed up" as I was. I had to admit I turned to all kinds of other things for comfort and solace and strength to get through my days—things like food, money and compulsive working (cleaning, canning, cooking, controlling others, trying to be the perfect mother). I had to admit that, just like my alcohol-addicted mother, I was trying to drown my doubts and fears and guilt in my own forms of addiction.

I strongly suspect many of you, if you looked honestly and deeply enough, would have to admit you've shied away from seeking a spiritual answer to your struggle with addiction. I suspect that like me, whether you're active in the church or not, you're going to be very challenged to think a spiritual solution could eliminate addiction from your life when the best scientific, psychological, medical and social efforts have failed. The solution is going to be predominantly spiritual, invisible and totally paradoxical. But I can

*The main thing is that he be willing to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles.*

—*Alcoholics Anonymous*

*The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.*

—*Alcoholics Anonymous*

promise you, the results will be very observable with the human eye and very measurable. Days of sobriety from alcohol, drugs, and/or sex will begin to accumulate, with fewer and milder slips or temptations to slip. Weight will be lost, your checking account will balance consistently, confidence will increase, relationships with loved ones will adjust to healthier levels of honesty and respect.

And how can I promise you these results? Because it really is true: we were (and still are) spiritual entities, first and foremost. All things, including us, were and must always be created spiritually before they can be created physically.

**For by the *power of my Spirit* created I them; yea, all things both spiritual and temporal. (D&C 29:31; emphasis added)**

In this verse we hear God explain to us plainly that *all* that He does is accomplished by *spiritual* power. Any efforts on our part to create or to change something will be unsuccessful if we focus on the physical plane only. We might experience temporary success, but always the outward reality will go back to match the inner reality. *Permanent* change must begin from within. Our primary emphasis must be on the *spiritual*.

***First spiritual, secondly temporal, which is the beginning of my work. (D&C 29:32; emphasis added)***

**The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums. CHRIST [first] takes the slums out of people—and then they [have the vision and power to] take themselves out of the slums. (Ezra T. Benson, *Ensign*, July 1989, p. 4; emphasis added)**

What I lacked all those years that kept me from making President Benson’s promise a reality was belief in, and focus on, the “inside-out” approach to problem solving. This program of twelve true principles has been called a “program of recovery.” That is an appropriate description because if we will take the suggested action the

program outlines, we will find ourselves recovering our spiritual selves as we are restored to the closeness we once had with God. With that recovered relationship will come the vision of who we are and the power to transform the physical circumstances of our lives to reflect the new inner serenity—and it will happen automatically.

As I said earlier, I know I sound like one of those door-to-door miracle workers again, telling you that you won't even have to scrub on those problem spots in your life. That's okay, because I know I'm in good company. Not with them necessarily, but with Him who also knocked on doors wanting to come in and share a seemingly impractical answer (**Revelation 3:20**).

You see, the truth is that He, too, offered a solution that didn't seem to relate, a way that seemed totally irrelevant to the problem at hand. As far back as when He was dealing with Moses and the Children of Israel in the wilderness, He challenged His people to see through logic to spiritual power. Remember the story of the brass serpent which God told Moses to make and raise up, promising that simply *looking upon* it would heal the people. How much sense did that make? I can just hear the people now: "This guy's got to be crazy. Surely we have to do something more than that! Let's see, first we'll use a knife to make little cuts over the puncture wounds. Then we'll..."

*Heart-deep, soul-deep* healing doesn't happen by the efforts or power of man, no matter how logical or wise. Putting the emphasis on the spiritual reality and turning to God must come *first*.

**When we put God [and the spiritual life] first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord [must] govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities. (Ezra T. Benson, *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 4)**

Convinced? I hope so, because it's time to get on with getting on.

*Behold, 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

## EXPERIMENT UPON MY WORDS

So what are these correct principles? That's a good question, and that's what this course of study is all about.

Notice the words "course of study." This isn't a book you just read or a series of lectures you just listen to. This is a course, a journey, a program. It will take willingness to act upon it, willingness to get involved. Remember Alma's words:

**But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words... (Alma 32:27)**

That's all I'm asking of you. You must be willing to "experiment" upon these words, to act upon these correct principles. This is a *spiritual* program of *action*. What you are going to learn herein is the process of weaving spiritual power into physical actions.

Now, as you begin, you will need to realize that to whatever extent you have been trying to fix your life from the outside in and neglecting the inner person, you will find that inner self an undernourished and out-of-shape spiritual being. You will be tempted to think this malnourished, unexercised spiritual self is all there really is of you spiritually, that somehow you must have stowed away in the transport area when all the really valiant spirits were coming in the last days. I want to encourage you to withhold judgment until the end of this course of study. You see, the truth is, our spiritual self adapts to and is shaped by our beliefs and choices, and these beliefs and choices are either nourishing or starving our spiritual selves.

That's the good news of the Gospel and the good news of this course of study. We don't have to be discouraged by the neglected, undernourished/underexercised condition we find our spiritual selves in. We need only begin to spend the kind of time and attention in nourishing and exercising ourselves *spiritually/emotionally* as we *thought* we had to physically, and with miraculous quickness that spiritual self will begin to recover.

## SUMMARY

Though the promised results of this program will ultimately affect your physical/mortal circumstances and self, the program itself is a spiritual one. It will lead us through the study and application of twelve true principles. The study part we can help each other with. The application part, though, is totally individual. Each of you must take the action that is asked of you on your own. This is when it becomes a *totally* individualized program, reflecting completely your own sincerity and diligence. I'm familiar with a saying: *When the pain of the problem gets worse than the pain of the solution, we'll be ready to change.* (If you are puzzled over the meaning of that statement and need an example of what it means, just think how desperately ready to face labor and delivery the ninth month of pregnancy makes most women.)

In other words, if you find yourself not really willing to put forth the effort to work this program of spiritual focus, don't worry. Life will eventually bring you to a place of readiness to accept the truth that God and His ways (which are manifest *first* in spiritual powers) are the only solution that works. You see, that's what this life is all about—not to teach us self-reliance and self-sufficiency—but to bring us to a place of complete humility, to consider ourselves fools before (and without) God (**2 Nephi 9:42**). But then that brings us to the first principle of our journey of recovery. We'll study and discuss that next week.

## ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK:

Many people have asked me, "It's great to read President Benson's counsel to put God first in your life, but how do you do that?" The answer is so easy and simple that many won't believe it: I put God first in my life by putting Him first in my days—one day at a time.

Before our hearts and lives can change, we must be willing to change our level of effort—we must become willing to go to any

*When the spiritual  
malady is overcome,  
we straighten out  
mentally and physically.*

—Alcoholics Anonymous

length. If we're not willing, there is nothing God can do for us, for as the hymn says, "God can force no man to heaven" (*Hymns*, no. 240) or even change a man (or woman) for the better.

In return for my efforts to get up early and put Him first, I have had this promise from Him literally fulfilled:

**He that seeketh me early shall find me, and shall not be forsaken. (D&C 88:83)**

1. So get yourself a notebook or use your permanent journal (these things will be precious to you, I promise) and do three things:

PRAY

READ

WRITE

2. Read "What Is Capturing?" (page A-3) in the appendix at the end of this workbook.
3. Come prepared to share next week from your writing—that is, if you feel like it. See you next week.

**PREPARATION FOR DISCUSSION OF PRINCIPLE ONE:  
"O HOW GREAT IS THE NOTHINGNESS OF THE CHILDREN  
OF MEN" (HELANAN 12:7)**

Step 1: Admitted that we of ourselves are powerless, nothing without God. (Mosiah 4:5; Alma 26:12)

The following scriptures are provided to enable you to practice using the tools of scripture study, prayer and capturing, and to introduce you to the principle we will study in the next chapter. There are seven references listed—one for each day of the week. Take one reference each day and spend at least ten minutes prayerfully pondering and writing your thoughts about these references. *Although it may be tempting, please do not pass over these exercises.* Remember, this book is not meant to be a "quick-fix" or an end in itself. It is a means to the end we all hope to reach some day—a living testimony of our

Heavenly Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ. This end is well described by President Gordon B. Hinckley, encouraging us to:

**constantly nourish the testimony of our people concerning the Savior... [and to instill] a true witness in [each] heart of the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ, [in order that in each of our lives] all else will come together as it should... (Ensign, August, 1997, p.3.)**

**Day 1: 2 Nephi 9:39**—We often think of the word *carnal* as applying only to those people who appear to be very wicked. Look up the word *carnal* in the dictionary. Think of its definition as it applies to our efforts to solve our problems. Write about an area in your own life in which you are guilty of being “carnally minded” in regard to seeking solutions.

**Day 2: 2 Nephi 12:11**—Because we usually try to overcome our weaknesses alone, we fail time after time. How can this help in the process of humbling us? Write about a problem you have sought to solve yourself and how peaceful or permanent your efforts have been. What do you suppose it means that **“the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day”**—the day when our “lofty looks” shall be humbled and all truth shall be known?

**Day 3: 2 Nephi 31:19**—“for ye have not come thus far save it were by the \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_, relying \_\_\_\_\_ upon the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ who is mighty to \_\_\_\_\_.” Copy the above scripture into your journal, filling in the blanks. Have you ever been told or have you thought that a lack of self-esteem was the reason you were having problems? What does this scripture say to you in regard to this modern “god” of self? Who has power enough to save you? Who should you esteem? How much? Is it yourself?

**Day 4: Mosiah 2:21**—In this scripture we are taught that we can never, even if we try with *all* our energy, return more to the Lord than we are receiving. How does this scripture translate into your everyday life? Does it bring you despair or relief? Write to Him about your feelings.

**Day 5: Alma 26:12**—We are bombarded with philosophies, programs, planners, commercials, products, and medications that promise personal power. Think back over your life and admit in writing some of these things that have lured you. Did they solve your problem? Did they improve your relationship with the Lord? The principles in this course can introduce you to the true Source of power so that you can say as Ammon did, **“I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in HIS strength I can do all things.”**

**Day 6: Helaman 12:7**—**“O how great is the nothingness of the children of men.”** This is a pretty plain statement. Notice the phrase “the children of men.” That expression is used repeatedly through the scriptures, applied to those who have not yet been born of God and become His sons and daughters (see **Mosiah 27:25**). Write about this verse. (Look back to the previous verse [6] for some clues as to why we are nothing when we are the “children of men.”)

**Day 7: Moses 1:10**—After being in the presence of God for many hours, Moses witnesses to us the tremendous contrast in power, glory and strength between God and man, using the same word that is used in Helaman, that man is “nothing.” Why do you suppose we resist relying on God’s power and choose to lean, instead, on self and the answers the world provides?

**O HOW GREAT IS THE NOTHINGNESS  
OF THE CHILDREN OF MEN  
(Helaman 12:7)**

Step One: Admitted that we of ourselves are powerless,  
nothing without God. (Mosiah 4:5; Alma 26:12)

Principle One: I of myself am powerless—  
nothing without God.

In October 1986, President Ezra T. Benson addressed the assembled body of the Church, making a solemn pronouncement concerning the importance of the Book of Mormon. *Reading* this great book was not enough; we were also admonished to *live* by its precepts. Citing **D&C 84:54-58**, he applied those words directly to us in our day, calling upon us to examine our own attitude towards this book which would bring us closer to God than any other book. (See Introduction to the Book of Mormon for the full statement from the Prophet Joseph Smith.) President Benson all but openly charged us with treating this sacred record lightly. He reminded us that such **“vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation”** (D&C 84:55).

I was deeply affected by President Benson’s words that day. It felt like a prophetic warning, if not an outright reprimand. The word “condemnation” held the same chilling connotation to me as the word “bondage.” I was riveted by the similarity. I sensed there was a

connection between this “vanity and unbelief” and the state of heart and mind which lures people into addiction.

But what form of “vanity and unbelief” was President Benson referring to? I had to admit I knew a lot of church members, myself included, who would be delighted to have a bigger house, newer car, more clothes. Was that what this indictment of vanity meant? Somehow, the inclusion of the word “unbelief” with vanity seemed to imply something deeper than mere material wealth or appearances. How would the Prophet of the Lord—and the Lord through His Prophet—apply the concept of unbelief to the Church as a whole, active members included? After all, there we all were, within reach of his spoken or written declaration, dutifully paying attention. I puzzled and pondered these things as I continued to search the Book of Mormon for validation of the principles of Twelve Step recovery.

### THE DANGER IN EMPHASIZING SELF-RELIANCE OVER RELIANCE ON GOD

As I studied, the witness grew brighter and brighter to my mind and heart that this book—this amazing, wonderful Book of Mormon—was a clear and resolute testimony that there is no power in any of us—even the most righteous of us—that is not a gift of empowerment given through the grace and goodness of God, even the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. We are mistaken to think anything more of ourselves—to think our success or salvation in any area of life was coming because of our own “industry” (**Alma 4:6**), management, or genius (**Alma 30:17**).

Of course! This was it! This was the “vanity” and the “unbelief” that brings us into “condemnation” or bondage. It was the vanity of placing emphasis on *self-reliance*, *self-sufficiency*, *self-anything* above and before emphasis on the reality of seeking salvation in and through the Savior. One of the most damning fallacies Satan had so subtly twisted in my mind during all the years I had listened to church leaders stress self-reliance in temporal concerns, was that I also had to be self-reliant in my own salvation.

*Selfishness is one of the more common faces of pride. “How everything affects me” is the center of all that matters—self-conceit, self-pity, worldly self-fulfillment, self-gratification, and self-seeking.*

—Ezra Taft Benson

As I continued to study the Book of Mormon, I found no support for any of the ideas of self-reliance, self-mastery, or self-sufficiency. Instead, I found testimony everywhere that all my efforts at goal-setting, life planning or life-management were manifestations of vanity and unbelief, if they were not first based on prayerful counsel with the Lord (**Alma 37:37**) and then empowered by His grace (power to carry them out).

Insisting that all it takes to be successful in life is careful management sounds too similar to Korihor, one of the most adamant anti-Christ's in history.

**And many more such things did he say unto them [de-emphasizing God's power in their life], telling them... every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature. (Alma 30:17)**

And not only did Korihor insist that management was a sure source of salvation and success, he echoed our modern tendency to almost revere intellectual giftedness, advanced degrees and certain professions as a sign of the Lord's extraordinary favor.

**Therefore every man prospered according to his genius. (Alma 30:17)**

I was astounded as I honestly admitted how much like this *anti-Christ* my thinking had become. I had focused my attention and energy on management and genius as the "ways and means" to save myself. I shuddered to think how easily the adversary kept me trying one "half-measure" after another—all to no avail. I had to confess I had kept myself distracted and busy looking "beyond the mark." I began to inventory and assess myself. Had I been drawing near to Him with my lips, and even my actions, but doing so half-heartedly? Keeping my heart from Him? Was I professing Christ and then living as if He didn't really matter in my life, all in the name of self-sufficiency, self-reliance and self-mastery?

Awakened by my Twelve Step study of the Book of Mormon, I finally realized, as I had once heard it said: *True self-mastery comes*

*[Someone who is truly addicted] will be absolutely unable to stop...on the basis of self-knowledge. This is a point we wish to emphasize and re-emphasize.*

—*Alcoholics Anonymous*

from turning our “self” over to the Master. In the same spirit, I began to see that true reliance is reliance on the Master (**D&C 3:20**) and true sufficiency is found in turning to Him only who is sufficient (**Moroni 10:32**). I felt like I was seeing all these principles with new eyes—awakened eyes, and awakened ears and heart.

Church leaders were not promoting self-reliance before “God-reliance.” They were talking about the kind of sufficiency that comes from relying on the Lord *above* and *beyond* anyone or anything else.

**If we increase our dependence on anything or anyone except the Lord, we will find an immediate decrease in our freedom to act. (L. Tom Perry, *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, p. 65)**

**We should put God ahead of *everyone else* in our lives. (Ezra T. Benson, *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 4; original italics)**

**Yet 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. (Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, May, 1994, p.7)**

Instead, we as a people have turned to “self” *first*, putting the greatest emphasis on our own “industry,” bringing ourselves dangerously in line with the “people of the church” in Alma’s day:

**And it came to pass... that the people of the church began to wax proud [of their appearance, possessions, and position],...which they had obtained [according to their definition] by their industry. (Alma 4:6)**

## **THERE IS ONLY ONE WHO HAS ALL POWER**

In my search of the Book of Mormon, I found a totally different perspective. I found testimony of the Savior’s preeminence as the

only source of salvation. I also found some pretty strong statements concerning the state of my “self” when not surrendered to the mind and will of the Lord.

**Wherefore, all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer. (1 Nephi 10:6)**

Here was all the “plainness” and truth that Nephi gloried in: *All* mankind must rely on the Savior, even those who chart and goal-set their way through life. None are exempt, and nothing we do will recover us from the mortal weaknesses and character defects we have developed in our “lost and fallen state”—unless it includes coming to Christ in a *very* personal and singular way.

**Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those *who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit*; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered. (2 Nephi 2:7; emphasis added.)**

We are here on earth for the very purpose of either breaking or softening our hearts in order that they might be turned to God and godliness. We can either resist the laws of God, in which case our hearts will inevitably be broken, or we can try with all our hearts to live the law and gradually realize that no matter how hard we try, we can’t do it perfectly. Only after truly internalizing the fact of my own nothingness and powerlessness without God, can I hope to be endowed with the power of God. Meanwhile, whether we come to a broken heart by sinning, being sinned against or struggling futilely to perfect ourselves, we must all come to a place where we are humble enough to acknowledge that without Him we are nothing and can never answer the “ends of the law” ourselves. Jacob also testified of the need for total humility before God—even if it means looking like a fool:

**And save they shall cast these things away, and consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the**

*For I know that they must perish except they repent and return to him.*

—Moroni 9:22

*Sometimes we try to stop our addiction by turning to something else—like service or a worthy hobby. These things are good, but only as far as they go. Only returning to God has the power we need to live addiction free.*

—Colleen Harrison

***depths of humility, he will not open unto them. (2 Nephi 9:42; emphasis added)***

What things must we cast away? Any pride we connect to what we think are our own accomplishments due to our own wisdom, learning, and smart management.

*Often we turn to our addictions because we feel it is the only thing we can control and have our own way. At least we think we can control it. Unfortunately, all too soon, it ends up controlling us.*

—Anon

We must come to realize that no matter how rich or educated or talented we become in ways that impress other people, we are still *totally* upheld by the power of God, and God alone.

Brigham Young made it clear just where all accomplishments begin:

***Men know how to construct railroads and all manner of machinery; they understand cunning workmanship, etc; but all that is revealed to them by the Spirit of the Lord though they know it not. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, 5:124 p. 125; emphasis added)***

Quoting Isaiah, Jacob also teaches us the following:

***And it shall come to pass that the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. (2 Nephi 12:11)***

In what day shall the Lord alone be exalted? Generally, in the day of His glorious second coming. But this scripture applies in a far more personal way.

All of us must someday receive His coming into our own lives. We can either wait for that day when all will come to know His reality as He appears in the skies surrounded by legions of angels, *or* we can believe and study, search and hunger for a *personal* spiritual experience that would endow us with a sure knowledge of His living reality long before He comes to the world as a whole. The Prophet Joseph Smith stated it this way:

***For the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor know ye the Lord for all shall know him [who***

remain] from the least to the greatest. (Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook, eds. *The Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 4)

Not only can the reality of Christ be personally revealed to us, but *all* that the greatest prophet in the world knew is waiting to be unveiled to us as soon as we are ready. Joseph Smith himself promised this:

**God hath not revealed any thing to Joseph, but what he will make known unto the Twelve and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them. (Ehat and Cook, ed. *The Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 4; emphasis added)**

More recently Elder Bruce R. McConkie encouraged all members of the Church to seek this personal degree of revelation:

**I say that every member of the Church, independent and irrespective of any position that he may hold, is entitled to get revelation from the Holy Ghost; he is entitled to entertain angels; he is entitled to view the visions of eternity; and if we would like to go the full measure, he is entitled to see God the same way that any prophet in literal and actual reality has seen the face of Deity. (Bruce R. McConkie, "How to Get Personal Revelation," *New Era*, June 1980, 48)**

However, before He can extend this degree of knowledge to us, He must be sure we are thoroughly convinced of our own powerlessness without Him. Thus we all must follow a path into the depths of humility.

#### **GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS—ONLY OF HUMILITY AND DESIRE**

**And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul. (Enos 1:4)**

Enos is an example for those of us who have been active members of the Church all our lives and are still feeling empty and not really connected with God. Thus was Enos also. One day, as he was hunting, he began to recall the words his father had spoken concerning the joy of the Saints and eternal life. (If we've been raised by active parents who didn't, despite all their church work, ever convey to us that being a member of the Church was joyful, and that eternal life was an attainable hope, we might have difficulty relating to Enos and to his being motivated by his father's words.)

The point is still the same: Whether we come to this place of *hunger*, of intense need, of being at the end of our ability to go on as a result of rebelling against the law or being fervently obedient to the law, we *all* come to it eventually, without exception.

**I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants. (Mosiah 2:21)**

There it is, in black and white—the *truth* that we cannot *work* our way to worthiness; the *fact* that the busiest Relief Society president must be just as reliant on the mercy and grace of Christ as the most inactive and skeptical “lost sheep.”

Facing this thought, some of you might ask, “Then why have I been doing all of this? If that's true then why should I do any of this striving to be active in the Church?”

The answer to this question is actually pretty simple: *love*. This is another one of those places where we are looking past the mark (**Jacob 4:14**). Love is the only *valid* reason for all our work and devotion to the Church. However, love of others isn't always sufficient to motivate us to good works. Often, it is only our love for the Savior which moves us to act when we are feeling less than charitable

towards others (**Alma 37:36**). Sometimes we act out of duty, but duty is a poor substitute for genuine compassion and love. Duty can often deteriorate into a feeling of grudging participation. Such service may still bless those we serve, but according to the prophets, it will do the one giving it no good (**Moroni 7:8**).

As these concepts began to settle into my heart and mind, I began to realize how often I had given grudging gifts because of my focus on others and their weaknesses. Even after I began to understand the need to be motivated by love, I couldn't make my heart change. Even as King Benjamin had solemnly pronounced, I could not keep up with all the ways that I, as a mortal in a fallen state of existence, could be enticed into sin.

**And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them. (Mosiah 4:29)**

The truth is that even “after all that [I] can do” (2 Nephi 25:23), I will always fall short of being worthy to enter into His glory. I must have His grace, or in other words, His enabling power, or I am lost. (See “Grace” in the Bible Dictionary.) As the scriptures testify, we can answer the *beginnings* of the law, but we cannot answer the “ends of the law.” We have the power to choose to begin the journey Homeward by desiring it more than anything in this world and by being willing to set our feet on the path, but only He has the power to enable us to finish that process or journey. *Without Him we are powerless to maintain any good work.*

**And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay, Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you. (Mosiah 2:25)**

And now I ask, Can you or I say anything different of ourselves? No, we cannot.

*Perfectionism is not the same thing as doing everything correctly, it is the obsession with doing everything correctly.*

—Clean Hands, Pure Heart

*One of the hardest things to turn over to God is our desire to be perfect.*

—Colleen Harrison

**TOTAL BANKRUPTCY**

**For the natural man is an enemy to God [lives in ways that separate himself from God and His true principles], and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever. (Mosiah 3:19)**

*Some people really balk at the idea of admitting they are powerless... [They] do not understand that this admission of powerlessness—which sounds like defeat—is really the moment when everything in our lives can launch off in a new and wonderful direction, fueled by an infinite Source of Power—our Savior Jesus Christ.*

—Anon

Here's another one of those scriptures that we avoid likening to ourselves *personally* by applying it *generally* to all of humanity. It's too bad when we use this kind of generalization. This scripture, like all others, does not have power to change our personal lives until we read it for ourselves, applying it to ourselves individually. (For I, \_\_\_\_\_ [insert your name here], when I am turning away from God, living on my own resources, thinking I have some power outside of what He gives me, am choosing to behave like a "natural man" type of person. I have had the potential and freedom to choose that way from the time of my own personal fall when I left heaven and came to earth. Now, as a mortal, I am powerless to restore my former oneness with Him and with my eternal family in heaven. And besides that, I can't even quit using my addiction without His grace and power.)

**Therefore they have drunk *damnation* to their own souls. (Mosiah 3:25; emphasis added)**

Therefore, I had drunk (or in my case, eaten) damnation to my own soul—behaving in a way that blocked my spiritual growth. This damnation, or bondage, is the inevitable result of a life run on self-will and self-reliance.

**And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. (Mosiah 4:2)**

The day had to finally come for me when I was willing to admit I was in that completely powerless situation of nothingness.

**Even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness... and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility. (Mosiah 4:11)**

**For behold, are we not all beggars? (Mosiah 4:19)**

It's tempting to consider it some kind of cruel fate that God would require us to come unto Him—and when we do, to have our own nothingness “rubbed in our face.” With that to look forward to, why even go? Who wants such a helping of humble pie? Practically no one. Little do we realize that while we resist this admittance of total bankruptcy, the Lord Jesus Christ has enough mercy and grace to make up for all our shortcomings. He only awaits our thorough and fearless admittance of need. Hear His tender affirmation of this:

**And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness... For if they will humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. (Ether 12:27)**

Speaking of those who would inherit the promised land, the Lord said:

**And except they repent and turn to the Lord their God, behold, I will deliver them into the hands of their enemies; yea, and they shall be brought into bondage; and they shall be afflicted by the hand of their enemies. (Mosiah 11:21)**

Until the fateful day of September 11, 2001, we who have been born and grown to adulthood in the United States of America had no idea there were vicious and merciless enemies in our midst. The closest most of us have come is the little girl in sixth grade who enjoyed hating us as much as we did her; or maybe the neighbor who didn't keep a confidence we once shared. Under these circumstances we have been lulled into a slumber of complacency.

Most of us are just as ignorant or complacent towards the “enemies” of our spiritual life—our fears, resentments, guilt and sorrows—as we were of our physical enemies. We choose to hide in various compulsive or addictive behaviors rather than confront them. These retreats from the battle line of reality eat away at our sanity and our security and make us our own—and our loved ones—

*For many years I believed that the only way to overcome my addiction was to “stuff” my desires as much as possible, to keep them contained or repressed. However, using this approach, I found myself virtually unable to resist a single urge to act out.*

*—Clean Hands, Pure Heart*

worst enemy. Just as in the time of Captain Moroni, the enemies within our hearts are our greatest threat.

While we here in the United States were spared for over two hundred years from the attacks of outside enemies, we were free to become a people who could pay attention to the deadly enemies of the human spirit—our fears, resentments, guilt, and bitterness of heart. Instead, far too many of us spent most of our discretionary time and money on the “things of this world.” It is my prayer that it is not too late for us to repent (turn again) to the Lord God of this land, even Jesus Christ (**Ether 2:12**).

### **CONCLUSION: 100% POWERLESS WITHOUT GOD**

**And there was no way that they could deliver themselves out of their hands. (Mosiah 21:5)**

**For I am unworthy to glory of myself. (Mosiah 23:11)**

**And were it not for the interposition of their all-wise Creator,...they must *unavoidably* remain in bondage until now. (Mosiah 29:19; emphasis added)**

Here are three more scriptures to “liken unto ourselves” if we want them to really speak to us. Blending them together, we might hear them say: There is no way, child, that you can deliver yourself from your enemies—your fear, your anger, and your guilt—that you are attempting to avoid by using your addiction. *Avoidance is not deliverance*. Of yourself, you are unworthy and have no glory or power. Until you realize that it is the power of Christ and His atonement and grace that is “sufficient for you” (**Moroni 10:32**), you will remain in bondage, having no power of yourself to free yourself.

We must all come to a place where we realize the following as Ammon did:

**Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself. (Alma 26:12)**

**I behold that ye are *lowly in heart*; and if so, blessed are ye. (Alma 32:8; emphasis added)**

**And now, because ye are compelled to be humble blessed are ye; for a man sometimes, if he is compelled to be humble, seeketh repentance; and now surely, whosoever repenteth shall find mercy. (Alma 32:13)**

In this last verse God reveals to us plainly His motive in allowing us to be afflicted by our own sins or the sins of another: He is trying to bring us to a place where we are so “bottomed out” in the depths of humility that we will finally give up hope on any other sources except Him, and turn from reliance on “the arm of flesh,” whether it’s our own or someone else’s. He can’t give us all that He has unless we repent (which means simply to *turn again* to Him). He can’t cross our agency and just make us be humble, so the only resort He has is to allow us to be buffeted and to suffer until we are ready to turn to Him.

**For he beheld that their afflictions had truly humbled them, and that they were in a preparation to hear the word. (Alma 32:6)**

We face two kinds of afflictions in this world: those that come upon us seemingly without our choice or foreknowledge, and those we bring upon ourselves by our own choices. One way or the other, all afflictions are for only one purpose: to bring us to Christ, for He is “the word,” and the *only* name whereby salvation cometh.

**Thus we may see that the Lord is merciful unto all who will, in the sincerity of their hearts, call upon his holy name. (Helaman 3:27; emphasis added)**

The key phrase here is “sincerity of their hearts.” If we are rigorously honest with ourselves, we have to admit that we have really prayed “in the sincerity of our hearts” (with real heartfelt emotion) only when something so big and so traumatic was happening—a loved one was dying, for instance—that we knew we had *no other resort* except God. On those occasions we prayed as if every word,

*Humility is a choice. It is not something we have, it is something we do.*

—Clean Hands, Pure Heart

*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

—Isaiah 1:18

every emotion, was being ripped straight out of our deepest, most central inner place—our hearts.

Only when we can get up every day of our lives and admit our own powerlessness in the same manner we do in the face of death will we have come to realize the truth as these scriptures have been trying to convey it to us.

#### **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK:**

1. Think and pray about being willing to attend a Twelve Step meeting if it's possible to do so, and take part in the sharing time. It is the tradition in Twelve Step meetings that each person who so desires may have a turn to share his or her thoughts, feelings, and insights without interruption or comment from others. A great deal of learning goes on, in the same spirit described in the following quote from the Prophet Joseph Smith, found in Truman Madsen's book, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (p. 84):

First, they were not simply to listen to one speaker. A teacher was to be appointed, said the revelation, and **"let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time, and let all listen to his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege."**

A beautiful teaching principle: the need for each person present to participate, contributing his or her insight and experience on a given theme.

2. Call another member of the Twelve Step program you have chosen to attend (or a good friend) and share something you've thought or felt as you've done your reading, scripture study, and capturing. These "reach out" calls are some of the most powerful services we can give in a Twelve Step program.
3. Be willing to teach your spouse, child, parent, or close friend some of these ideas if the comfortable opportunity presents itself.

As you teach by the Spirit, you will find that *you* learn more every time you rehearse the material.

**PREPARATION FOR DISCUSSION OF PRINCIPLE TWO:  
“I GLORY IN MY JESUS” (2 NEPHI 33:6)**

Step 2: Came to believe that God has all power and all wisdom and that in His strength we can do all things. (Mosiah 4:9; Alma 26:12)

**Day 1: 2 Nephi 2:2**—One element of the greatness of God is His ability and desire to consecrate our afflictions for our gain. Look up the meaning of the word consecrate in the dictionary. Write the definition in your journal. Write about the afflictions that have come into your life. Keep in mind that afflictions can be trials, heartaches, or illnesses, anything that causes you pain and distress, including your own mistakes. How have you seen the consecrating power of God applied to these afflictions?

**Day 2: 2 Nephi 4:19**—Nephi, a prophet of God, humbly admits to God that he is harassed by temptation and sin. Why do you think God wanted him to record this and then allowed it to be preserved and handed down to us? Who is it that has strengthened Nephi? Who has he learned to trust? What do you think it is that he trusts the Lord can do for him? Can you trust that the Lord has enough mercy and power to redeem even you? Why?

**Day 3: 2 Nephi 33:6**—I glory in \_\_\_\_\_, I glory in \_\_\_\_\_, I glory in my \_\_\_\_\_, for he hath redeemed my soul from \_\_\_\_\_. Copy this scripture into your journal, filling in the blanks. Hell is a state of being “dead” or “damned.” Addictions put us in hell on earth. Our spirits feel dead or stopped from growth. Write about a behavior that you keep repeating that keeps you from growing and being a progres-

sively better you. Who is it that Nephi assures us has power to get us out of our personal hell?

**Day 4: Mosiah 4:6**—I often say that I believe in the goodness of God, but when it comes right down to believing that this goodness is extended to *me* by *my* Savior I lose my faith. I would ask you in the words of King Benjamin “**if you have come to a knowledge of the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, and his matchless \_\_\_\_\_, and his \_\_\_\_\_, and his \_\_\_\_\_ towards [you]**”? Has this happened to you? Describe how this belief (or lack of it) impacts your life and influences your compulsive/addictive behaviors.

**Day 5: Mosiah 4:8**—Salvation means to save or preserve something precious. Christ’s atonement is His testimony to us of how precious we are to Him and to the Father. Keep track today of some of the little ways, the positive coincidences, the tiny blessings that demonstrate your preciousness. At the end of the day, record a few in your journal. If you do not honestly feel precious before Him, speak to Him, in writing, of your honest feelings.

**Day 6: Mosiah 11:23**—When we are under the influence of any addiction, one way to describe our situation is to say that we are in \_\_\_\_\_. Is our addiction really the primary sin we need to repent of, or is it just a symptom? According to Abinadi, what is the true root of sin?

**Day 7: Alma 24:10**—Capture this scripture for yourself. What does it teach you personally? Freedom from the bondage of addiction is a gift from God. Here Alma thanks God for three great gifts. What are they? Write about them in your own words.