

In The Master's Hands and in His Heart
Never Too Broken to Be Made
New

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INTRODUCTION

People facing addiction, emotional wounds, or lifelong patterns of brokenness often feel trapped between who they are and who they long to be. Shame, fear, and confusion create barriers that can seem insurmountable. Many struggle silently, believing their pain is too deep, their past too dark, or their failures too repeated to ever find healing.

This book was written for you.

It is not a theological textbook or psychological manual. It is a companion — a guide for those who have known hurt, battled destructive habits, or endured spiritual dryness. It combines personal testimony, biblical truth, and practical recovery principles to illuminate a path toward healing.

Whether you are new to recovery or have walked this road before, this book invites you into an honest exploration of your story and God's story — and how the two intertwine.

You are not beyond hope.
You are not beyond healing.
You are never too broken to be made new.

PREFACE

People do not need formal training in theology to draw near to God any more than an infant needs intellectual sophistication to enjoy a mother's love. Relationship comes before understanding. And yet, the richness of a person's relationship with God often grows in proportion to the time and attention given to it. The sooner you begin investing in that relationship, the deeper the rewards.

Christianity is, at its core, a reasonable faith — not blind belief, but faith rooted in history, experience, and the self-revelation of God. It traces a coherent thread from creation to redemption, showing God's persistent pursuit of humanity. This pursuit culminates in Jesus Christ, whose life and sacrifice reveal both the depth of our brokenness and the greater depth of God's love.

The reflections in this book come from someone of humble estate — a flawed man who has experienced both self-inflicted wounds and grace-driven healing. My journey has taken me through addiction, emotional isolation, family pain, and spiritual confusion, but it has also led me into recovery, community, and renewed purpose through God's mercy.

I expect readers to approach this book with thoughtful skepticism — that is healthy. My goal is not to demand belief, but to invite exploration. If these pages encourage you to seek God more earnestly or to engage in recovery more honestly, then they have served their purpose.

PART I

FOUNDATIONS OF A REASONABLE FAITH

CHAPTER 1

Starting Points for the Search for God

Every journey toward God begins somewhere — often in uncertainty, pain, curiosity, or longing. For many, spiritual exploration feels overwhelming. The concepts seem foreign. The language used by religious communities can be confusing. Some walk away not because they lack desire, but because they lack clarity.

A helpful way to begin is by examining what scholars call presuppositions — the beliefs we carry with us before we fully understand or evaluate them. These beliefs shape our worldview. Some arise from childhood, some from culture, some from experience, and some from intuition. As we mature, we assess these assumptions and decide which to keep, which to question, and which to discard.

Our beliefs about God also rest on presuppositions. Below are the key presuppositions on which this book is built. You may accept or reject them — but exploring them thoughtfully will strengthen your understanding.

1. God exists and desires relationship
He is the creator and sustainer of all things and invites people of every background into fellowship with Him.
2. God has spoken through Scripture
He has inspired a written record of His actions, character, and purpose for humanity.
3. Every person has inherent worth
You are precious to God, uniquely designed for purpose and potential.
4. Every person is broken in some way
We all carry wounds, sins, habits, and experiences that hinder healthy relationships with God and others.

5. God has provided a path to healing

Through Jesus Christ, God removes barriers and offers transformation to all who seek Him.

These presuppositions are the foundation upon which the rest of this book is built. They are not conclusions imposed on you — they are invitations to explore the possibility of a God who both knows you fully and loves you deeply.

CHAPTER 2

Understanding Key Biblical Terms

Spiritual confusion often arises because biblical or church-related terms feel foreign or outdated. If you are exploring faith or recovery, clarity matters. The following definitions are simple and practical, designed to help you navigate the rest of this book more easily.

Sin

In ancient archery, to “sin” meant “to miss the mark.” Spiritually, sin refers to falling short of God’s design for humanity. It is less about rule-breaking and more about brokenness.

Sinner

Not a label of shame, but a description of humanity’s condition: we all fall short of God’s perfection.

The Holy Bible

A collection of inspired writings — history, poetry, prophecy, letters — through which God reveals His nature, His works, and His plan for redemption.

Scripture

Any portion of the Bible, whether a book, chapter, or verse. Usually presented by a book’s abbreviation, chapter number, and verse; for example, in the Book of John — Jn 3:16.

Christ / Messiah

Titles meaning “Anointed One,” referring to Jesus as the one sent to save,

restore, and reconcile humanity to God. In the scriptures those “Anointed” (dedicated through the application of a special oil) were Prophets (those empowered to speak on God’s behalf), Priests, and Kings. Jesus fulfills all of these roles.

Holy / Holiness

To be “set apart for God.” Holiness is not moral superiority; it is alignment with God’s character and purpose.

Gospel/Good News

Those portions of scripture detailing Jesus’ coming to earth and His acts to restore broken humanity to God.

These terms will appear throughout the book. Understanding them not only strengthens your spiritual vocabulary but also opens the door to deeper insight into recovery, redemption, and your own story.

PART II

RECOVERY: WHERE HEALING BEGINS

CHAPTER 3

Hurts, Habits, and Hang-Ups

Recovery rarely begins in isolation. Most people who seek healing discover quickly that they cannot face their hurts, habits, or emotional struggles alone. Every person carries wounds—some obvious, others hidden—and these wounds shape how we act, react, and relate to the world.

For many, the first step toward healing comes in the form of small recovery groups. These groups create a safe environment where honesty is welcomed, vulnerability is respected, and transformation is possible. Such was my own story: during seasons of deep struggle, small circles of people seeking recovery helped me find stability, courage, and, eventually, hope.

Many programs follow a structure known as the Twelve Steps, originally designed to help individuals overcome addiction but now adapted for a wide range of emotional and relational struggles. While programs vary, the steps themselves remain consistent in purpose: to move a person from denial, isolation, and brokenness toward honesty, accountability, spiritual awakening, and healthy relationships.

Below is a simplified form of the steps for accessibility:

1. We admitted we were powerless to solve our problems and that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God.
4. We made a deep, honest moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We confessed to God, to ourselves, and to another person the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We became entirely ready to have God remove our defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of those we had harmed and became willing to make amends.
9. We made amends where possible, unless doing so would cause further harm.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and promptly admitted when we were wrong.
11. Through prayer and meditation, we sought deeper contact with God.
12. Having experienced spiritual awakening, we carried the message to others and practiced these principles in all our affairs.

Most recovery groups do not require participants to identify God in any particular way. People are respected wherever they are spiritually. For me, however, the “Higher Power” was unmistakable: the eternal “I AM,” revealed through God’s Word and ultimately through Jesus Christ.

The Twelve Steps helped reveal my wounds.
God helped heal them.

In recognition of the fact that there may be some who are not ready or willing at this present time to share their brokenness with others, may I suggest that you make a journal where you can address specific issues that you struggle with and begin to work through the healing steps as listed.

Beginning to be utterly honest with yourself will open the door to be honest with others.

CHAPTER 4

God Exists and Seeks Relationship

If God exists — and desires relationship — then we must ask how He reveals Himself. Scripture states:

“Since the creation of the world His [God’s] invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen...”
Romans 1:20

The Bible does not attempt to be a complete world history. Instead, it presents a focused narrative: the story of God’s interaction with humanity. It describes the creation of the universe, the formation of humankind, and the unfolding of God’s plan to redeem a broken world.

What God creates, He calls good.
When He creates humanity, He calls it very good.

Humanity’s fall — through disobedience, pride, and rebellion — this introduces suffering into the world. Yet even in the earliest moments of failure, God initiates a plan to restore His creation.

John’s Gospel reveals this restoration in profound terms:

***“All things came into being through Him” [Jesus; The Living Word]... “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.”
John 1:3–4***

The God who shaped the universe does not remain distant. He enters His creation. He calls individuals like Abraham, forms a covenant people, reveals His will through law and prophecy, and ultimately fulfills His promises through Jesus Christ.

***“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”
John 1:14***

This is not a vague, impersonal deity.
This is a relational God pursuing broken people.

CHAPTER 5

God Has Spoken Through Scripture

If God desires to be known, it makes sense that He would communicate clearly. Scripture presents itself as that communication — a collection of writings inspired by God, preserved through generations, unified in message, and powerful in impact.

The Bible contains:

- History
- Poetry
- Prophecy
- Wisdom literature
- Letters
- Eyewitness testimony

Despite its many genres, the message remains unified:
God creates, loves, redeems, restores, and invites.

Scripture encourages examination. In Acts 17:11, the Bereans examined the Scriptures every day to verify the spiritual claims presented to them. They did not accept teachings blindly. They tested everything against God’s Word.

The Bible is not merely a historical record. It is a voice — God’s voice — revealing His heart, His standards, His patience, and His grace.

To grow spiritually, we must engage Scripture thoughtfully. To recover emotionally, we must allow its truth to challenge and reshape us.

CHAPTER 6

You Are Precious and Purposeful

Every human life carries inherent value — not because of accomplishment or perfection, but because God has created each person with intention and love.

This means God is not distant. He is attentive, caring, and invested in your healing.

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28

Yet every person is broken in some way. Some wounds result from our own choices. Others come from childhood trauma, betrayal, illness, or abandonment. Still others develop from the slow erosion of emotional neglect or the relentless pressure to perform.

The church, ideally, should be a place where broken people find help. In reality, churches carry their own culture, traditions, and imperfections. But they also contain people who love God deeply and long to love others well.

To understand your worth, you must confront several truths:

- Submission to God is freedom, not oppression.
- Everyone is broken — including those who seem confident.
- You are a “trophy of grace,” not a disappointment to God.
- Cultural baggage should never overshadow spiritual truth.
- One size does not fit all — your journey may differ from others.

If Jesus came to restore broken people, then the presence of brokenness in your life is not evidence of failure — it is evidence that His mission applies to you.

Your brokenness does not disqualify you.
It is the very reason God draws near.

PART III

THE WOUNDED CHILD WITHIN

CHAPTER 7

Why Control Feels Necessary

The need to control life does not arise in a vacuum. It grows from wounds — often early ones — where instability, fear, or trauma shaped how we learned to survive. Many adults carry an inner child who was never protected, never heard, or never comforted. This child learned to adapt by grasping for control wherever possible.

My own childhood was marked by abuse and uncertainty. My parents divorced when I was very young. My stepfathers were frequently absent — whether physically, emotionally, or because of alcoholism. We moved often. Paychecks were unreliable. Fear and tension were frequent visitors in our home. In such an environment, a child learns quickly:

- If you have something of value, someone might take it.
- If you reveal weakness, someone might exploit it.
- If you lose control, you may get hurt again.

These beliefs planted seeds of mistrust that would grow far into adulthood. Even after I appeared “grown,” the wounded child inside me still operated behind the scenes — shaping my relationships, my emotions, my habits, and my self-protection strategies.

Many people carry similar wounds:
abandonment, instability, criticism, neglect, favoritism, or exposure to addiction, conflict, or fear.

Children cannot process emotional chaos.
So they develop survival strategies.

For some, it becomes perfectionism.
For others, anger or withdrawal.
For others still, addiction, fantasy, or emotional detachment.

For me, it became control.
A vow: *No one will ever hurt me again.*

But vows made in childhood often become prisons in adulthood.

True healing does not come from protecting the wounded child —
but from listening to him, understanding him, and allowing God to comfort him.

Acknowledging your wounded child is not weakness.
It is the beginning of transformation.

CHAPTER 8

Powerlessness and the Beginning of Change

Few words make adults more uncomfortable than powerless, helpless, or dependent. These words touch something deep — the vulnerable parts of ourselves we’ve spent a lifetime defending.

Yet recovery begins with one of the most challenging admissions:

“My life has become unmanageable.” **Step 1.**

This admission can feel humiliating. But in reality, it is liberating.

Before I reached this point, I relied on several unhealthy coping mechanisms:

- emotional detachment
- secretive behavior
- pornography
- alcohol abuse
- avoidance of difficult conversations
- hiding behind competence and responsibility

These habits did not arise randomly. They were attempts to soothe, numb, or escape emotional pain that I did not know how to confront.

For years, I maintained an outward image of strength while my inner world was crumbling. Depression crept in. Stress mounted. Relational pressures intensified. And through it all, I clung to the illusion that I could manage everything myself.

Eventually, the façade broke. My strategies no longer worked. My emotional reserves drained. My relational patterns collapsed under their own weight.

It was then that I discovered the truth:

Powerlessness is not the end.
It is the doorway to help.

Recovery teaches that admitting weakness is not a sign of failure — it is the essential first step to healing. It is the moment when self-reliance surrenders to grace, and hiding gives way to honesty.

You cannot heal what you refuse to acknowledge.
You cannot fix what you refuse to admit is broken.
You cannot carry alone what was meant to be shared.

When I embraced Step 1 — truly embraced it —
something inside me began to change.

I discovered that powerlessness is not a destination.
It is the beginning of hope.

CHAPTER 9

Insanity: Repeating Old Patterns

In recovery circles, people often define insanity as:

“Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

While not a clinical definition, it captures a powerful emotional truth: humans tend to repeat unhealthy patterns long after we recognize their harm.

I grew up in an environment where patterns of stress, escape, and conflict repeated endlessly:

Stress → Escape → Drugs/Alcohol → Suspicion → Conflict →
Shame → Silence → Repeat

This cycle became “normal” to me as a child, and I unknowingly carried it into adulthood. Even when I tried to build a healthier life, my responses to stress — withdrawal, avoidance, substance use, emotional shutdown — replayed the past in new settings.

Many destructive patterns are learned unconsciously:

- emotional shutdown
- guilt avoidance
- people-pleasing
- addictive behavior
- relational sabotage
- perfectionism
- escapism (media, fantasy, food, work)

Breaking these patterns requires more than determination. It requires *transformation*. This begins with Step 1.

Patterns do not change simply because we “decide” they should. They change when we uncover their roots, bring them into the light, and allow God and others to help reshape them.

Step 2 invites us to believe:

“A power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

This belief does not demand full understanding. It requires a willingness to hope — perhaps for the first time in a long time.

Recovery does not judge the wound. It seeks its source. Then it brings that wound to a place where healing can happen.

Insanity ends where honesty begins. And honesty begins the moment we say: —I’m tired of repeating the same painful cycle.

CHAPTER 10

Step 2 – Coming to Believe

Belief does not usually burst into a person's life fully formed. It grows slowly — often through the presence of compassionate people who expect nothing in return.

In my journey, God used the kindness of others to open my eyes.
Men who listened without judgment.
People who shared their own struggles.
Individuals who accepted me before I was healed.

These people did not preach at me.
They walked with me.

Their acceptance became the first evidence that real love — and real healing — might be possible. Their authenticity helped me see that God might be closer than I imagined.

Step 2 is not a theological exam.
It is a quiet shift inside the heart:

“Maybe... just maybe...
there is hope for me.”

This step leads to essential questions:

- What if God is not distant?
- What if my life could actually change?
- What if my wounded child does not have to stay wounded?
- What if God really does restore what is broken?

Belief begins with possibility, not certainty.

For me, Step 2 unfolded slowly — through conversations, recovery meetings, Scripture, and the increasing awareness that my life did not have to remain in bondage to past patterns.

Coming to believe is not about knowing everything.
It is about being willing to hope again.

CHAPTER 11

Step 3 – Turning Our Will Over to God

Turning your life and will over to the care of God is not a single event — it is a lifelong posture, formed slowly through trust, honesty, and humble awareness. Many people imagine Step 3 as a dramatic spiritual experience or a moment of emotional breakthrough. Sometimes it is. More often, it begins quietly.

Surrender is not passive resignation.
It is active partnership with God.

This step invites you to move from self-reliance to God-dependence, from isolation to relationship, from control to trust. It requires four internal movements of the heart:

1. Awareness — Recognizing God’s presence and acknowledging your need for Him.
2. Trust — Believing that God is good, wise, and invested in your healing.
3. Honesty — Bringing your real self into His presence, without masks.
4. Willingness — Choosing to let God lead your steps, your growth, and your recovery.

Spiritual practices become increasingly important here:

- Scripture shapes the mind.
- Prayer shapes the heart.
- Honest relationships shape character.

In my own life, Step 3 meant letting go of the belief that I alone could fix my brokenness. It meant admitting that transformation was not something I could force through effort — it was something God would form in me as I cooperated with Him.

Surrender is not the end of self — it is the beginning of freedom.

CHAPTER 12

Steps 4 & 5 – Moral Inventory

The **Fourth Step** — “a searching and fearless moral inventory” — is one of the most challenging and transformative moments in recovery. It asks us to look honestly at ourselves, to name our patterns, motives, wounds, sins, fears, resentments, and harmful behaviors without minimizing or excusing them.

Most people spend their lives avoiding painful self-examination. But recovery depends on it.

A moral inventory is not an exercise in shame — it is an exercise in clarity.

In this process, you reflect on questions such as:

- What fears have shaped my behavior?
- What patterns have harmed me or others?
- Where have I acted out of insecurity, anger, or woundedness?
- What secrets have I carried that need to be brought into light?

When I began my own inventory, resistance came naturally:

“I’m not that bad.”

“Others had it worse.”

“I’ve improved.”

“That’s all in the past.”

But honesty stripped away those excuses. I encountered forgotten memories, unrecognized motivations, and areas of selfishness I had long ignored.

Then came **Step 5** — sharing these truths with God, with myself, and with a trustworthy person. The fear of being known is often greater than the fear of staying broken.

But when I shared my story with safe, compassionate men in recovery, something surprising happened: I experienced love instead of judgment, understanding instead of rejection.

Confession breaks the power of secrecy.
Honesty opens the door to healing.
Vulnerability allows others to walk with us.

Freedom begins where secrets end.

CHAPTER 13

Humor, Defenses, and Hidden Emotions

Every person develops defenses to cope with pain. For some it is anger, for others silence, busyness, escapism, or emotional numbness. For me, it was humor — dramatic, exaggerated, polished humor that hid deep wounds behind a smiling façade.

Humor became a shield:
If others laughed, they wouldn't look too closely.
If I exaggerated my emotions, I wouldn't need to expose the real ones.
If I kept conversations light, no one would ask difficult questions.

But defenses — even clever ones — cannot protect us forever. They eventually become barriers to emotional intimacy, honesty, and

spiritual growth. They block connection with the people we love and keep us from experiencing God's comfort.

Recovery required me to ask hard questions:

- What am I hiding behind humor?
- What feelings have I never allowed myself to express?
- What am I afraid others will see if I stop performing?

I began to recognize that much of my emotional avoidance stemmed from early wounds. As a child, strong feelings were unsafe. As an adult, I continued to protect myself the same way.

Learning to express authentic emotion — without overdramatizing or hiding — was painful at first. But it slowly created space for deeper connection with others.

Maturity looks like telling the truth about how we feel.
Healing looks like replacing defenses with courage.

CHAPTER 14

Higher Power, Hour by Hour

Step 5 becomes real through practice — not a one-time prayer, but a daily awareness of God's presence and a moment-by-moment willingness to trust Him.

I began imagining simple conversations with God:

“Where were You?”

“Right here.” [remembering Psalm 34:17-18]

“Why didn't I see You?”

“You weren't looking.”

These moments helped me realize that God's nearness does not fluctuate — only my attention does.

Growing in awareness required intentional habits:

- slowing down
- listening inwardly and spiritually
- examining my motives
- practicing gratitude
- inviting God into decisions and feelings
- naming my fears honestly
- responding to conviction instead of resisting it

For years, I hoped change would happen suddenly — that a dramatic spiritual experience would eliminate my struggles. But recovery taught me a different lesson:

Most transformation happens gradually.
Daily.
Quietly.
Faithfully.

God uses practice, repetition, honesty, and relational support to form new patterns in place of old ones. As we lean into His presence, our desires slowly change, our reactions soften, and our character begins to reflect His grace.

Surrender becomes not an obligation, but a rhythm of life.

CHAPTER 15

Step 6 – Becoming Ready for Growth

Step 6 says:

“We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”

For many, the word *all* feels overwhelming. How can anyone be “entirely ready” for such comprehensive change? But the key to Step 6 lies not in perfection — but in willingness.

Readiness is not completion.
Readiness is openness.

Being “entirely ready” means:

- Listening honestly to God and others
- Searching your motives and reactions
- Recognizing patterns you can no longer justify
- Accepting accountability
- Being willing to let go of what harms you
- Trusting God enough to allow Him to reshape you

Growth unfolds in cycles, not straight lines:

awareness → confession → change
awareness → confession → deeper change

The Christian life is not behavior modification.
It is transformation through the Holy Spirit.

God does not expose defects to shame us —
He reveals them so He can free us.

Step 6 opens your heart to that freedom.

PART V

TRANSFORMATION

CHAPTER 16

When Strength Becomes Weakness

For many people, strength becomes a way of life — a shield forged in childhood, hammered into shape through hardship, and worn like armor. When you grow up in an environment where chaos, instability, or emotional inconsistency rule the day, you learn to survive by being strong. But survival skills do not always translate into healthy adult living.

For me, strength became a kind of identity. I learned early that showing weakness invited trouble. If I appeared capable, dependable, or self-sufficient, others would rely on me — and that gave me a sense of control in a world that felt uncontrollable.

Later, in the military, I discovered a form of equality: everyone was pushed, everyone was challenged, everyone endured stress. Many struggled under the pressure, but for me, it felt familiar — even strangely comfortable. I had lived in tension for so long that I knew how to survive it.

But what I perceived as resilience was often emotional detachment. What I called strength was sometimes avoidance. What looked like self-sufficiency on the outside was isolation on the inside.

As life progressed, this “strength” began to crack. The pressures of marriage, parenting, health challenges, addiction, work responsibilities, and church involvement built up until they became overwhelming. I tried to handle it the only way I knew how — alone. When that failed, I slipped into old destructive patterns, isolating myself further and numbing my pain.

The unraveling was painful. But it was also the moment God used to show me a difficult truth:

Sometimes the very strengths that once protected you become the weaknesses that keep you from healing.

Transformation began when I accepted that my version of strength was not God's version. His strength begins at the end of mine. And His invitation to surrender was not a call to collapse — but a call to finally let Him hold what I had carried alone for far too long.

CHAPTER 17

Intervention and Community

While I wrestled with denial and isolation, my wife recognized long before I did that we needed help. She sought out support groups, engaged with AL-ANON, and surrounded herself with people who understood addiction and family dysfunction. Her willingness to seek community created a doorway for my own healing.

My turning point came unexpectedly when a Celebrate Recovery group visited our church. Their testimonies were raw, honest, and unvarnished. People spoke openly about hurts, addictions, brokenness, and the grace they had found through Christ-centered recovery.

Their authenticity disarmed me.
Their vulnerability convicted me.
Their honesty invited me.

I went to my first meeting, unsure of what to expect. Instead of judgment, I found acceptance. Instead of shallow conversation, I found genuine connection. Instead of pretending, I found people willing to be real.

Recovery required something I had resisted for years:

Step 7—the humility to admit I needed others; beginning with God.

Transformation rarely happens in isolation. God uses community — real, imperfect, honest community — to do what we cannot do alone. Through small groups, sponsors, friendships, and accountability, He rebuilds us piece by piece.

Community is not a threat to strength.
It is one of the ways God pours strength back into us.

CHAPTER 18

The Lighter Side of Recovery

One of the most surprising discoveries in recovery was joy. I expected seriousness, solemnity, maybe even heaviness. Instead, I found:

- laughter
- compassion
- warmth
- welcome
- music
- shared stories
- shared tears
- shared victories

People greeted others with genuine enthusiasm. There were smiles, hugs, and encouragement. Those who were hurting most were not shunned — they were honored with gentle support and deep respect. Leaders were kind, authentic, and transparent. No one acted as if they were above anyone else.

Celebrate Recovery meetings typically opened with worship and teaching, followed by small groups where honesty was invited and confidentiality was protected. Rules were simple:

- Speak for yourself
- No fixing or advising

- No cross-talk
- No judgment
- Respect everyone
- Share only what is yours to share

Oddly enough, these boundaries created freedom.
People felt safe enough to be vulnerable.
And I found myself drawn into the same safety.

After meetings, people often talked one-on-one, offering encouragement or insight rooted in their own experiences. These conversations became some of the most meaningful moments of my healing.

Grace and joy often grow in the same soil.
Recovery taught me that healing can be both serious and profoundly uplifting.

CHAPTER 19

Torn Fabric – Healing Relationships

Relationships are like fabric — woven through shared experiences, strengthened by trust, and stretched by seasons of change. When stress, misunderstanding, addiction, or dysfunction enter a family, the fabric begins to fray.

Growing up in a chaotic home taught me survival, not connection.
When I became an adult, I carried those patterns into my own family:

- withdrawing under stress
- shutting down emotionally
- avoiding conflict
- keeping secrets
- burying pain
- numbing instead of communicating

This harmed the people I loved most — my spouse, my children, my community. Healing required confronting the painful truth:

Steps 8 & 9 I had to take ownership of the ways I contributed to the tearing. Who have I hurt? How can I make amends?

Through recovery, community, and God’s grace, I learned the first steps toward relational restoration:

1. Intentional Compassion

Seeing the pain of others without defensiveness.

2. Open Dialogue

Honest, respectful conversations — even when uncomfortable.

3. Responsibility

Owning harmful actions without excuses.

4. Confession

Bringing patterns into the light so healing can begin.

5. Support

Allowing community to help rebuild broken trust.

Healing family fabric is slow work — delicate, emotional, often painful. But it is deeply worth it. Recovery taught me that honesty is not destructive; denial is. Vulnerability is not weakness; isolation is.

Your story is not over.

Relationships can be mended.

Grace can rebuild what was torn.

God specializes in restoring what we believed was beyond repair.

CHAPTER 20

Step 10 – Missteps

No one walks the recovery journey perfectly. Every person — even the most disciplined, spiritual, or sincere — experiences setbacks. Some are small. Some are painful. Some serve as reminders that growth is not linear.

I learned this firsthand. There were times I slipped back into old thoughts, old habits, old coping mechanisms. At first, I reacted harshly toward myself:

“How could you do this again?”
“You should be past this by now.”
“You’re failing all over again.”

But recovery gave me a new lens.

Setbacks are not signs of defeat.
They are signals of where healing still needs to occur.

The key is not the absence of missteps, but the speed and honesty of your response:

- Notice quickly
- Admit truthfully
- Confess openly
- Seek support
- Re-engage the process
- Extend grace
- Move forward

The danger is not the stumble — it is the hiding.
Shame thrives in secrecy. Healing thrives in honesty.

In Scripture, even the Apostle Paul (one commissioned by Jesus to proclaim the Gospel) shared that he sometimes did what he did not

want to do and failed in doing what he intended. Human weakness is universal. But God's grace is greater than our patterns of failure.

Recovery is not about becoming flawless.
It is about becoming more faithful.

CONCLUSION – Steps 11 & 12

Recovery is not a destination. It is a lifelong journey — a movement toward wholeness, honesty, courage, and connection. Along the way, you will encounter moments of joy and moments of struggle. You will celebrate victories you once believed impossible. You will confront wounds you did not know were still shaping you. You will grieve what was lost, and you will rejoice in what is being redeemed.

Your failures will not define you.
Your past will not control you.
Your brokenness will not disqualify you.

The God who created you has never abandoned you.
He sees you.
He knows you.
He loves you.
And He draws near to the brokenhearted.

Every step you take — whether small or uncertain — is a step away from isolation and toward the arms of a God who restores. Every admission of weakness is a declaration of hope. Every moment of honesty breaks another chain. Every act of surrender opens the door for God to work in ways you never imagined.

You are not alone.
You are not forgotten.
You are never too broken to be made new.

As long as you are breathing, your story is still being written — and the One who writes it is faithful. And one you should share with others.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed for small groups, recovery groups, church classes, or personal reflection.

INTRODUCTION

1. What drew you to this book?
2. What parts of your story feel similar to the themes introduced?
3. What would healing look like in your own life?

PREFACE

1. What does “reasonable faith” mean to you?
2. Do you feel faith and reason can work together? Why or why not?
3. How has God pursued you through your life experiences?

CHAPTER 1 – Starting Points

1. What beliefs did you inherit without choosing them?
2. Which presuppositions feel most challenging?
3. Where is your starting point with God today?

CHAPTER 2 – Key Biblical Terms

1. Which terms were most familiar? Which were new?
2. How do these definitions help you understand recovery?

3. How does understanding the definition of “sin” as “missing the mark” affect your outlook?

CHAPTER 3 – Hurts, Habits, and Hang-U

1. What are your biggest hurts, habits, or hang-ups?
2. What parts of the Twelve Steps resonate most?
3. What keeps you from seeking help?

CHAPTER 4 – God Exists and Seeks Relationship

1. What evidence of God do you see in your life?
2. What barriers keep you distant from God?
3. How do you feel about the idea that God pursues you?

CHAPTER 5 – God Has Spoken Through Scripture

1. What role has Scripture played in your life?
2. What makes Scripture difficult at times?
3. How does God speak to you today?

CHAPTER 6 – You Are Precious and Purposeful

1. Do you believe you matter to God? Why or why not?
2. What broken areas do you struggle to acknowledge?

3. What would embracing God's love mean for your recovery?

CHAPTER 7 – Why Control Feels Necessary

1. What early experiences shaped your survival responses?
2. What promises did your inner child make?
3. What might God want to say to that wounded child?

CHAPTER 8 – Powerlessness

1. Why is powerlessness difficult to accept?
2. Where do you still try to control things you cannot?
3. What would letting go look like?

CHAPTER 9 – Insanity: Repeating Old Patterns

1. What destructive patterns repeat in your life?
2. What emotions usually lead you there?
3. What new patterns is God inviting you to create?

CHAPTER 10 – Coming to Believe

1. Who helped you believe change was possible?
2. What barriers keep you from trusting God?
3. What would “coming to believe” mean for your next step?

CHAPTER 11 – Turning Our Will Over

1. What fears surface when you consider surrender?
2. What part of your life is hardest to give to God?
3. What small act of surrender could you take today?

CHAPTER 12 – Moral Inventory

1. What emotions arise when you consider doing an inventory?
2. What secrets still feel too heavy to reveal?
3. Who could be a safe person or group to share with?

CHAPTER 13 – Defenses and Hidden Emotions

1. What defense mechanisms do you rely on?
2. What would life look like without those defenses?
3. What emotions do you avoid most?

CHAPTER 14 – Hour-by-Hour Dependence

1. What helps you stay aware of God throughout the day?
2. What distracts you from His presence?
3. What practice could strengthen your awareness?

CHAPTER 15 – Becoming Ready

1. Are you “entirely ready” for God to change you?

2. What defects are hardest to release?
3. What keeps you from trusting the process?

CHAPTER 16 – When Strength Becomes Weakness

1. How has your “strength” actually harmed you?
2. What would healthy vulnerability look like?
3. What strength is God inviting you to surrender?

CHAPTER 17 – Intervention and Community

1. Who has spoken truth into your life?
2. What keeps you from accepting help?
3. What could community offer you right now?

CHAPTER 18 – The Lighter Side of Recovery

1. What surprised you most about recovery culture?
2. How does joy help healing?
3. How can you create safe spaces for others?

CHAPTER 19 – Healing Relationships

1. Which relationships in your life need healing?
2. What steps toward reconciliation feel possible?
3. What is one thing you can do this week to move toward healing?

CHAPTER 20 – Missteps

1. What does a “slip” look like for you?
2. How do you usually respond when you stumble?
3. What healthier response do you want to practice?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Books and reading have always been one of Ron's passions; the library was a safe refuge throughout a troubling childhood. His love for writing began early as a member of the Armed Forces Writers League. In January 1970, he published a "Humor in Uniform" piece in *Reader's Digest*, marking his first national publication.

Ron later detailed his 44-year career building nuclear submarines in *Confessions of a Nuclear Dinosaur* (CrossBooks, 2013). Over the years, he has also written and published numerous poems and vignettes reflecting on life, faith, and the journey toward healing.

He continues to write with the hope that his experiences — and the grace that transformed them — will encourage others to find courage, freedom, and restoration.