

Chapter 2

Undoing the Lies About God

Once I was willing to face the truth, admit I was addicted to pornography and let go of the lie that it was only a bad habit, I also had to admit that acquiring “clean hands” (a change in my actions) would require me to confront a lot of other lies with which I had become infected over my lifetime. The process of cleansing my heart would involve changing my beliefs as well.

CHAINS MADE OF LIES

Addiction is a terrible condition of spiritual bondage that undermines our agency and gradually enslaves us by dragging us deeper and deeper into a way of life based on lies. We who have experienced addiction of any kind know the feeling of suddenly realizing we are trapped, caught, enslaved. We can no longer picture life without our addiction. What we usually don’t perceive is that our bondage to evil began one subtle justification or rationalization at a time, one little lie at a time. Nephi clearly understood the connection between believing lies and becoming enslaved:

And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell. And behold, others he flattereth away,

and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance. (2 Nephi 28:21–22)

From Nephi’s chilling warning, we see how subtly we can be bound by chains woven of the lies we hold onto—lies about life, about God, about ourselves and about others. Thus Satan, “the father of lies,” lays the groundwork for our addiction, and in fact, for all sin. Satan doesn’t want us to turn to God and find healing. He wants us to continue to stumble around, looking for happiness in all the wrong places. Thus, sin does not begin with behaviors, but with *beliefs*.

LIES THAT HAVE KEPT ME FROM TURNING TO GOD

President James E. Faust spoke about the importance of having a close, personal relationship with the Lord:

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. (*Ensign*, Jan. 1999, 2)

As I look back at my relationship with God during my youth and most of my adulthood, I see that most of my interactions with Him—or should I say, my *avoidance* of interaction with Him—was firmly rooted in the negative beliefs Satan had planted in my heart and mind concerning the nature of God. The most powerful way the adversary influenced me to avoid God was to lie to me about who God is and what He is like. Erroneous beliefs about the nature of God served to keep me in my addicted state, afraid to turn to the only true source of help. How

could I have a relationship with a God I feared? It is only in undoing these lies that I have been able to finally come to God and be healed, first from the lies, then from the addiction those lies nurtured.

I have heard it said in Twelve Step circles, “If your picture of God is not helping you get sober, you may have to fire your old God and get a new one.” Said another way, “If your understanding of God is not helping you, you may need to come to a new understanding.” My recovery began when my understanding of God came to coincide more closely with the whole truth about Him—that He is a being of both perfect justice *and* of infinite mercy. The following are some of the *false* ideas about God that kept me running and hiding from Him for years. I am so grateful to be free of them today.

The Distant God

As a scientist, my academic training emphasized the operation of natural laws. At church I was taught that God also obeys and uses natural laws to accomplish His purposes. As I embarked upon the study of science, I enjoyed thinking of God as the greatest of all scientists. This picture of God gave legitimacy to my own choice of profession and I found it personally reassuring to think that life unfolded by rules one could count on.

This “logical” view of God can be taken too far, however. While many of my professors were faithful men who believed in God, some of them subscribed to the idea that God set up the world, then let it go. He didn’t interfere in the daily affairs of men, instead letting them get along the best they could. This is often referred to as the “watchmaker” concept of God—as if the world were a watch God made, set in motion, and then left to run by itself. The idea was that everything we need is already here, and that beyond a few general guidelines—like the Ten Commandments—we don’t need God’s interference or help in our lives. This philosophy gives rise to the lie:

God created the earth, but does not get involved in our personal lives. We are pretty much on our own here in mortality.

The Angry, Vengeful God

Even when I finally began to believe that God might sometimes get involved in our lives, I still wondered just what form that involvement would take. I often agonized: “What does He expect of me, and how upset with me will He be when I fall short?” It was not until I got into recovery that I began to admit how powerfully my assumptions about my Heavenly Father’s character were colored by my earthly father’s attitude toward me. For example, there were occasions when, as a child, I stopped off at this or that friend’s house instead of coming straight home after school as my parents expected me to. When I finally did get home, my mother would express her disappointment with me, but would leave me to wait for my father to come home and discipline me for my offense. Needless to say, I spent those afternoons filled with anxiety and dread of Dad’s arrival and the spanking I would often receive. Somewhere along the way, I began to feel the same way about God as I felt about my father. I was sure that “coming home” to God would also result in being punished. After all, I had certainly been a “bad boy” in my adult indiscretions. Thus, I came to believe this lie:

God is a stern disciplinarian who is angry with me because of my sins and weaknesses.

This seems to be a common belief among those who have become entangled in Satan’s traps. When we sin we naturally suffer the pangs of conscience that sin brings. Then Satan jumps in to exploit and exaggerate our fears and tell us lies about God that keep us from turning to Him for help. I think of Alma the Younger and how he dreaded coming into the presence of God because of the memory of his sins:

The very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds. (Alma 36:14–15)

What a trap Satan has constructed for keeping us in sin! First he entices us to commit the sin. Then he slams us with the greatest lie he

can tell: That our only possible helper—the Lord—is an ogre! If we believe that, then Satan really has us, for he has cut us off from our only source of redemption.

I am sure the adversary is 100% responsible for this distorted picture of an angry God who delights in wrath. This concept has been handed down for centuries, even within our Christian culture. For example, I remember a sermon written by a Puritan preacher, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), which I was required to read in high school, entitled “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment.

Having already developed a number of faults, including a chronic problem with sexual self-gratification, I was understandably unsettled by that terrible description, and was very grateful that I belonged to a church that taught that God was merciful and kind. For some reason though, I was still persuaded by Satan’s lie that while God might be merciful and kind *to others*, when it came to me and my sins He felt more like the God Jonathan Edwards described. I was convinced that if God was not outright angry with me, He was at least very disappointed and probably outright disgusted. As a result, I avoided any consistent personal effort to approach God. I was sure I would only be met with rebuke. I once saw a bumper sticker that said: “Jesus is coming—and boy is He ticked!” I laughed, but inside I cringed. I was afraid that at least where His feelings toward me were concerned, that bumper sticker wasn’t far off the mark.

Under the influence of this lie, even my reading of the scriptures was twisted and confused. It seemed I couldn't open them without finding a verse that portrayed God as angry and fearsome:

Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord. Also in Horeb ye provoked the Lord to wrath, so that the Lord was angry with you to have destroyed you. (Deuteronomy 9:7–8)

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:5–6)

And [the wicked] said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Revelation 6:16–17)

Verses like these totally eclipsed in my guilt-ridden mind the far more frequent verses that testify of God's goodness, patience, and long-suffering nature.

A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF GOD

After years of avoiding this indifferent or disgusted God I had imagined, and hiding in the den of addiction, I finally reached a point where, as Alma described, I too was racked with the torment of a damned soul. And like Alma, though I was afraid to face God, I finally accepted the truth that I had to turn to Him and seek the Savior's direct intervention in my behalf if I was to ever find relief:

And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world. Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: *O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.* And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more. (Alma 36:17–19, emphasis added)

Like Alma, I had finally become desperate enough to reach out to the Lord. Even though I was not sure what would happen to me, I knew that anything He might do could not possibly be worse than the slow soul-rot of my addiction. I had to have help! My own strength was failing me miserably. Somehow I, too, came to understand that Jesus was the only One who could save me. Trembling, but resolute, I confessed to Him my utter helplessness and my total dependence on Him. To my great astonishment and relief, He did not reject me as I feared. Instead, He welcomed me with open arms. The lies I had believed immediately began to fall away and I saw Him with new eyes. He was indeed a God of love and tenderness!

As I studied the scriptures with this new heart, softened toward God, I began to realize the phrase “the wrath of God” can be viewed differently than I had ever seen it before. I think of that phrase now, not as a description of His feelings toward us, but as the inevitable consequences of disobeying the eternal principles God Himself lives and is trying to teach us through the commandments He gives us:

Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God, which justice could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy

could have claim on them no more forever. (Mosiah 3:26, emphasis added)

I was amazed at this new perspective! My heart was even more tender toward God when I realized that He had no choice but to allow Adam to experience the Fall as a consequence of his eating the forbidden fruit! I had always thought of God as “all-powerful,” and I still believe He most certainly does have all the power it is possible for any being to retain in righteousness. Today, though, I believe that because of His strict obedience to eternal laws, including the interplay of agency, justice, and mercy, there are some things God cannot do. He cannot save us in our sins. He cannot bless us for keeping commandments we have not kept. These are just other ways of saying He cannot “lie” or pretend that something is true that isn’t, for He is a God of truth in all things. In a similar way, He cannot keep us from the consequences of our sins if we refuse to repent (**Helaman 3:29, D&C 19:16–17**).

Today I realize my old images of God were not consistent with the teachings of the Book of Mormon. God is not indifferent to my life. He is very much involved in all our lives, but He must respect the same eternal principles He requires us to respect. God is bound by eternal laws, laws which God Himself must obey or He would cease to be God (**2 Nephi 2:13**). Justice demands payment for laws that are broken. Jesus was willing to suffer *for* us, so we ourselves would not have to suffer the penalty required by justice. But that substitution of His suffering for ours is only possible if we turn to Him and consciously and deliberately accept His gift. If we refuse to do so, God cannot interfere with the eternal law of justice, which demands the automatic implementation of the penalty. Our repentance, coupled with Jesus’ willingness to meet the demands of justice is the only way mercy can *satisfy* justice without *robbing* or negating it (**Alma 42:14–26**).

Thus, since God is the embodiment of these principles, He becomes a representation of them, and the punishment exacted by these laws is expressed as the “wrath of God.” This expression does not mean that He is *personally* angry with us or that He *personally* has to execute the punishments. His reaction is rather one of sorrow at our disobedience—not because He needs our obedience, but because of the sorrow and

suffering we bring upon ourselves when we disobey. Like any loving parent, He suffers *with us*:

And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains? And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity? (Moses 7:28–29)

And God explained to Enoch:

Unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood;...and among all the workmanship of mine hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren...Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands; *wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?* (Moses 7:33, 36–37; emphasis added)

Notice the heavens weep when we sin because sinning causes *us* to suffer. And as Enoch began to share God's perspective, he too, wept:

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Enoch, and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men; wherefore Enoch knew, and looked upon their wickedness, and their misery, and wept and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned; and all eternity shook...And as Enoch saw [those who would be destroyed in the flood], he had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens: I will refuse to be comforted; but the Lord said unto Enoch: Lift up your

heart, and be glad; and look...And behold, Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh; and his soul rejoiced. (Moses 7:41, 44, 47)

All sorrows can be erased in the Atonement of our Beloved Savior, if we will but repent. It all depends on our willingness to come to Him. This new perspective not only colors the way I hear the scriptures, it also colors my prayers, and opens to my understanding a new relationship with my Savior. Like Alma, I no longer fear Him but instead rejoice in His reality in my life. I never knew it was possible to love anyone the way I love Jesus and the way I now understand He loves me and has always loved me. With Alma, I no longer fear the coming of the Lord, but rejoice in it and long for that great day to come. Alma testified:

And now we only wait to hear the joyful news declared unto us by the mouth of angels, of his coming; for the time cometh, we know not how soon. Would to God that it might be in my day; but let it be sooner or later, in it I will rejoice. (Alma 13:25)

What an amazing change of heart Alma had experienced! He had come to know and trust the goodness of God, which enabled him to repent and be reborn. I am humbled to be able to add my testimony to his that such changes are possible. A life out of tune can be put right again. A soul tortured with guilt can once more know peace. The Savior only waits for our decision to come unto Him.

FINDING HEALING IN UNDERSTANDING GOD AS JOSEPH SMITH KNEW HIM

And so it was that, just as the old Twelve Step adage said, I had to “fire” my old beliefs about God and “hire” some new ones. To put it more literally, I had to finally make the effort to come to *know* the Lord as He is revealed in the fullness of the restored gospel. I had to admit that all my church activity and “busyness” in the service of others over my lifetime had not amounted to coming to *know* Him (**Matthew 7:23**).

As I studied more deeply and sincerely, I was led to the *Lectures on Faith*. There I “joined” the School of the Prophets, as the Prophet Joseph revealed several things about the true character of God.

First, that He was God before the world was created, and the same God that He was after it was created.

Secondly, that He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, and that He was so from everlasting and will be to everlasting.

Thirdly, that He changes not, neither is there variable-ness with Him; but that He is the same from everlasting to everlasting, being the same yesterday, today, and forever; and that His course is one eternal round, without variation.

Fourthly, that He is a God of truth and cannot lie.

Fifthly, that He is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of Him.

Sixthly, that He is love. (*Lectures on Faith*, 35)

Prayerfully, I sought to understand how knowing these characteristics of God could help me in overcoming my addiction. Let me share some insights I feel He gave me:

1. *God was God before the world was made, and he is the same God today.* He knows what is going on. You might say, He has been around the proverbial “block” a few times. He totally understands not only the way the *worlds* work, but also the way *people* work. In other words, he knows the principles of happiness just as well as the principles of astronomy and physics. When God gives us a commandment, He isn’t doing it arbitrarily. He’s actually trying to share with us what works to bring lasting satisfaction and joy in life. After all, He’s the expert. He’s seen it before. He has lived it Himself. I began to realize that if I would trust these true principles, I could be led by a *perfected*

human who has experienced a thousand times more than I will ever be required to endure in mortality.

2. *God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness.* This means He wants to help me. He is not sitting on the judgment throne waiting for a chance to condemn me, as I had previously thought. Instead, He wants to do all that He can to redeem me from the suffering I have thus far brought upon myself. As I accepted these truths, I began to realize I can trust that if I go to Him, I will find help, not criticism or condemnation. The Prophet Joseph wrote:

Unless He was merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness, such is the weakness of human nature, and so great the frailties and imperfections of men, that unless they believed that these excellencies existed in the divine character, the faith necessary to salvation could not exist; for doubt would take the place of faith, *and those who know their weakness and liability to sin would be in constant doubt of salvation if it were not for the idea which they have of the excellency of the character of God, that He is slow to anger and long-suffering, and of a forgiving disposition, and does forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin.* An idea of these facts does away with doubt, and makes faith exceedingly strong. (Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 35–36, emphasis added)

If you weren't really impressed by that paragraph, you might want to read it again. Read it as if Joseph were talking, one-on-one and heart-to-heart with us addicts. He is saying that we need to know God is loving so we can trust Him and take our addictive behaviors to Him. From my own experiences I can testify that the Lord does welcome us home and does not condemn us.

3. *The nature of God does not change.* This means I can *always* trust Him. He is not going to be good to me one day and cruel the next. We need to be told this because we don't see that same steadiness in the people around us. None of us in

mortality is perfectly consistent, but as hard as it may be to imagine, God *is*. Sometimes we excuse ourselves when we are irritable or uncooperative by saying we are “having a bad day.” God never has “bad days.”

4. *God cannot lie.*

All the promises God has made to me will be fulfilled. I can count on Him. I may have been let down and disappointed by others in my life, but God will not let me down. It may take time for us to fully believe this, but we need to give Him the chance to prove it to us.

5. *He is no respecter of persons.*

If He has helped *any* other person recover from addiction or any other challenge, He will also help me. God’s promises don’t just apply to others; they apply to *all* of us, without exception!

6. *God is love.*

The characteristic of love so permeates the nature of God that it can be said of Him that He *is* love. Every action He takes toward us is based in love. I can trust that whatever His response to my petitions to Him, *it will be loving and benevolent.*

When I started to gain a more accurate understanding of the true nature of the Savior as “the Eternal God” (title page of the Book of Mormon), I started to let go of my fear of Him. I started to gain hope and confidence that motivated me to come to Him for help. As I came to Him, I found that He reciprocated! I felt Him draw near to me, as he has promised:

**Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you;
seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye
shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
(D&C 88:63)**

What joy I experienced when I found that promise applied to me—to sinful, slothful, weak, backsliding, unhappy me! What a miracle! What a revelation!

As I approached the Lord and felt Him welcome me, I began to feel I knew Him, not just as a concept or a historical figure, but as a Person,

as a Man—the most glorious and exalted Man I have ever known in this life. I began to get a sense of His personality, His goodness, His kindness and patience. As I reflected on this “new-found” relationship, I began to realize that it was really one of the longest standing relationships I have. Suddenly the gospel teaching that Jesus was my older brother since I first came into being as a spirit child of our Heavenly Father was more than just a pretty story to me. I *knew* it was true! He has known me and been my example, my teacher and my friend for eons. The recovery of this “memory,” of this sure witness, has been the central meaning of the word “recovery” for me as I’ve continued to work my program. I find myself continuing to recover from my addiction in direct proportion to how much of my former relationship with the Lord I allow myself to believe and receive. In the course of this recovery process I have come to know that He still loves me, despite my sins. I know that although He abhors my *sins*, He still loves and accepts *me*.

As this very personal testimony of Christ’s love for me began to enlighten my mind and heart, I saw that none of the angry, impatient sentiments I had felt toward myself all these years had come from Him. They were a fabrication, woven of my own shame and the lies I had believed about how God felt about me, lies whispered to me by the enemy of my soul.

AWAKENING TO THE LOVE OF GOD

As I have come to know the goodness of God and to believe I could be a recipient of this goodness, I have started to rejoice in the scriptures that tell me of His true, tender and loving nature. I now identify with the prophets who have written of Him, because I now know the same God they knew. Their testimony resonates in my soul in a way it never did before. Let me share some favorite passages with you:

And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of

men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things. And he spake unto me, saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul. (1 Nephi 11:21–23)

Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ. (Alma 5:38)

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matthew 23:37)

The Lord repeated the same lament to those who survived the destruction at the time of His death (3 Nephi 10:4–6), saying how readily He would have gathered those who had fallen if they had come unto Him. He has renewed that promise in our own day:

For, behold, I will gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if they will not harden their hearts; Yea, if they will come, they may, and partake of the waters of life freely. (D&C 10:65–66)

The scriptures are also full of the promise the Lord makes to us, that if we will repent, He will forgive us and help us out of the bondage to which we have subjected ourselves. In these scriptures I again see the loving nature of God and the hope for healing and forgiveness:

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment [I let you experience the consequences of your own actions]; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. (Isaiah 54:8)

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. (Hosea 13:9)

Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me. (Mosiah 26:30)

I am so grateful for this understanding of the true nature of God that has been given us through the revelations of the restoration. While these truths have been restored to us *as a people*, we must each allow them to be restored to us *individually* and to take effect in our own hearts and lives. In this restored understanding, let us come unto Christ and not be afraid of Him.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

It is hard to describe the difference it makes to have this reawakened relationship with my Savior. Some have described having the Spirit in their lives as walking in the light compared to walking in shadows. To me it is a feeling of peace instead of a feeling of fear. Fear is a natural consequence of sin, and I think the adversary takes great delight in playing upon this fear. The Lord, on the other hand, desires for us to have peace.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

Peace comes into our lives as we come to know Christ's goodness and mercy. It comes as we understand that while mercy cannot rob justice, it can *satisfy* justice. An even deeper peace settles upon our hearts when we come to know the Lord Himself, and realize that He knows us and either will, or already has, forgiven us for our sins as we continue to repent. If we trust Him and continue to come to Him, He will help us with each and every step of our mortal journey. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

When we begin to learn this way, we begin to learn the only true God, and what kind of a being we have got to worship. Having a knowledge of God, we begin to know how to approach Him, and how to ask so as to receive an

answer. When we understand the character of God, and know how to come to Him, he begins to unfold the heavens to us, and to tell us all about it. When we are ready to come to him, he is ready to come to us. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 349–350)

What a glorious promise! If we only knew what amazing blessings were in store for us, none of us would hold back. We would all rush quickly into His arms!

MAKING THE MOST OF THIS CHAPTER

Capturing is one of the most helpful practices I have found for making the scriptures and other written materials come alive for me. This tool has been of immeasurable value in helping me come to know myself and the Savior. I recommend it to each of you with all my heart. I am sure you will find it of great benefit, not only while working through this book, but for the rest of your life.

ASSIGNMENT: Before continuing, please turn to Appendix A and read the section called “Capturing” starting on page 251.

For years I had heard the counsel that I should keep a journal. I made a few feeble attempts at journal writing through the years, but I didn’t really catch the vision until I started working on a serious recovery program. I found that writing was not just for the purpose of keeping a record. As I wrote about my recovery experiences and feelings, I began to see things I had not previously been able or willing to see. As I wrote about things I was reading in the scriptures, I was amazed and delighted to see what new insights were opened to me. Above all, I came to understand that the Lord was mindful of me. He was willing to counsel with me personally as I used the tool of writing to slow down my thoughts and listen for His thoughts and impressions. Recently, I became aware of Elder Richard G. Scott’s testimony of the appropriateness of writing down our personal revelation:

The Savior said, ‘I will tell you in your *mind* and in your *heart*, by the Holy Ghost’ (D&C 8:2, emphasis added)... An impression to the *mind* is very specific. Detailed words can be heard or felt and written as though the instruction were being dictated. (“*Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led*,” Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Symposium, August 11, 1998, Brigham Young University, 2, emphasis added)

It is my testimony that He will do the same for you, and that writing will be a vehicle for receiving much guidance and healing. This is true even if you haven’t written much before. It will work even if you don’t like writing. I strongly encourage you to try. It will bring you great rewards. *Please take the time to write about these questions; the process of writing will make a big difference in how much you gain from this book.*

We behave as we believe, and in order to change our actions, we need to change some of our beliefs. In order to see which beliefs may be holding us back, we need to know what our beliefs are. The following questions will help you examine your beliefs. You may want to write about one each day for the next five days.

1. Joseph Smith said, “It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 345). What has your concept of God been until now? Write about three men you know who have some characteristics that seem to you to be like God’s.
2. Alma wrote that at death, **“The spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life” (Alma 40:11)**. Write about why a loving Father would want to visit with all His children, even the wayward ones. What might He want to say to them before they go to their assigned place in the spirit world? How do you picture Him expressing His love for them?
3. A proverb in Ezekiel’s time said, **“The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge” (Ezekiel 18:2)**.

We may have acquired beliefs about God, from our parents or others, that either hinder us or help us in coming to Him. Write about where you think most of your *feelings* about God (not just facts) came from. How appropriate do you think they are now?

4. Describe in writing how you feel about your relationship with the Lord, and about your hopes for your future relationship with Him.
5. The quote from Joseph Smith cited in question 1 continues: “And to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another.” Prayerfully ponder and write about what you imagine your conversation with the Lord would be if you could have a private priesthood interview with Him.