

Chapter 5

Step Two

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

(A.A. and Heart t' Heart versions)

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*)

(Heart t' Heart scriptural version)

God has all power, both in heaven and on earth. He has the power to touch my soul; He can change my heart. I cannot of myself change my behavior, my heart, my will, or my desires. I can only turn to God, who has the power to change me from the inside out. He can change my desires so that I no longer want to sin, so that in my heart of hearts, I want God more than I want any earthly pleasure. But before I am willing to make this surrender, I must *believe* He *can* and *will* perform this great miracle in me.

Step One left me sobered with the realization of my powerlessness. In Step Two, my hope is rekindled. There is a way out of the morass of addiction—through Jesus Christ, my Savior.

VOLUNTARY INSANITY

In the original AA wording of Step Two, we read: “[We] Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves *could restore us to sanity.*” In

the Heart t' Heart version of Step Two, the wording softens the focus, placing emphasis on the miracle that in God's strength we can do all things—including overcome our addiction. I found, though, that I needed to honestly face the indictment of insanity found in the original version of the step.

I have heard insanity defined as “*doing the same thing over and over again, hoping for a different result.*” What better description could be found for the endlessly repeating cycle I was caught in for most of my life—acting out, then suffering inevitable demoralization? Over and over I asked, “Why do I keep hurting myself this way? It just doesn't make sense to keep doing something that, in the end, always brings such sorrow and despair!” However, my thinking *was* “insane,” because I just kept saying to myself, “Maybe this time I can get away with it. Maybe this time I will only have the rush and not the guilt. Maybe this time, wickedness *will* be happiness!” I might just as well have jumped off a building and hoped I would fall *up*. Need I say, in this area of my life, I have been a very slow learner. Actually, my downfall wasn't a matter of needing to *learn* something. I knew *intellectually* that “**wickedness never was happiness**” (Alma 41:10), I just didn't *believe* it. I wasn't really a “slow learner” as much as I was a “slow *believer*.” Thus, my need—as ridiculous as it may seem, since I was a lifelong active member of the Church—was to take Step Two and *come to believe*.

BECOMING A BELIEVER

I began my recovery work by attending Heart t' Heart meetings and studying the LDS version of the Twelve Step program outlined in *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage*; both of these activities helped me immensely. Once the basic principles for overcoming addiction began to sink into my understanding, I was eager to find Twelve Step literature specifically addressing *sexual* addiction. I obtained a copy of *Sexaholics Anonymous* (The White Book), and was amazed and delighted with the insights I found on almost every page. On page 89, I found the process of Step Two broken into three separate parts that all of us who have come to this type of fellowship can recognize:

We came
We came to
We came to believe

First of all, *we came*. We came to a meeting. We came to a book or a website or some other vehicle that allowed us to participate in the fellowship of recovery. Like the early disciples of Jesus, heeding his call to “Come follow me,” we became willing to listen. Maybe we didn’t believe yet, but we were willing to sit still and hear and consider these new ideas.

We came to. It was as if our addiction had knocked us unconscious. We were in a trance and needed to be awakened. As we heard the words, the thoughts and experiences of those who were ahead of us on the path to recovery, a light dawned: there might be an answer here for us as well! We also came to admit that happiness could never come the way we had sought it. We had tried to force happiness from life instead of obeying the principles of Life itself.

We came to believe. The more we listened, the more the Spirit worked on us, teaching us that the Savior’s love applied to us as well. Our newly awakened belief gave us the courage to try concrete actions in our attempts at recovery. We gained the faith to test the promises of the Lord. We began to truly look to Him to restore us to sanity—to sane living.

I knew there was truth in these ideas. I knew there had to be a way back. I knew I had not always been “like this.” I remembered a time in my life when I was innocent, when I didn’t automatically cave in when temptations came along. Perhaps the Lord could help me get back to that place.

DEALING WITH DOUBTS

Facing these issues of just *how much* I believed and just *what* I believed brought me face to face with three questions that had been lurking in the shadows of my unexamined thoughts for years.

1. **Could God really take this addiction away from me?** Could He really free me from the control of this terrible disease? I had already prayed for relief, but it hadn't helped much. Was the deficit in the level of my belief?
2. **Why would God take my addiction from me?** While I believed God had helped others to overcome addictions to things such as tobacco and alcohol and even sex, could I believe He would help me—specifically, me—overcome my own loathsome weakness?
3. **Why should God help me, if I haven't yet done all I can do on my own?** My own punitive belief about what God should do for someone like me hampered my faith. I interpreted the words “all that I can do” (see **2 Nephi 25:23**) to mean that only by working until the day I died would I have done all I could do on my own, and that was what was required before His grace was available to me.

Each of these unacknowledged doubts about whether God could, would or even should help me acted as invisible barriers that kept me from turning to Him. Perhaps I was like Laman and Lemuel who told Nephi that they did not ask for revelation because **“the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us” (1 Nephi 15:9)**. It seems that, like them, I was judging God, attributing limits to His willingness to help me long before I gave Him the chance. In order to get past the barriers these doubts represented, I had to examine them one by one.

1. **Could God really take this addiction away from me?**

From the vantage point of recovery, considering all the miracles God *has* done in my life and in the lives of others, it seems almost blasphemous that I ever entertained this idea, yet it was truly one that haunted me. I had struggled with my addiction to pornography for years and had asked the Lord repeatedly for relief, but none had come—at least, not permanently. In my weakened faith, perhaps the easiest, natural-man explanation for my continuing plight was to doubt God. As ridiculous as it sounds, I was in effect saying, “I know God can move mountains, and even *make* mountains, but this addiction thing is really hard! I'm not sure He can fix *this*.”

If you want to indulge in this kind of foolish thinking, you'd better stay away from the scriptures, because they won't let you get away with it. For example, consider the people of King Benjamin. They responded to the invitation of their prophet king to repent, and they experienced a marvelous change as a result:

And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. (Mosiah 5:2)

For years I read this verse with a combination of amazement and envy. I thought how wonderful it would be to be free of the ravages of temptation simply because I didn't have the desire to act out any more. On the other hand, I thought this blessing was somehow beyond my reach. I was so easily attracted to sin that I felt if it was possible at all for me to get to the point where I had no more disposition to do evil, it would take me the equivalent of several lifetimes.

Now, in recovery, I have experienced the truth that **“the things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Luke 18:27)**. My testimony today is that God can, and does, work miracles in our lives when we come to Him. I know this because He has now taken this obsession from me. I no longer have the desire to look at pornography. I have learned that this blessing given to the Nephites in King Benjamin's day is just as available to us today. I know. I am living it! As Colleen wrote:

Part of the process of coming unto Christ and truly applying His atonement to our own lives and the lives of others is to lose our fear that there is some power or effect of evil the Savior can't overcome. (*He Did Deliver Me from Bondage*, 48)

In a similar way, Nephi had to remind his brothers of the power of the Lord in their lives:

Yea, and how is it that ye have forgotten that the Lord is able to do all things according to his will, for the children of men, if it so be that they exercise faith in him? Wherefore, let us be faithful to him. (1 Nephi 7:12)

2. Why *would* God take my addiction from me?

Addiction is so devastating. It gives us such feelings of unworthiness and even worthlessness. As I was caught in this swamp of self-loathing and self-disgust, someone said to me, “Do you realize that if you were the only person who needed the Savior’s Atonement, He would have willingly gone through it all, just for you?” That thought just blew me away. Why would the Lord love me that much? Why would He value me when I had turned my back on Him so many times and refused His invitation to turn away from my despicable practices? I think the answer can be found in these thoughts expressed by Elder Hartman Rector Jr.:

God doesn’t love us because we are good. God loves us because he is good. God is good and so he loves us, and those who are the best love the best. (*Conference Report*, Oct., 1969, 76)

God’s love is based on His character—not mine! What an amazing thought this was to me. It meant I did not have to *earn* the Savior’s love through my behavior. He has always loved me, even knowing He would have to suffer for me. Unfortunately, the many years I spent in addiction clouded my mind to this truth. Only after I began to open myself to Step Two was I able to feel the Savior’s love confirmed to my soul once again.

Since opening my mind and heart to His goodness, I now see it everywhere in the scriptures. There are so many stories of men who have been rescued from a life of sin—the apostle Paul, Alma the Elder and Alma the Younger, the sons of Mosiah and Zeezrom, to mention only a few. Right there in the testimony of the scriptures was example after example that the Lord would save those with chronic tendencies to sin, if and when they finally surrendered their lives to Him. None of these men were living exemplary lives when the Lord reached out His hand and touched them. In fact, most of these men were actively

opposing the Lord's work. It didn't seem they had done anything (at least, in *this* life) to "earn" any particular privileges—and yet, the Lord saved them. That gave me hope. If, as Elder Rector said, God loves us because He is good, maybe He would help *me* change, too.

3. **Why *should* God help me, if I haven't yet done all I can do on my own?**

One of the strongest traditions in my cultural heritage as a Latter-day Saint is the tradition of self-sufficiency. In addition, I was raised by parents who had inherited a powerful work ethic, reinforced by the experience of marrying and starting a family during the Great Depression. I was raised to be proud of working for what I received, paying my own way, and not relying on others to supply my wants or needs. Simultaneously, I was taught that "faith without works is dead," and that anyone who thinks grace is a free gift is sorely mistaken. Needless to say, when combined with the frightening concept of God I explained in Chapter Two, these ideas painted a pretty bleak picture. Small wonder that my interpretation of the following verse had made me feel hopeless:

For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after all we can do.* (2 Nephi 25:23, emphasis added)

Today I realize that I totally misunderstood this verse. I read it with hardly more than a passing thought for the faint and distant hope of "grace." To me, grace represented God's help given *after* this life. I read the word "after" in the sequential sense, as in this sentence, "After I finish mowing the lawn, then I will go to the store." In this interpretation, I heard the verse was saying to me: "Philip, even though some grace may be extended to you at the end of your life, don't forget that you have to do absolutely everything you possibly can until the day you die, and then *maybe* you will qualify for enough grace to be saved." What a discouraging message that was!

It dawned on me one day that “after” could be seen as part of the phrase “after *all*,” which gives it a very different meaning. “After all” can be used in discussing which of two contributing factors carries the most weight, or it can mean “in spite of.” For example, “*After all* I tried to do to cheer her up, *your* letter really made the difference.” In other words, I may have done all I could, but your letter was what really did the job. In a similar sense, I may do all I can toward my own salvation, but that is almost negligible compared to the Savior’s marvelous contribution of grace. To me, that principle is echoed in the words later spoken by King Benjamin: **“I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants” (Mosiah 2:21).** We are not enough, but the Savior is, and that is a great comfort!

Today, when I read this passage in 2 Nephi, the emphasis in my heart and mind is not on *me*, but rather on Jesus Christ and His power to redeem me. This is because I have taken Step Two and have come to believe that a Power greater than myself (my beloved Savior) can, and will, *and has* restored me to sanity. As I write this book **“to persuade...[my] brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God,” (2 Nephi 25:23)** I am rejoicing that I did not have to wait until the end of my life to receive this dispensation of grace. Now it is easy for me to see and confess the truth that it was my pride and desire to “do it all myself” that blinded me to Nephi’s real message. Nephi wasn’t teaching the importance of self-sufficiency. He was teaching the importance of believing in Christ, and being reconciled to God! Why? Because it is only through our faith in Christ and becoming reconciled with God that we place ourselves in a position to receive the grace that is so necessary to our salvation. For even though we work as hard as we can, we will never be saved by our works alone. In spite of all we can do, we are dependent upon the grace (power) of the Savior for our salvation. Just a couple of verses earlier, Nephi testified:

As the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved. (2 Nephi 25:20)

CLAIMING THE ATONEMENT FOR MYSELF

“None other name given under heaven!” I had never grasped such a powerful statement before. There is no other name whereby I can be saved than the name (and grace, or power unto salvation) of Jesus Christ. I certainly can’t be saved in the name of Philip Harrison! Years of struggling in my own inadequate strength have proven that. Again, Nephi’s message was *not* one of self-sufficiency in the matter of our salvation, but rather *dependence upon Christ*. Consider how this invitation is repeated throughout the scriptures:

Wherefore we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God, that they might enter into his rest. (Jacob 1:7)

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)

And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing... Yea, come unto Christ, *and be perfected in him*, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness. (Moroni 10:30,32, emphasis added)

In *He Did Deliver Me from Bondage* (A–6), Colleen refers to the “spiritual dyslexia” we often experience in reading the scriptures. For many years I heard two of the phrases in this last verse (**Moroni 10:32**) backwards—when I heard them at all. I would have sworn it said, “Perfect yourself in order to qualify to come unto Christ.” After all, the scriptures also say that “**no unclean thing can dwell...in his presence**” (**Moses 6:57**). I thought, “If that is true, I certainly would have to clean myself up a great deal before I could even approach Him.”

A deeper understanding of the truth, however, taught me that Moroni is saying we must first “come unto Christ,” and *then* “be perfected in Him,” before we can deny ourselves of our ungodly tendencies. We *have* to come unto Him, give ourselves to Him, surrender our will to His before He can “perfect” us. I had it backwards. In my mind I had reversed the process, which doesn’t make sense at all. Since Christ is the only one who can heal us, how can we ever be healed if only those who are well are allowed to approach Him? It’s like breaking a leg, and then saying, “As soon as this broken leg heals up, I’ll get myself down to the doctor’s office.”

Another reason that **“no unclean thing can dwell in [God’s] presence”** is that when we *do* come to Him, He cleans us up. He removes from us the stains that make us unclean. Doesn’t He say, **“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)?** What greater rest could I find than to finally put down the burden of temptation, sin, and addiction that had plagued me for years!

Elder Boyd K. Packer has also taught that we don’t have to wait until we die for the Savior’s Atonement to take effect. We can enjoy the blessings of His Atonement right now:

The Atonement offers redemption from spiritual death and from suffering caused by sin. For some reason, we think the Atonement of Christ applies *only* at the end of mortal life to redemption from the Fall, from spiritual death. It is much more than that. It is an ever-present power to call upon in everyday life. When we are racked or harrowed up or tormented by guilt or burdened with grief, He can heal us. While we do not fully understand how the Atonement of Christ was made, we can experience “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” (*Ensign*, May 2001, 23; emphasis original)

THE CAPTAIN OF MY SOUL

In the chapter on Step One, I cited the poem “Invictus” by William Ernest Henley as an example of determined self-sufficiency. Since in the matter of our salvation, we are *not* self-sufficient, Elder Orson F. Whitney, of the Council of the Twelve, wrote a reply to Henley’s declaration of personal independence, which he entitled “The Soul’s Captain.” Elder Whitney responded to the phrase, “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul” this way:

Art thou in truth? Then what of Him
 Who bought thee with his blood?
 Who plunged into devouring seas
 And snatched thee from the flood?
 Of what avail thy want of strength
 Apart from His vast might?
 Pray that His light may pierce the gloom
 That thou mayest see aright...
 Bend to the dust that head unbowed,
 Small part of life’s great whole,
 And find in Him and Him alone
 The captain of thy soul.
 (Boyd K. Packer, Conference Report, October 1962, 47)

The phrase “The captain of thy soul” reminds me of President Ezra Taft Benson’s statement:

Christ changes men, and changed men can change the world. Men changed for Christ will be captained by Christ. Like Paul they will be asking, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6.) Peter stated they will “follow his steps.” (1 Pet. 2:21.) John said they will “walk, even as he walked.” (1 John. 2:6.)

Finally, men captained by Christ will be consumed in Christ...Their will is swallowed up in his will. (See John 5:30.) They do always those things that please the Lord. (See John 8:29.) Not only would they die for the Lord,

but, more important, they want to live for Him. (*Ensign*, July 1989, 4–5)

From all these new ways of looking at the Atonement, I now picture the Savior and myself working together in a mutually loving relationship. I believe His personal testimony:

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. (John 12:46–47, emphasis added)

Instead of seeing Him as a judge, watching to see if I am “doing it right,” I have come to see Him as my constant counselor and guide, willing to assist me each step of the way, and endow me with His grace, or in other words, the power to overcome my sins and be restored to innocence.

I GLORY IN MY JESUS

Before I came to understand how loving and kind the Savior is, “coming unto Christ” and submitting myself to Him was a scary proposition. When I actually did begin to come unto Christ, a miracle occurred—I lost all fear of Him, and began to see Him for who He really is. One of the testimonies that helped me the most in this process of coming to know the real Jesus was Colleen’s. She wrote about this verse from the Book of Mormon:

I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell. (2 Nephi 33:6)

Describing the impact this verse had upon her, Colleen wrote:

“I glory in my Jesus...” My Jesus... My...Mine! I could not get past the personal intimacy of Nephi’s statement. Tears welled up, spilling down my face. I burned through and through as with a fire, a passionate and yet childlike

love for God. I felt as if someone had just given me permission to approach the Lord, to actually embrace Him, at least in spirit. I felt such a burning, such a passionate and yet childlike adoration for the Lord. It felt as if I had suddenly awakened to Nephi's example of approaching the Lord and coming to know Him as my dearest friend, as *my* Jesus.

I wept in gratitude to the humble, tender Nephi who had preserved this saving truth of Christ's availability. His personal administration in our lives can be ours, as soon as we are ready to believe and receive it from Him. I mounted up in my imagination as on eagle's wings (**D&C 124:99**), carried by the power of the love I felt for Him and from Him. I had never before comprehended how close the Savior is willing—and even desires—to be to us.

How can I possibly convey the spiritual awakening, the change, that began to dawn in my heart from that hour? As I continued to read the Book of Mormon, I found one witness after another that there did not have to be any distance between the Lord and me; that His love and power to redeem were enough to save even me. His arm was strong enough to encircle me and give me safety from my weaknesses. A few pages later I read Jacob's words:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I beseech of you in words of soberness that ye would repent, and come with full purpose of heart, and cleave unto God as he cleaveth unto you. And while his arm of mercy is extended towards you in the light of day, harden not your hearts. (Jacob 6:5; emphasis added)

I knew it was true. I knew by my own experience that He lives and that He lives for me. Something had changed.

I had lived this reality with the Savior. He was my friend,
my Jesus. (*He Did Deliver Me from Bondage*, 32–33)

Colleen’s testimony has since been confirmed to my own heart. I now know, as she does, that Jesus is amazingly available to us. He is ready to take the burdens from our hearts as soon as we will let go of them. He loves us more than we can begin to understand, and will respond with kindness to our efforts to reach out to Him.

MAKING THE MOST OF THIS CHAPTER

Please take time to answer the following questions in your recovery journal.

1. In **Alma 15:8** we read this testimony, **“If thou believest in the redemption of Christ thou canst be healed.”** To be healed is the equivalent of being restored to sanity. How do you feel about the Lord’s ability to perform this miracle for you? Think of a situation in which you behaved “insanely” by trying to get comfort or happiness from addictive behaviors. Did it work? Did it last? Write about it and how you would have behaved if your addiction had been removed and you had acted sanely.
2. In **Helaman 14:13** we are told that we **“may have a remission of [our sins] through his merits.”** The Lord can give you peace and remission. Write about any feelings you still have that you must *earn* or *merit* His atoning power. Do you feel there is anything you have to do totally on your own before you can ask the Lord’s help? Where do you think this feeling comes from?
3. **2 Nephi 33:6**—**“For he hath redeemed my soul from hell.”** Christ has the power to redeem us, no matter how deep or personal our individual hell has been—even if we got ourselves into it by our own deliberate choices. Write about the idea that Christ came to redeem *you*, even from a hell of your own making.

4. In **John 5:39**, the Savior Himself testifies to us of the power the scriptures have to bring us closer to Him in thought and testimony. Write about your past experiences with the scriptures, including attempts to find hope in them that have failed and attempts that have succeeded. Look back at a scripture in this chapter and write about the feelings and thoughts you have in response to it.

5. In **Mark 9:24** a man expresses in tears his less than perfect belief: **“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”** The Lord did not rebuke him for his double-mindedness, but proceeded to work the miracle he asked for. Write about how it makes you feel to realize the Lord is willing to accept your faith, even if it is imperfect and faltering. You may want to consider writing your thoughts directly to Him, as if in a letter. This exercise can open your heart to the Spirit of the Lord like few other things can.