Step Two

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

“For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

(Philippians 2:13)

In Step One, we admitted we are powerless, our lives are a mess, and we cannot continue to do things the way we have been doing them. This step out of denial into the light can bring with it a feeling of hopelessness unless we begin to shift our gaze from ourselves and the wreckage of our choices onto something bigger and more powerful.

How do we come to believe in a power greater than ourselves? Some begin by just entertaining the thought that there is a God, but for those of us that are Christians, we know who that power is and shift our gaze from ourselves onto him. Some would say we have to muster up faith to get God to move on our behalf, and if we don’t have enough faith, God won’t help us or answer our prayers. The focus of this type of faith is on the person rather than God. It is faith in faith. Even if our faith is as small as a mustard seed, God will respond (Matthew 17:14-20). In fact, God is faithful even when we are not faithful. Second Timothy 2:13 says, “If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.”

We need to move from hopelessness to hopefulness. Hopeless means “beyond optimism or hope; desperate” and “impossible to accomplish;” in contrast, hope means “to look forward to with desire and reasonable confidence” and “the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out well” (Random House Webster’s College Dictionary, 1999).

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12). Disappointment is the death of a hope. When we experience disappointment in any area of our life, it is natural to feel sadness. Sadness can turn into despair, which is chronic hopelessness that comes as a result of allowing circumstances beyond your control or those that came about as a result of your actions to discourage you to the point that you cannot see yourself going forward. Addicts often get to this point of despair when they succumb once again to their addiction. Unfortunately, this emotional despair doesn’t necessarily result in their getting help, but actually propels them toward using again out of the shame and hopelessness.

If the despair is chronic and interferes with living life, it may be depression. The symptoms of depression are as follows: sadness, loss of hope, loss of the ability to feel pleasure, loss of
motivation, feelings of guilt, anger, difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much, poor self-concept, irritability, loss of interest in things, inability to concentrate, hyper-focusing on the past, and decreased energy. If the depression is interfering with the ability to function in your life, you may need to see a counselor for therapy and a doctor for medication.

We all deal with disappointments in our lives; it is how we react to it that matters. When disappointment comes, how do you react? Do you:

- Blame others, God, circumstances, fate, or yourself?
- Get angry, bitter, or plot revenge?
- Turn on yourself and beat yourself up?
- Return to your addiction and old behaviors?
- Engage in self-pity and play the victim?
- Give in or give up?
- Question your faith in God?
- Wallow in hopelessness?

These are all common ways of dealing with disappointment, but none of them bring us to a healthy place where we can move forward. Instead of doing these things, we need to do as David did when he was disappointed and hopeless:

These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God” (Psalms 42:4-5).

David knew the solution was taking his eyes off the circumstances and putting them onto God, the source of his hope, who would be able to restore his life.

We too need to put our hope in God as the one who can restore us to a sane way of life free from the hold our addictions, other people, and our destructive habits have on our lives. It is this process of coming to believe that God can and will restore us that is the essence of Step Two. It is essentially finding faith.

“Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is defined as “confidence or trust in a person or thing” and “belief that is not based on proof” (Random House Webster’s College Dictionary, 1999). So what is that faith actually in? Is it in circumstances turning out exactly like we want, an easy answer, a miracle, a change in someone else, the removal of a problem, instant sobriety, or an easier life? If our hope is in any of those things, we have a false hope. God never promised that things will be easy or that we won’t struggle, but he has promised to be with us and help us. That is our hope.

The Apostle Paul asked God to take away his thorn three times and God said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul goes on to say he would boast about his weaknesses and delight in all his difficulties because that was when he could really be strong--not in his own strength but in God’s strength (2 Corinthians 12:8-10).
Commentators disagree on whether Paul’s thorn was a physical illness, emotional struggle, temptation, or spiritual struggle. Regardless of what it was, Paul understood that God wasn’t taking away his difficulties, but he was working them for good in his life. Isaiah 40:29 says, “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.” In order to get God’s power, it is a prerequisite to be weak and powerless.

God says: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. He will fight for you and uphold you with his right hand of righteousness” (Joshua 1:9). Even when we are going up against enemies and giants, as Joshua was, we can be strengthened by God to face the future with courage. Our enemies and giants are our addictions, compulsions, difficult relationships, and life circumstances, but God has promised us that he will go with us and empower us to deal with them. We can be courageous because we have God on our side working in us and for us.

Joseph found himself in a pit, then a foreign land, and then a prison. He could have despairsed, been bitter, and lost faith. Instead, he kept his eyes on God and knew God would do what he wanted through the circumstances for his glory and that no matter what anyone else did to him that God would use it for good. God uses all the things in our lives, our successes and our failures and the successes and failures of others, for his glory and our good (Romans 8:28). You can be assured that “it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13). Part of our hope is that nothing in God’s kingdom is wasted.

God promises that no matter what our circumstances are that he will restore us to sanity in them. But, what is sanity? Sanity is “soundness of mind.” It can be manifested in many ways:

- Physical sobriety from an addiction that sends us into despair and destroys our lives.
- Emotional sobriety from our dysfunctional reactions to people, places, and things, outwardly and inwardly, in a way that robs us of peace, serenity, and the ability to live our lives.
- Not being ruled by toxic emotions.
- Not being victims of our circumstances.
- Being able to reason rightly and use good judgment.
- Living a life of integrity and uprightness.
- Taking responsibility for our part in problems.
- Admitting when we are wrong.
- Being able to choose our reactions and actions.
- Enjoying life.
- Acceptance of the things we cannot change.
- Changing the things we can.
- Having goals and meeting them.
- Finding out who we are and using our gifts.
- Having boundaries.
- Having freedom from shame.
Hope comes from knowing there is a way to get free from the things that have enslaved us. We come to believe that God will work in our lives on our behalf when we let him and we come to believe that God will work in our loved ones’ lives too. There will still be times we will fail, but we don’t need to despair. After talking about not being able to do what he wants to do because his sin nature still wars against his spiritual nature, Paul says, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). A guy I know, Don Hofer, sings a song that expresses this truth: “We fall down, we get up, we fall down, we get up, we fall down, we get up, a saint is just a sinner who falls down and gets up.” There is always hope with God, even when we continue to struggle because he will continue to fight on our behalf and offer us power to overcome.

**Step Two Questions**

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

1. What leads you to despair and hopelessness?

2. How do you handle disappointment?

Do you:

- Blame others, God, circumstances, fate, or yourself?
- Get angry, bitter, or plot revenge?
- Turn on yourself and beat yourself up?
- Return to your addiction and old behaviors?
- Engage in self-pity and play the victim?
- Give in or give up?
- Question your faith in God?
- Wallow in hopelessness?
- Put your hope in God?
3. How does your powerlessness over others and even yourself help you to recognize your dependence on God?

4. Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and yet, expecting different results. How have you demonstrated insanity?

5. “Sanity” or “emotional sobriety” can be described as “having sound judgment and being in a reasonable state of mind.” What would your life look like if it were sane? What areas need to be restored to sanity?

6. Do you believe God can and will restore you to sanity? What about your loved one(s)?
7. Describe your hope for a better future.