

## **Steps to Spiritual Health**, through Humble Honesty, Trust, & Consecration.

The year was 1997. I was sitting in Sabbath School, listening to members of a Christian 12-Step group. Even though I'd been in addiction recovery for 3 years, I had no interest in 12-Step groups. But, after I was handed a list of the 12 Steps. I could hardly believe what I was reading. With each of those steps, came a deep recognition that this was the path God had been leading me for the past 3 years. Every one, I had been practicing already, except for the 12th step, where it said, "Having had a spiritual awakening, as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others." At this point, I didn't feel safe witnessing to others.

The 12-Step group was my solution. God led me here, at just the right time, so that I could experience this important 12th step, found in Rev 12:11, where we find that the redeemed overcame not only by the blood of the Lamb, but also by what?..... the word of their testimony. What an awesome privilege to share what Father God is doing though His Son dwelling in us! I love to share -- it's a vital part of my recovery. Ellen calls it, "the progressive work of a lifetime" -- Bible Sanctification. This experience taught me that the 12 Steps are God-ordained. But please understand that my message today is not just for addicts.

You may know who the "only true God" is. You may know the truth about who the Holy Spirit is. And you may know Jesus Christ as the literal only-begotten Son of the Living God. The Bible says, ~~Thou believest~~ [You believe] that there is one God; ~~thou doest well~~ [Good for you!]: the devils also believe, and [they] **tremble**. ([James 2:19](#))

My point is that it takes more than understanding and believing the truth. Checkout these snippets from Ellen's Early Writings:

I ~~also~~ saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary through the time of trouble. **Those who**

receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully...

Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God...

[These] will come up to the time of the falling of the plagues, and then see that they needed to be hewed and squared for the building. But there will be no time then to do it and no Mediator to plead their cause before the Father...

I saw that none could share the "refreshing" unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action.

We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence. [EW 70-71](#)

Wow! So, how do we deal with our pride, selfishness and every wrong word and action? And, how do we draw nearer to the Lord? I would like to submit to you 3 Steps and 3 Principles to make this process simple and practical.

## FIRST: THE 3 PRINCIPLES (not steps, but principles)

1. is foundational to the next two: **Humble Honesty**: Honest first of all with ourselves -- no denial! Honesty with God. He knows everything about you anyway, so why not admit your true condition to Him? Remember what is required for forgiveness in [1Jn1:9](#)? CONFESSION -- being painfully honest with God. Then, when appropriate, honesty with other humans also.
2. **Trust**: Primarily trust in God. But what about trust in myself? Maybe not. What about trust in others, when it is safe?
3. **Consecration**: A full denial of self and a commitment to trust and obey our Father God through His Son, dwelling in us.

Now, let's think more specifically about how we can cooperate with God, so that when we must live without a mediator, we will be so full of the Spirit of Christ that we will no longer need mediation. Amen?

Turn with me to the Gospel of John, chapter 5

**Step 1**: "*We admitted we were powerless over our problems, that our lives had become unmanageable.*" John chapter 5. Look with me at John 5:19: ~~Then answered Jesus and~~ said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

Now verse 30: ~~I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.~~

Now chapter 8. Are you seeing a trend here?... John 8:28: ~~Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.~~

Now chapter 15. Let's look at John 15:5: I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for **without me ye can do nothing.**

[John 5:19,30;8:28;15:5](#)

In these 4 texts, we find the 1st step to **Spiritual Health** well-defined by Jesus Christ. To sum it up in one word, I would say.... POWERLESSNESS. POWERLESSNESS! That's it! I can proceed NO further in this "progressive work of a lifetime"([3SM 202.3](#)), without recognizing that I CAN'T FIX MYSELF! Is there an Amen?

That's the first Step -- easily stated, but often difficult. Why is it so hard? BECAUSE I WANT TO BE IN CHARGE OF ME, YOU AND EVERYTHING AROUND US. It's called arrogance -- pride -- one of the 7 deadly sins. I found 3 times in my Bible(Prov3:34;Jam4:6;1pet5:5) that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

For me, after many years of trying and failing against my addiction, it was crystal clear that I was powerless over those sins that so easily beset me. That's Step 1: "*We admitted we were powerless over our problems, that our lives had become unmanageable.*"

So, which of the 3 broad principles does Step 1 fall under? **Honesty&Humility** -- admitting the truth about ourselves. What about **Trust**? It's about **not trusting ourselves**, right?

**11:15**

**Step 2:** Here's how it reads for 12-Steppers: "*Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*"

Being raised in a Christian home, I've always given the God of the Bible credit for being the Creator and sovereign God of the universe. I knew too that Jesus died to pay the penalty for my sins. But it's been a gradual process for me to come to understand His unlimited love for me, and just how to co-operate with His loving power as He works to "restore me to sanity".

For many, though, it is difficult to trust the God of their understanding. In our early years, the only God we knew was our parents. Ideally, parents are servants of God and are godly role models for their children. But, all too often, this is not the case. Many children are seriously abused, even by parents who are professed Christians. As children, we could not readily discern whether our parents were following God, or not. In fact, our parents were as gods to us, when we were very young.

As a result, many have grown up with a skewed view of God. And it didn't end there. As we became older, we've seen other professed Christians acting in ways that just didn't seem right. They may have even been abusive toward us. So, is it any wonder that so many have turned to gods other than the God of the Bible?

But, the apostle Paul says, *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" ([Philippians 4:19](#)). "~~For~~ I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith ~~the~~ LORD[Jehovah], thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." ([Jeremiah 29:11-12](#)). Jesus says, "... I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" ([Hebrews 13:5](#)). "... and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" ([Matthew 28:20](#)).

With a God like that, maybe it is time to make a disconnect between the behavior of so-called "Christians" and the character of the Almighty Father -- the God of the Universe. The character of the one true God is what defines the word 'Love'.

Like the Prodigal Son ([Luke 15:10-24](#)), maybe it is time for us to come home to our loving Father who is waiting patiently to see us turn toward Him, so that He can run to us with arms open wide. He longs to envelop us in His love and to cover us with the robe of Christ's righteousness, as we confess our sins to Him ([1 John 1:9](#)). Jesus says, "... If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."[\(jn14:23\)](#)

...PAUSE...

Over the last year and a half, I estimate that I've spent 10,000 hours seeking to understand the identity of God. Ya, I know... I'm a slow learner ☐ Of course, much of that time was spent painfully unlearning much of my previous understanding. Out of all this study, I want to share with you what has been my most-rewarding discovery. This discovery is the second most amazing thing that has ever happened to me. It was learning the true identity of the Holy Spirit. More-specifically, It was the realization that NO OTHER BEING STANDS BETWEEN JESUS AND ME! THE SPIRIT OF JESUS IS NOT ANOTHER BEING, BUT RATHER THE OMNIPRESENCE OF JESUS HIMSELF WANTING LIVE OUT HIS LIFE IN AND THROUGH ME, and you! I can't begin to explain how excited this makes me and how fulfilling this is to me. There is no other being in the Universe who understands our challenges as well as Jesus! What could be better than having direct access to Jesus anytime ANYWHERE? This is our privilege. In fact...

[Romans 8:9](#) ... *ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

[2 Corinthians 3:17](#) Now the **Lord is that Spirit.** and where the **Spirit of** the Lord is, there is liberty.

Liberty! "the state of being free". That's It! Not only does "Christ in me" give me the hope of Glory(Col 1:26), but He gives me freedom right here and now! Can anyone say AMEN?!

We "have one God and one Saviour; and one Spirit—the Spirit of Christ..." –Ellen White, [9T, p. 189.3](#)

That's my God! Is this your God? Can we trust this God? "Can we trust the one true God, our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ? Can we? Amen, amen.

That's **Step 2!** "*Came to believe that the Almighty Father, through Jesus Christ, His Son, could restore us to sanity.*" "Came to believe..." That's faith. That's trust. The overarching principle here in step 2 is **Trust** - explicit trust in God.

Before my recovery from addiction began in 1994, I was unknowingly practicing these first 2 steps. For years I knew I was powerless over those sins that most-easily beset me - Step 1. For most of my life, I trusted the God of my understanding, as best as I knew how - Step 2. But something was lacking. Something my parents never taught me. Something my SDA teachers never taught me. Something my SS teachers never taught me. Something my SDA pastors never taught me. What was it? Step 3!

**Step 3** "*Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of Father God & His Son.*" In 1994, God brought this step to my understanding, not through any 12-Step program, not through the organized church, but through an SDA supporting ministry. Prior to 94, I had been an addict for 25 years and I Praise God that, as of June of this year, I will be 25 years in recovery! Here's how it started:

There was an independent ministries Campmeeting held at a farm somewhere north of Colville. There were 2 families invited as speakers. The kids and parents all spoke. I listened Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday... It seemed as if they all had the

same message -- the exact message that I needed to hear. They often quoted from the book Ministry of Healing, page 176, where Ellen White wrote about "The Power of the Will". I had heard it before, but never got it. I didn't get it Monday either, but the more they talked about how God was giving them the victory over their temptations, the more it began to sink in to my dull brain.

Just like the false information about God that I had to recently unlearn, I had to unlearn the false information I had been taught about my will power, in order to understand the truth of the matter.

You might now wish to look up James, chapter 4. We'll be looking at that soon...

Check out the Willpower handout. Let's go over it together. I'll be interjecting my own thoughts between Ellen's sentences. I hope that's not too confusing 😊

Ellen said, [The tempted one needs to understand the true force of the will](#). Well, of course! Doesn't everyone know that our willpower is for getting things done and for fighting off temptation – fighting the good fight of faith, right? Growing up SDA, I came to believe that if I failed at resisting temptation, I should try harder. But when it came to those sins that most easily beset me, I mostly failed – for 25 years I failed.

[This\(the true force of the will\) is the governing power in the nature of man \(Ellen continues\), the power of decision, of choice](#). Now, hold on... I thought my willpower was the power of force – I'm going to make it happen my SELF. I'm going to fight off the temptation. It's all about ME! After all, didn't James (4:7) instruct us to "Resist the devil and he will flee from you"? Sure he did, but check out the 2 things that proceed the resisting... starting in [James 4:6](#):

1. ["God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.](#) Step1 Humility
2. [Therefore submit to God."](#) Step3 Submission



Now, check out the 5 things he said to do after he said to “Resist the devil...”, starting in James 4:8:

1. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Step2 Trusting in God
2. Cleanse your hands, you sinners... Step5 Confession
3. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Step6 Repentance
4. Lament and mourn and weep! ... Step4 Introspection – I’ve sure done a lot of that!
5. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, always remembering Step 1 Humility and [THEN] He[God] will lift you up.

But somehow, I missed all this humility and went straight to resisting the devil, expecting him to flee. For 25 years, that didn’t turn out well for me.

Let’s continue reading from Ministry of Healing: [This(the true force of the will) is the governing power in the nature of man the power of decision, of choice.]

Everything depends on the right action of the will. My interest now starting to peak now... Desires for goodness and purity are right, so far as they go [She says,]; but if we stop here, they avail nothing. I could identify... All of my arrogant, power-hungry SELF was unable to successfully conquer those sins that most-easily beset me. Then she says that Many will go down to ruin while hoping and desiring to overcome their evil propensities. Now I was convicted! Ellen was for sure talking about me. I knew I was “going down to ruin! But look what she says next... at the end of that first paragraph. Here’s why we were going down to ruin: They do not yield the will to God. They do not choose to serve Him. I honestly had no clue about that. But she’s talking about total humble honesty, trust, and consecration here. That’s in stark contrast to my arrogant, power-hungry, but FAILING SELF. Is there anyone who can identify with me?

[2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph] God has given us the power of choice; it is ours to exercise. But check this out. She said: We cannot change our hearts; we cannot control our thoughts,

our impulses, or our affections. We cannot make ourselves pure, fit for God's service.

Wow! I knew I couldn't do those things, but I thought I had to. What a relief it was for me to discover that it is impossible! Did you hear that? Did you know that you cannot change your heart? Did you know that it is impossible to control your thoughts, impulses, and affections? Did you know that at least one modern medical scientist agrees with this? Some may have heard of Dr. Robert Lustig, a Pediatric Endocrinologist researcher at University of California, San Francisco. Listen to what he said. And, I quote:

*"The one thing that I do know is that we cannot control behavior. We never have and we never will. There is physiology; there is biochemistry underlying every single behavior. The question is: how long do you think you can exert a cognitive inhibition (will power) on a bio-chemical drive that's going 24x7x365? Bottom line: we can't control behavior. We never could."* End Quote.

Wow! That's sobering... That's humbling... So, it's hopeless, right? Wrong. Look at what Ellen said next. [But we can](#) [we can... Here's something we can do: we use our willpower to] [choose to serve God, we can give Him our will](#); So... here's what I found out. My willpower is NEVER enough to ALWAYS resist temptation. Here's what else I found out: My willpower (and yours) is ALWAYS enough to surrender myself to God in times of temptation.

So, how does that work, practically? I consider Jesus to be our perfect example. We've already seen, how He humbly admitted his powerlessness 3 times in John 5 & 8. Now, let's consider that Thursday night in the Garden of Gethsemane... Jesus knew what must happen. He knew he needed to die. Worse than that, He knew that when He took my sins and yours upon Himself that this would separate Him from His otherwise-always-present Father God. The thought of these terrible things must have been what brought Him to say to His 3 closest friends, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Mt 26:38). Jesus had a choice. He could have called the whole thing off and all of Heaven would have come to His rescue. We cannot imagine how intense this temptation was to our Savior. What we do know is that, in prayer, He acknowledged the almighty

power of His Father God to be able to do anything (Mk 14:36). We know that 3 times, Jesus prayed asking that if it be possible that this “cup”, as He called it, be taken from Him, but only if it be Father God’s will. We know that, as He surrendered His will to God in prayer, an angel was sent to strengthen Him (Lk 22:43). We know that, as He prayed earnestly, *“His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Lk 22:44).”* This, my friends is Jesus’ perfect example of how we must choose to serve God – how we must give Him our will, that is, if we want to have victory over temptations that lead to those sins that easily beset us.

[Mt26:38; Mk14:36; Lk22:43-44](#)

...PAUSE...

Now, I don’t know about you, but I have never resisted unto blood, as did Jesus. I’ve never had to. However, as I began to understand this vital spiritual principle while I was at campmeeting in 1994, I had an extremely intense temptation to one of those sins that had beset me for 25 years. I praise God for that campmeeting and the several speakers who God used to help my understanding of these principles.

When that temptation came, rather than using my willpower to fight it, I admitted, in prayer, my powerlessness over this evil. I acknowledged the infinite power of Father God. Then, in humble submission, I said, “Father, what would you have me to do? ([Acts 9:6](#))” At that very moment, the temptation was gone. Praise God! Even though I was still present in the circumstance that precipitated the temptation, there remained no desire in my mind to sin. Halleluiah!

Lest there be any confusion, I must be quick to add that this wasn’t the last temptation of this type. This was certainly not the conclusion of my sanctification. Rather it was the **beginning** of a whole new life in Christ. Remember that “Sanctification is the progressive work of a lifetime” {[3SM, 202](#)}. My experience and those of many others who I’ve encountered is that each time we choose to serve God and give Him our will as temptation comes, future temptations become weaker and the interval between

temptations becomes longer. This discovery, about how to use my will power is THEE most amazing thing that has ever happened to me. Maybe this is what Ellen referred to when she said, “[we can choose to serve God, we can give Him our will;](#)”

[then \[THEN\] He will work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure. \[So what is the expected result?\] Thus our whole nature will be brought under the control of Christ.](#) That’s what I want. Is that what you want, friends?

Now, check out that 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph: [Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in the life. By yielding up the will to Christ, we ally ourselves with divine power. We receive strength from above to hold us steadfast. A pure and noble life, a life of victory over appetite and lust \[and may I suggest everything else? Victory\], is possible to everyone who will unite his weak, wavering human will to the omnipotent, unwavering will of God. \(\[Ministry of Healing, page 176\]\(#\)\)](#)

The apostle Paul said, *[I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. \(\[Galatians 2:20\]\(#\)\)](#)*

Friends, let’s encourage each other to live by *[every word](#)* that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah. [Deut8:3; Mt4:4; Lk4:4](#)