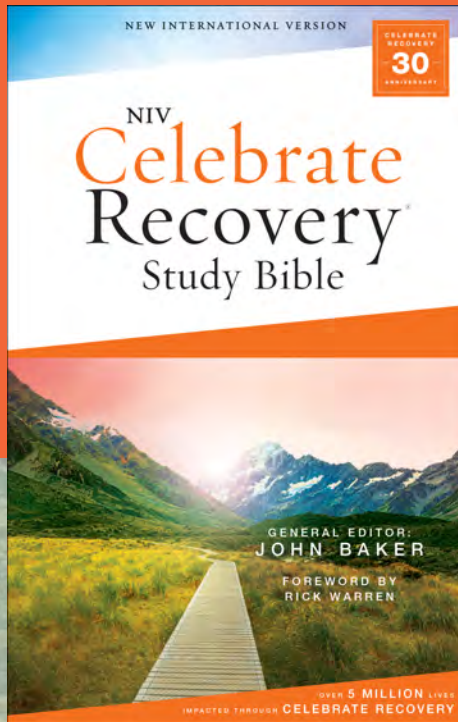


Recovery Insights

from Bible Personalities

7-Day Plan

Recovery Insights *from* Bible Personalities



People in the Bible struggled with significant issues much as we do today. Each of the stories in this 7-day devotional illustrates a particular recovery issue from the lives of characters in the Bible. Gain insights from the life of Esther, Moses, Eve, Samson, Peter, and others for your own recovery journey.

- Day 1: My Name Is Eve
- Day 2: My Name Is Moses
- Day 3: My Name Is Samson
- Day 4: My Name is Delilah
- Day 5: My Name Is Tabitha
- Day 6: My Name Is Esther
- Day 7: My Name Is Peter

Day 1 Scripture passages

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Genesis 3:1-7

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:26-27

Day 1 Devotion

My Name Is Esther

Understanding recovery begins with understanding our fundamental problem: Our sin separates us from God and the blessings he wants us to enjoy. Sin's story begins with the temptation of Eve by Satan, in the guise of a serpent. Even under the perfect conditions found in the Garden of Eden, temptation found Eve. The devil's strategy was to lead the first woman to distort the word of God (see Genesis 3:1-3) and to doubt his goodness (see verses 4-6). Eve twisted God's words by adding to them and thereby misrepresenting his directive (see verse 3). Further, God's goodness was attacked by the serpent's assertion that Eve's sin wouldn't result in death (see verse 4), as well as Satan disparaging God's motives in his directions to Adam and Eve (see verse 5). God, the enemy insinuated, was holding out on the world's first couple. Eve bought into this last lie: "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it" (see verse 6). Eve's sin spread almost immediately to the only other person on the planet, her husband. She took some of the fruit to Adam and he also ate.

At this point in the story, we see that some of the serpent's predictions did indeed prove to be true. Satan had informed Eve that "when you eat . . . your eyes will be opened" (verse 5) and that these first two humans would have personal experience with both good and evil. The promise of the serpent, though, was that this would make them "like God" (verse 5). The great irony of this deception was that both Adam and Eve were already "like God," having been created in his own image (see 1:26-27). Their eyes were now opened, and they did in fact know both good and evil, but the outcome of this experience was shame (verse 7).

This is the tragic beginning of sin's deadly, destructive work. Lives continue to be devastated as God's words are distorted and his goodness is doubted. The consequences of sin, as well as God's plans for humanity's recovery, are spelled out already in Adam and Eve's story.

Day 2 Scripture passages

In the first month the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried.

Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord! Why did you bring the Lord's community into this wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!"

Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the tent of meeting and fell facedown, and the glory of the Lord appeared to them. The Lord said to Moses, "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink."

So Moses took the staff from the Lord's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."

Numbers 20:1-12

Day 2 Devotion

My Name Is Moses

As our time of sobriety grows longer, it can be hard to remember that we're never beyond temptation. Numbers 20 records an instance of relapse by one of God's greatest servants. Moses had an anger problem. He heard the complaints of the people about the lack of water (see Numbers 20:1-5) and appropriately asked God what he should do (see verse 6). The Lord instructed Moses to speak to a rock, promising that water would flow from it so the people could drink (see verses 7-8).

Sadly, Moses failed to act according to the centuries-later recommendation of Pastor Rick Warren, who counsels each of us to carry out a regular HEART check, asking ourselves daily whether we're hurting, exhausted, angry, resentful, and tense.

Had Moses done this, he might have avoided a relapse into anger that for him turned out to have life-changing consequences. This wasn't a new experience for Moses. Exodus 2:11-12 records how his impulsive act of rage led to the murder of an Egyptian, which in turn resulted in 40 years of exile from Egypt. How did Moses end up spending

40 years in the wilderness of Midian? He sinned and tried to keep his guilt and shame a secret (see Exodus 2:12). We are indeed as sick as our secrets.

After 40 years Moses was restored to God's service. His patience with a nation of complainers was repeated proof of the reality of his recovery experience. But the danger of relapse isn't erased even by decades of ministry. Moses, as we've seen, was directed to simply speak to the rock. Instead he tongue-lashed the stubborn Israelites and struck the rock in his fury (see Numbers 20:10-11).

The consequences were severe, primarily because Moses was a leader. God placed a limitation on his ministry to God's people. After so many years of faithful service, he wouldn't be the one to lead the people into the promised land (see verse 12). Relapse can be avoided if we consistently take a personal inventory and continuously maintain our conscious contact with God. We'll never outgrow our need to evaluate our spiritual condition or to listen to God carefully every day.

Day 3 Scripture passages

In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Ephesians 5:28-32

Then the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon him. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of everything and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. Burning with anger, he returned to his father’s home.

Judges 14:19

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3-4

Day 3 Devotion

My Name Is Samson

Samson's story presents the irony of a powerful and yet absolutely powerless man. God gave Samson incredible physical strength. But neither physical strength nor strength of will can overcome our sinful addictions. Samson's particular addiction was sexual, and his obsession led him to squander his God-given strength. Addictions are often attempts to meet personal needs through physical pleasures. Each human being comes into this world equipped with a nearly insatiable, lifelong need for love. Only God is big enough to satisfy that demand. In fact, we're created to love, and to be loved, by God. Sex can seem to be a powerful substitute for love. That shouldn't be surprising, since sexual love is designed by God to be enjoyed by a husband and wife with such intensity that their intimacy reflects the love Jesus has for his church (see Ephesians 5:28-32).

What was Samson's overriding failure? He failed to enjoy and share God's love and the love of others. In addition, he didn't care enough about his own people to use his strength to set them free. This strongest of men settled for the substitute and sacrificed his God-given asset.

Samson never fulfilled his purpose in life, even though he frequently demonstrated evidence of his amazing power. Regularly in his story we're told that "the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him" (e.g., see Judges 14:19). If we've worked through the first seven principles on the road to recovery, we've both experienced and displayed God's power. However, if we fail to continuously practice Principle Eight, we're in danger. Recovery includes sharing our experience of change with others. Real recovery will make the needs of others more important to us than our own: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

Samson, like the rest of the judges God empowered, was born to deliver others from bondage. Instead, Samson squandered his gifts on personal gratification. Sobriety doesn't equal recovery. It's the beginning point of a process that will help us to fulfill God's purposes in our lives. Those purposes include using our pain as a platform for proclaiming God's power to heal broken lives and set captives free.

Day 4 Scripture passages

Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, “See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver.”

So Delilah said to Samson, “Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued.”

Samson answered her, “If anyone ties me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, I’ll become as weak as any other man.”

Then the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she tied him with them. With men hidden in the room, she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he snapped the bowstrings as easily as a piece of string snaps when it comes close to a flame. So the secret of his strength was not discovered.

Then Delilah said to Samson, “You have made a fool of me; you lied to me. Come now, tell me how you can be tied.”

He said, “If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I’ll become as weak as any other man.”

So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them. Then, with men hidden in the room, she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he snapped the ropes off his arms as if they were threads.

Delilah then said to Samson, “All this time you have been making a fool of me and lying to me. Tell me how you can be tied.”

He replied, “If you weave the seven braids of my head into the fabric on the loom and tighten it with the pin, I’ll become as weak as any other man.” So while he was sleeping, Delilah took the seven braids of his head, wove them into the fabric and tightened it with the pin.

Again she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” He awoke from his sleep and pulled up the pin and the loom, with the fabric.

Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when you won’t confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven’t told me the secret of your great strength.” With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was sick to death of it.

So he told her everything. “No razor has ever been used on my head,” he said, “because I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother’s womb. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.”

When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, “Come back once more; he has told me everything.” So the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands. After putting him to sleep on her lap, she called for someone to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him.

Then she called, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!”

He awoke from his sleep and thought, “I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the Lord had left him.

Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison.

Judges 16:4-21

Day 4 Devotion

My Name Is Delilah

Delilah was devoted to a life of deception. Her greatest “accomplishment” was the destruction of a man who loved her—a man named Samson. Samson was an easy target for her trickery, since women were this strong man’s greatest weakness. Delilah’s con was paid for by the Philistine rulers in the staggering amount of “eleven hundred shekels of silver” (about 28 pounds) each (see Judges 16:5).

Isn’t it amazing the degree to which living a lie makes us susceptible to the lies of others? Three times Samson misled this wily woman, and each time she complained, “You have made a fool of me” (verses 10, 13, 15).

In reality, Delilah needed no help in the area of foolishness. She prostituted herself to land a fortune in silver, a ruse that included lying to a man who was in love with her. After her successful betrayal of Samson, Delilah disappears from the biblical account. Her inheritance: the knowledge that the man who loved her was maimed, humiliated, and enslaved by her deception and greed. By the time Samson awakened to his blindness to the truth, his eyes had been physically gouged out (see verse 21).

How often do deception and addiction go hand in hand? Like Delilah, the addict will weave a web of deception in order to continue feeding his insatiable habit. And, sadly, it’s often easiest to go on deceiving those who love us, over and over again. The end product is a life wasted—our own—and all too frequently other lives are devastated—those we love, or at least those who love us.

The only escape from a life of dishonesty is an encounter with the truth—his name is Jesus. He’s the one who said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). If we’ve wasted our lives in self-deception and in the manipulation and betrayal of those who love us, there’s still a way back to God. He can break the pattern of deception. Recovery forces us to face the truth in order to end the insanity that has taken over our life. David voiced a simple prayer that we may wish to make our own: “Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God” (Psalm 31:5).

Day 5 Scripture passages

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"

Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

Acts 9:36-43

Day 5 Devotion

My Name Is Tabitha

One of the “proverbs” of recovery is this: Service keeps us healthy. But in Christ-centered recovery, service does far, far more. Giving of ourselves is central to our ability to enjoy life as Jesus desires and be a blessing to others.

Tabitha had an impressive résumé: She “was always doing good and helping the poor” (Acts 9:36). She wasn’t an apostle, a preacher, a professor, or a famous evangelist. But she assisted others in need. Good deeds didn’t deliver her from difficulties or disease. In fact, she became sick and died. Tabitha, like many others who give of themselves out of genuine love and humility, probably never thought of herself as having any great impact on God’s kingdom. But her death revealed just how much she mattered to so many.

Tabitha’s hometown was Joppa, an ancient seaport on the Mediterranean. Peter was at the time nearby in the town of Lydia. The impact of Tabitha’s illness and death is seen in the disciples’ urgent plea that Peter come immediately

(see verse 38). When the apostle arrived, he was shown examples of Tabitha’s love: “All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas [Tabitha] had made while she was still with them” (verse 39). What were the results of Tabitha’s service to others? First, she was restored to life by God’s miraculous intervention (see verse 40). Then she became an example for all time to come of God’s life-giving power and grace (see verse 41). Finally, her story led to the salvation of many (see verse 42).

Like Tabitha, we need to make ourselves available continuously in a helping capacity. Our deeds of love bless others in ways we may never know. Indeed, our service makes us shining examples of God’s grace.

This is reality: If you’re not yet serving, you’re not yet recovering.

Day 6 Scripture passages

After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.

Then the royal officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?" Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew.

When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, the pur(that is, the lot) was cast in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will give ten thousand talents[b] of silver to the king's administrators for the royal treasury."

So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. "Keep the money," the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please."

Then on the thirteenth day of the first month the royal secretaries were summoned. They wrote out in the script of each province and in

the language of each people all Haman's orders to the king's satraps, the governors of the various provinces and the nobles of the various peoples. These were written in the name of King Xerxes himself and sealed with his own ring. Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day.

The couriers went out, spurred on by the king's command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered.

Esther 3

"All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."

When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

Esther 4:11-16

Day 6 Devotion

My Name Is Esther

As we travel the road to recovery, fear may slow us down. It's not that we expected the trip to be easy. But some elements can be intimidating, like listing and then sharing all the ugliness in our life with another human being. Esther experienced the degree to which fear can make us falter.

Her people, exiled Jews then scattered across the Persian Empire, faced extermination because of the vicious plot of Haman (see Esther 3). Esther, in her role as queen, was their only hope. Mordecai had become his cousin's guardian after the young Esther's parents had died. He now sent a message and documents to Esther detailing the vile scheme and asking her to go to the king and beg for mercy. This was risky business. Esther's predecessor had angered the king and lost her position. To appear before him without a summons could result in execution (see Esther 4:11). Esther understandably balked at what she had to do. She was afraid.

Mordecai responded to her hesitation by pointing out that her refusal would mean her own death, as well as the deaths of her father's family, and that her position may well have been given to her in light of the crisis her people now faced (see verse 14).

Esther, to her credit, responded to the reasoning of a man she trusted, fasted to gain spiritual strength and insight, sought the support of others in her preparations, made a commitment, accepted the potential price (death) she might have to pay (see verses 15-16), and developed a plan (see Esther 5-7).

God graciously protected Esther. When she entered the king's chamber, he granted her an audience and listened to her petition. Carefully and methodically Esther moved through her meticulously developed plan.

Day 7 Scripture passages

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"

"No," they answered.

He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") 21 When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"

Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."

John 21:1-22

Day 7 Devotion

My Name Is Peter

All of us, without exception, need a sponsor and/or accountability partner—someone who can confront us with truth and love without placing shame and guilt. A sponsor must demonstrate compassion, care, and hope—but not pity.

In John 21 we see an ideal sponsor working to help Peter in his recovery. Peter had publicly denied ever knowing Jesus—the man who was his Lord, his teacher and his best friend. He needed to get back on the road to recovery, to undergo some authentic character changes. To Peter’s credit, note that, even in the pain of his failure, he stayed with his group (see verses 1–3).

Jesus himself filled the role of the sponsor/accountability partner for his fallen disciple. He sought Peter out, fed him (see verses 4–14) and showed him compassion before he moved to confrontation. Then Jesus took Peter aside to help him face his pain and shame (see verses 15–22).

Jesus’ words to Peter included a call to evaluate his love for Jesus and to minister to others (see verses 15–17). How would this disciple take the first step? The Lord gave him a simple instruction: “Follow me!” (21:19)

In recovery, we are called to honestly examine the past and face our pain and shame so that our love for Jesus can continue to grow. We are able to do this by making attendance at our recovery meetings a priority, maintaining an honest view of ourselves, staying connected to a group, getting involved in service, and maintaining spiritual contact with Jesus through prayer and study.

How do we know our love for Jesus is growing? How do we know when we are following him? We know we love the Lord when we think less about ourselves and more about the needs of others.