



THE
ONE
YEAR

LIFE RECOVERY[®]

PRAYER DEVOTIONAL

*Daily Encouragement from the Bible for
Your Journey toward Wholeness and Healing*

STEPHEN ARTERBURN, M.Ed.
NICK HARRISON

The One Year Life Recovery Prayer Devotional

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with Misty Arterburn

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The One Year Life Recovery Prayer Devotional: Daily Encouragement from the Bible for Your Journey toward Wholeness and Healing

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*For the many who fight the war against addiction
May the victory be yours*

Introduction

ADDICTIONS OF ANY KIND are life destroying. You know this firsthand. That's why you're in recovery. You're trying to shed your dependencies and "recover" a normal life. An important aspect of addiction recovery—an aspect often overlooked—is the spiritual component. Recovery involves not only overcoming the physical and psychological compulsion of our addiction but also becoming strong spiritually.

Our hope is that this book of devotions will stimulate you to more dependency on God as you go through the recovery process. We want you to know that God is for you in your battle. He is able to strengthen you. He works with you to overcome the weaknesses of the flesh. He does this through his Word, through your prayers, and through the encouragement of others on the same journey.

Our expectation for you is that you'll not only recover from your addiction but that God has a post-addiction plan for you that will bring you fulfillment and joy. Others in history have walked your path. The man we refer to as Saint Augustine was surely sexually addicted. Augustine claimed that even at the young age of sixteen, "the frenzy gripped me and I surrendered myself entirely to lust." William Wilberforce, leader of the abolitionist movement in England, was a solid Christian man who was addicted to opium first prescribed as a relief for his ulcerative colitis. More recently, it's all too common to read of celebrities who have had to fight a serious addiction. Some, sadly, didn't recover. Whitney Houston,

Elvis Presley, Amy Winehouse, and Michael Jackson come to mind. We don't want that to happen to you.

As you go through this year, remember that the devotions in this book are designed to supplement, not replace, your other recovery protocols. If you're not presently in a reputable recovery program, we hope you'll search for one. Life Recovery, Celebrate Recovery, and Teen Challenge are three good options. You can find others on the internet or through recommendations from friends, but do check them out first and make sure they're scripturally based and have a track record of helping people shed their addictions.

We say that because this book, too, is written from a decidedly Christian perspective and is part of Tyndale House's Life Recovery resources, which include the New Living Translation of *The Life Recovery Bible*, the version most often used in the devotions on the following pages.

Many of the ideas, Bible references, and prayers will only make sense to a man or woman who has made a commitment to Christ.

We expect many readers are drawn to this book because they're already Christians and want to follow biblically based principles in their recovery from addiction. We know, too, that many other readers may not have yet entered into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. If you haven't entered into a relationship with God but want to, you can do this now by simply acknowledging your need for God's intervention in your life and asking him, in faith, to forgive your sins and make you a new creation. That new creation identity is the basis for Christian recovery from addiction.

We read in the New Testament book of Romans, "If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved" (Romans 10:9-10). And in the gospel of John, we read Jesus' words to Nicodemus, "You must be born again" (John 3:7). A wonderful verse affirming the believer's new identity is found in

2 Corinthians 5:17, which tells us, “Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”

Recovery is all about that new person you become when you confess Christ as your Lord. So if you’re serious about your recovery and would like to commit your life to Christ, you can do so by simply praying in your own words or by praying this suggested prayer:

God, I have failed to live the life I should. I’ve sinned and am in need of forgiveness. I ask you to forgive me for my sins, come into my life, and create in me the person you’ve always meant me to be. Help me as I recover my life from addiction.

If you prayed that prayer with even mustard seed–sized faith, God has made you his child. For further reading on this new life or more in-depth reading to help overcome your old life, see a list of useful Life Recovery resources on page 399.

When one becomes a Christian through the new birth, there comes a fresh supply of power from the Holy Spirit who will indwell you as your teacher, counselor, and comforter. The Holy Spirit will help you see areas in your life where you need to turn away from destructive behaviors and walk out the new post-addiction life God has planned for you.

Whether you’re a new Christian or a well-seasoned believer who has become addicted to a substance or compulsive behavior, we hope this book helps you in your recovery. Please know you are being prayed for as you go through the next twelve months with us.

A final word: Make no mistake, being a Christian doesn’t make addiction recovery an easy fix. For most people, including Christians, recovery is a long-haul process. There are rarely quick fixes. You must enter into recovery planning to stay the course—no turning back. You must be wanting and willing. *Wanting* recovery and *willing* to go through the process of recovery no matter what, enduring the challenges.

We think of the process of recovery as tearing down a brick wall that

has slowly built up over the course of your addiction, separating you from the person you're meant to be. In recovery, that brick wall must come down, brick by brick.

To help you take down the wall, *The One Year Life Recovery Prayer Devotional* provides daily readings to encourage you in your recovery. Each day's reading starts with a Bible verse and follows it with a brief exhortation, a short prayer, and to cap it off, a quote from a prominent Christian, past or present, to reinforce the theme of the day's devotion. In quoting these people, we hope you'll see that, down through the ages, successful men and women went through very hard times to be able to instruct us with their wisdom. Even from those who wrote centuries ago, you will find words oddly contemporary and relevant to your recovery.

Over the next year, our prayer is that the bricks in your wall will continue to fall as you pursue sobriety. *We know you can do this.* God has called you to it, and he will empower you to remove that brick wall and step over into the real self you're called to be.

Remember, your best life is your post-addiction life. Pursue it.

A Word about Addictions

SOMETIMES THE FIRST STEP toward overcoming an addiction is to learn something about it. There are two general categories of addictions. One category, chemical or substance addiction, results from someone ingesting alcohol or some other drug simply to feel different. Not everyone develops a chemical addiction to alcohol, but other highly addictive drugs can trap anyone who tries them.

Those who have begun to use alcohol to ease pain should watch for danger signs that indicate they are susceptible to addiction. People who develop serious alcohol issues often have the ability to “handle” their drinking (that is, they can drink a lot without it having much effect on them). Another danger sign is binge drinking: when a person consumes a lot of alcohol in an evening or a weekend but doesn’t drink again for several weeks. They point to their long stretches without alcohol as proof that they don’t have a dependency problem, but they do. Another danger sign is having others in the family tree who have been alcoholics. Heredity is a factor and indicates a much higher probability of becoming addicted to alcohol. Watch for these signs—they spell trouble.

Becoming addicted to a drug can start innocently. We may use drugs in order to fit in with friends, not knowing how powerfully addictive the drugs are. Sometimes, people get a legitimate prescription from a doctor. It may help for a while, but then its effects wear off, and soon more and more is needed. Some people may end up actually getting prescription

medications on the street as well as through a doctor. Others try to self-medicate by using illegal drugs. It begins as a way to escape the pain, but the need for more can easily become a compulsion and then an addiction. The user feels trapped and gradually gets loaded down with shame and guilt.

The other general category of addiction, process addiction, involves using less obvious methods to try to handle emotional pain. These compulsive behaviors are related to a process instead of a substance like drugs or alcohol. These behaviors start out in small ways and are seemingly innocent. Some people may think they can control these behaviors, but when they try to stop, they realize the repetitive behavior controls them.

Gambling or compulsively spending money may be a way we try to deal with our problems. We may find that we are always short of money or are drawn to the excitement of gambling with its random rewards. Even video games may become our escape from a painful reality. Check it out. Decide to not play any video games, gamble online, or spend money for thirty days and see how uncomfortable it is. Each of these activities can become a process addiction.

Process addictions involving eating can be a big issue. Eating is one of the things we think we can always control, but there are three ways eating can be a problem. One problem, overeating, happens when people look at food as a source of comfort. When they are in emotional pain, they turn to food in order to feel good again. Another eating problem involves binge eating and then having to purge what was eaten. And then there is the very serious problem of people not eating enough. Because they think they are fat, some people control their eating habits and chronically lose weight, leading to life-threatening physical problems.

Using the internet can become a problem that leads to devastating addictions. Spending too much time searching the web, or even too much interaction on social media, can keep us from living in the real world. Or our internet use may involve pornography. Many think that viewing pornography is a problem limited to men, but it can be just as big

a problem for women. Research says that the age group most commonly looking at pornography on the internet is young people—as young as eleven years old. Habitually viewing pornography can affect the brain in the same ways as a chemical addiction and can have devastating effects on our relationships.

Sometimes, people inflict pain on themselves to distract them from their emotional pain. They usually do this by cutting themselves. The reasons for this behavior are complex, but it is basically a way to feel something different—physical pain instead of emotional pain—and it is a way for them to feel alive. If they bleed a little, they know they are still here and that they are not invisible. This can become a very serious addiction.

These are some of the ways we may attempt to handle life's problems. We can get caught up in one of these chemical or process addictions and then get angry with ourselves because we can't stop. We can begin recovery by recognizing that it's not all our fault, but then we also need to begin to take responsibility for the choices we make. What you do in response to these problems will determine the course of your life, whether you know it or not. You are in control of your choices right now. Look to the resources in this devotional and to others who understand you and love you. You should not—you cannot—walk this path of recovery alone.

An Early History of Life Recovery

IN 1935, BILL W. AND DR. BOB, who were deeply involved with the Oxford Group movement, founded Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). They were seeking to live out the Oxford Group's Four Absolutes—absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love—as they helped others find the sobriety they were experiencing.

In those beginning days of the program, there were no Twelve Steps. Instead, they had six precepts relayed by Ebby T., who was Bill W.'s sponsor. Here are the six precepts:

- We admitted we were licked.
- We got honest with ourselves.
- We talked it over with another person.
- We made amends to those we had harmed.
- We tried to carry the message to others with no thought of reward.
- We prayed to whatever God we thought there was.

From these precepts, the Twelve Steps emerged. Dr. Bob, Bill W., and Dr. Samuel Shoemaker spent hours discussing as they studied portions of the Bible that aligned with their Oxford Group experiences and supported their own recovery journeys.

Three portions of Scripture were specifically identified as foundational in the development of the Twelve Steps: the Sermon on the Mount,

which includes the Beatitudes (Matthew 5–7); the book of James, which focuses on several Twelve Step fundamentals; and “the love chapter” (1 Corinthians 13). All three of these portions of Scripture clearly established the Christian and biblical roots of AA and the Twelve Steps. Having come out of their study of the Bible, these early pioneers were careful to include nothing in the Steps that would counter any truth found in God’s Word.

In the early days of AA, when conservative Christian values and truths were unapologetically used to help others in recovery, the success rate was quite amazing. The book *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers* tells how Dr. Bob called every newcomer to the first AA group to “say a prayer to God admitting you were powerless over alcohol and your life was unmanageable.” Nearly 93 percent of those surveyed in the Akron, Ohio, group never relapsed. For an addiction that had resulted in hopelessness and helplessness for centuries, this result was truly amazing.

We can only imagine what it was like to hear of alcoholics being “cured” (as the unknowing world called it) when anyone getting better from a real addiction to alcohol was considered the result of a divine miracle. We can compare what was happening there to what people would think today if 93 percent of people with stage IV incurable and inoperable brain cancer who went to Akron, Ohio, miraculously found healing there. Every media outlet would send someone to discover what was going on. Back then, 93 percent of alcoholics getting better caused such a stir that the wealthy John D. Rockefeller Jr. sent his son to find out what was going on to produce this miracle. When he reported back, he told his dad that they all had experienced a conversion experience with God.

In order to remove any barriers to inclusion based on religious views, AA did not use explicitly Christian language in their literature. They referred to God mostly as “God as we understood Him” or as the “Power greater than ourselves,” allowing for a variety of religious perspectives. As time passed, most people forgot the strong connection between the Twelve Steps and the Bible, and recovery became a secular practice with

many connections to medicine and psychology. In recent years, it has been difficult to reestablish the connection between Christian values and successful recovery programs that use the Twelve Steps. We are honored to be part of a movement that brings the Twelve Steps back to Scripture through the publication of *The Life Recovery Bible*, the creation of additional Life Recovery resources, the formation of The Life Recovery Institute, and the establishment of Life Recovery groups around the world.

At a meeting in 1991, Tyndale House Publishers partnered with Stephen Arterburn and David Stoop to create *The Life Recovery Bible*, which includes traditional study Bible features along with devotionals to give fellow strugglers a meaningful connection to God's Word. This Bible is designed for people involved in Twelve Step recovery programs who have longed for a tool that integrates the Twelve Steps with Scripture. Introducing them to the true Power greater than ourselves, the God of the Bible, *The Life Recovery Bible* provides a strong biblical foundation for recovery. And for people who know the Bible but are in need of recovery, it introduces them to the Twelve Steps in a Christ-centered recovery program.

Using *The Life Recovery Bible* along with this devotional, in the context of Twelve Step meetings and working the Steps, your life can be transformed. You can become one of many people who have allowed God to take over what they could not control and now believe what they once found so hard to accept.

The Twelve Steps of Life Recovery

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our problems—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that AA has reviewed or approved the contents of this publication, nor that AA agrees with the views expressed herein. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism—use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities that are patterned after AA, but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise.

The Twelve Steps and Scripture

THE TWELVE STEPS HAVE long been of great help to people in recovery. Much of their power comes from the fact that they capture principles clearly revealed in the Bible. The following pages list the Twelve Steps and connect them to corresponding Scriptures that support them. This will help readers familiar with the Twelve Steps to discover the true source of their wisdom—the very Word of God.

STEP 1: We admitted that we were powerless over our problems—that our lives had become unmanageable.

“I know that nothing good lives in me. . . . I want to do what is right, but I can’t” (Romans 7:18; see also John 8:31-36; Romans 7:14-25).

STEP 2: We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

“God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him” (Philippians 2:13; see also Romans 4:6-8; Ephesians 1:6-8; Colossians 1:21-22; Hebrews 11:1-10).

STEP 3: We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God.

“Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable” (Romans 12:1; see also Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 10:14-16; James 4:7-10).

STEP 4: We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

“Let us test and examine our ways. Let us turn back to the LORD” (Lamentations 3:40; see also Matthew 7:1-5; 2 Corinthians 7:8-10).

STEP 5: We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:16; see also Psalms 32:1-5; 51:1-3; 1 John 1:2-6).

STEP 6: We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor” (James 4:10; see also Romans 6:5-11; Philippians 3:12-14).

STEP 7: We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

“If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness” (1 John 1:9; see also Luke 18:9-14; 1 John 5:13-15).

STEP 8: We made a list of all the persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

“Do to others as you would like them to do to you” (Luke 6:31; see also Colossians 3:12-15; 1 John 3:10-20).

STEP 9: We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

“If you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar . . . and . . . someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God” (Matthew 5:23-24; see also Luke 19:1-10; 1 Peter 2:21-25).

STEP 10: We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

“If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12; see also Romans 5:3-6; 2 Timothy 2:1-7; 1 John 1:8-10).

STEP 11: We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

“Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart” (Colossians 4:2; see also Isaiah 40:28-31; 1 Timothy 4:7-8).

STEP 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

“Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself” (Galatians 6:1; see also Isaiah 61:1-3; Titus 3:3-7; 1 Peter 4:1-5).

In God's Image

God created human beings in his own image.
In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

GENESIS 1:27

TO BE CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE is to be made to desire the things God desires, to love the way he loves. When we were in bondage to our addiction, we experienced the demeaning of that image. We became less like our Creator and more like our abusive slave master. Our recovery is, in part, a restoration of the image of God in us as we turn from looking into the face of addiction and, instead, look into the Father's eyes. That gaze alone brings us closer to healing. Closer to once again bearing the image of God.

† Father, that I was created to be an image bearer of you amazes me. In my addiction, I've allowed that image to be marred. In my recovery, Lord, I pray you'll fully restore your image in me. Remove the scars of my addiction. Allow me to be a reflection of you and your attributes—not just for my sake but for the sake of those who see me, know me, and interact with me. Renew me this year; bring recovery to every part of my being. Make me whole again.

Within each of us exists the image of God, however disfigured and corrupted by sin it may presently be. God is able to recover this image through grace as we are conformed to Christ.

ALISTER McGRATH (1953-)

JANUARY 2

Freedom Is Not Wishful Thinking

Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free,
and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.

GALATIANS 5:1

EARLY ON IN OUR ADDICTION, our prayers may have been wishful thinking along the lines of “I sure wish God would get me out of this life I’m in.” God can answer that prayer, but since all of the Christian life is based on faith, at some point we must turn that wishful thinking into confidence in God’s ability to fully bring us out of slavery and into freedom. When he does, we must forever after always “stay free.” We must never again submit ourselves to any yoke of slavery.

For the apostle Paul’s Galatian audience, the temptation was to submit to the law from which they had been freed by trusting in Christ. For us, the temptation is to waver from recovery and find ourselves back in the throes of addiction. Thank God wishful thinking is a poor substitute for saving faith. When Christ sets us free, we’re free forever. As Paul reminds us in Galatians 5, “Now make sure that you stay free.”

† *Father, my hope in you isn't wishful thinking. Deliverance from addiction is reality. Staying in addiction is slavery. Lord, be with me as I continue on in faith, building my trust in you day by day, watching you bring about every change I need. Help me to remember that you are for my freedom even more than I am.*

Trust is faith that has become absolute, approved, and accomplished. When all is said and done, there is a sort of risk in faith and its exercise. But trust is firm belief; it is faith in full bloom. Trust is a conscious act, a fact of which we are aware.

E. M. BOUNDS (1835-1913)

Christ Welcomes Us

Accept each other just as Christ has accepted you
so that God will be given glory.

ROMANS 15:7

COMING TO CHRIST FOR THE FIRST TIME . . . or returning to Christ after a season of addiction, we might wonder at his response. We know of the returning prodigal in Luke 15, but is that just a Bible story? Or is it true for us who have wandered in addiction?

Yes! It *is* for us! We soon find ourselves not only accepted by Christ but *welcomed* by him. He has longed for our return and receives us without hesitation, without condemnation, without projecting shame on us. Christ reminds us we are his and are deeply loved by him, no matter how long it's taken us to come home to him.

Today, think about Christ welcoming you. Consider his deep desire for friendship with you. In his generous welcoming, would you refuse to also welcome him into your life?

† Lord, I come to you one day at a time, basking in your words of welcome. Thank you for taking me as I am. Thank you for the promise of recovery and wholeness. Father, in you, I find a true home and a sure rest after wandering so long in the desert of addiction.

When you stray from His presence, He longs for you to come back. He weeps that you are missing out on His love, protection, and provision. He throws His arms open, runs toward you, gathers you up, and welcomes you home.

CHARLES STANLEY (1932-)

JANUARY 4

God Doesn't Count Our Successes and Failures

I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14

IT'S DURING THESE EARLY DAYS of the new year when we recall our previous vows of sobriety, which by this date have often been violated, resulting in a plunge of our self-worth. We own up to another failure and assume God is adding another F to our divine report card. But the truth is that our failures are simply the enemy's tools to keep us in his clutches.

As Christians, we know our success doesn't depend on us anyway. Our strength is in the Lord himself. So we're able to forget what lies behind and strain ahead in full forgiveness and confidence that we aren't failures. We reach for the prize that is ours: sobriety here on earth and a heavenly home in eternity.

† *God, thank you that my past failures have brought me to where I am now—seeking full recovery by trusting in you alone. I press on toward the greater goals you have for me in this life and the joys that await me when this life is over. May the one thing I focus on be forgetting what lies behind as I press forward to what lies ahead. Bring it to pass, Lord.*

If you are a true believer in Jesus, be of this mind—always to be pressing forward to something higher and better. If God has given you one form of maturity, press onward to a much higher form. Seek continually to rise. The eagle's motto is, "Higher, Higher!" Let it be your motto, too.

CHARLES SPURGEON (1834-1892)

A Clean Heart

Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Renew a loyal spirit within me.
Do not banish me from your presence,
and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and make me willing to obey you.

PSALM 51:10-12

WHEN TEMPTATION COMES, we know two responses: One is the response of the clean heart and renewed, right spirit God has placed in us. At that point, we realize we no longer need to accept the invitation to renew our addiction. The other response is when we don't sense the Holy Spirit's upholding power, and we become as dry gunpowder, needing only a spark to set us off. But, praise God, he never takes his Spirit from us. He is *always* there to uphold us. We need only to have a willing spirit.

† God, because of Christ's death on the cross, my heart is clean. You are renewing my spirit each day. Lord, my hope is in you during times of severe temptation. Remind me often of the joy of my salvation. Uphold me with a willing spirit.

As long as the Spirit dwells in my heart, he deadens me to sin, so that if lawfully called through temptation I may reckon upon God carrying me through. But when the Spirit leaves me, I am like dry gunpowder.

ROBERT MURRAY M'CHEYNE (1813-1843)

JANUARY 6

A New Life Has Begun!

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person.

The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

AT THE MOMENT OF OUR conversion to Christ, many amazing things happen to us. Perhaps the most miraculous is that we become a “new person.” It’s as we grow to understand and live out our new life that we overcome our old life, which, according to God, has passed away. Here’s the thing: *You can’t fully embrace your new identity if you won’t let go of your old identity.*

† *Lord, I belong to you! Because of that, I’m a new person. My old life is gone—truly gone—and a new life has begun. This life was born of you. Now, heavenly Father, I pray you’ll nourish this life. Bring it to maturity. Protect me, care for me, use me. May I quickly learn to live out of this new reality and discard all that belongs to the old life with its addictions and wrong appetites. Use my life to help others, Lord. This will be true happiness.*

Oh, the unimaginable blessedness of those on whom this new creation has taken place. Oh, the unutterable, the endless misery of those on whom no change has passed, in whom old things still remain!

HORATIUS BONAR (1808–1889)

The New Birth

You have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.

1 PETER 1:23

THERE IS NOTHING LIKE THE new birth to set us right. Having been born again by the Spirit of God, we leave behind all our garbage: our sin, our dependency on chemical or other addictive crutches, our compulsions, our lost years. All those fall behind us when we're born from above. Now we simply daily live out the truth of a reborn life that can never end, rooted in the living Word of God.

Being born again *is* the gospel. And it's our ticket to freedom.

† *Thank you, Lord, for the living and abiding Word, through which I gain my freedom. I praise you for the new birth that ushers me into a far better life than the natural one that is so easily attracted to addiction. May my new birth bring a welcome infusion of true life into my being. I pray that this life within me, born of your Holy Spirit, will continue to grow and bring forth good fruit—the fruit of long-term sobriety.*

The gift of sonship to God becomes ours not through being born, but through being born again.

J. I. PACKER (1926–2020)