The Road to Recovery
Letting Go

Adapted from Rick Warren’s “The Road to Recovery” and Celebrate Recovery’s Eight Recovery Principles

Matthew 11:28–30

There’s a story about a pet-store delivery truck going down the road. Every stop light he came to he’d run to the back of the truck, grab a 2x4 and start beating on the side of the truck. Nobody could figure out what he was doing, so finally somebody asked him, “What are you doing?” He said, “This is only a two-ton truck and I’m carrying four tons of canaries. I’ve got to keep two tons of them in the air all the time.”

This is a picture of life isn’t it? Many of us are out there beating ourselves, trying to keep it all in the air from all crashing down. We have a tendency to get stuck in life. We get stuck in relationships. We get stuck with habits. We get stuck in grief when we lose a loved one. We get stuck in anger. We get stuck in our work, in a sexual relationship. And then we can’t get out of it and then on to a cycle. Once you get stuck, then you start feeling guilty that you’re stuck.

We want to get out of it, but it seems to spin around and around again. Then we have a lot of guilt after we can’t get out of it and can’t change. Maybe you even experience anger at yourself because you can’t seem to change. And for some anger turns to fear that I’m never going to get out of this. It’s got control of me. Fear can and will eventually turn to depression and you start feeling sorry for yourself and you start the cycle all over again and get further stuck.

How do we break out of that “stuckness”?

That’s what we’ve been talking about for a couple of weeks.

Step 1—Admit it, I’ve got a problem. Reality step.

Step 2—Hope step—Not only am I powerless but God has power and He is willing to help out. He knows my problems and cares about my problems and cares about me. He knows everything going on in my life. He’s offering to help me to change. And that’s the Hope step.

But it’s not just enough to know that God will help you. You got to take action. You’ve got to make a decision. You’ve got to walk across the line.

STEP 3—CONSCIOUSLY CHOOSE TO COMMIT ALL MY LIFE AND WILL TO CHRIST’S CARE AND CONTROL.

This step is based on what Jesus said in Matthew 11.

Matthew 11:28-30

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Jesus says, “Come to Me.” It’s God’s invitation. I will make your life easier. I will lighten your load. You will have relief. You will have release. You will have rest. Give Me control and care of your life and watch what I do. Life will get so much easier. Less stressful.

What a deal! Why would anybody turn that deal down? Yet some of you have heard this before and you’ve never acted on it. It’s like having an unopened gift. God says I want to give you this gift of relief and release and recovery
I. WHAT KEEPS ME FROM DOING THAT?

1. **Pride** will keep me from admitting I need help.

_Psalm 40:12_

For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

2. **Guilt** will keep you from taking this step. I may be ashamed to ask God to help me.

Psalm 40:12

For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

3. **Fear**. I’m afraid of what I might have to give up.

Do you know what freedom is? Freedom is choosing who controls you. When you give your life in care and control of Christ He sets you free. He said, “He’ll turn me into a nun (priest).” You say, “I don’t want anybody controlling me.” Who are you kidding? You’re being controlled all the time. It’s just that you choose who you’re being controlled by when you let God control your life. You’re controlled by the opinions of other people. You’re controlled by hurts you can’t forget. You controlled by habits, hang-ups, by the way your parents brought you up.

“Does a man benefit if he gains the whole world and loses his soul in the process? Is anything worth more than his soul?” No.

When you take this Third Step you give up everything and then you never had it so good. Because He takes what you’ve given Him, He turns it around, He adds new meaning, new significance, new vitality, gives it back to you in a whole new way.

If you’ve been afraid to open your life to the care and control of Christ that He might make you some fanatic, some nut, or something or I might have to give up ___________. Don’t worry about the specifics of what you might
have to give up. Don’t worry about that. If you focus on the specifics you’ll never make the greater decision, which is the step to recovery. Just come to God:

4. **Worry.** Keeps you from surrendering your life to the care and control of Christ. We confuse the decision-making phase with the problem-solving phase. Back in 1963 when JFK announced publicly, “We’re going to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade,” that was the decision. Had all the problems been solved when he made that decision? No. If you’re a good manager you know you never confuse decision making with problem solving. If you confuse them, you never make the decision. You have to make the decision, then solve the problems. Kennedy said, “We’re going to go to the moon,” then it was NASA’s problem to figure out the problems’ solutions.

When I surrendered my life to Christ, I didn’t know everything that would happen. I didn’t know anything except I wanted to follow Jesus. There have been some ups and downs in that process and I have grown, changed, failed and gotten back up again. God is still purging and sanctifying me and I pray it continues for the rest of my life. I want His work in my life. I know what my work leads to. Aren’t you tired of your way?

This is the most important thing I’ll say today: The Christian life is a decision followed by a process. Same with recovery. It is a decision followed by a process. All I’m talking about today is the decision. OK, let’s do it, let’s go for it.

In World War II the Marines had a definite strategy they used in the Pacific when they went to retake the Pacific from the Japanese. They used the same strategy on every island and it worked every time. First, the Marines would go to the island that had been taken captive, and they would start bombing it, and they would just pelt it with bombs and grenades and all kinds of explosives. That was called the softening-up period. Many of you are in the softening-up period right now. And all kinds of explosions are going off in your life that are just sending fragments everywhere and you’re saying, “This isn’t working.” You come to a point where you say, “Yes, I need something beyond myself.” It’s softening up your pride. “I need help. I need God in my life. There’s too much stress.” The second phase, the Marines would come in and establish a beach head, maybe only twenty yards deep and two hundred yards wide but they would just get a presence on the island. When they had established the beach head, had they completely liberated the island? No. They had just gotten in. From there they began to fight the battles. Sometimes they’d move one hundred yards forward and sometimes they’d get pushed back. And sometimes they’d win the battle and sometimes they’d lose it. But everybody knew that once they’d established a beach head total liberation of the island was inevitable, just a matter of time. And in the history of WW II once the Marines had landed and established a beach head they never lost an island. It was just a matter of time that the entire island would be set free.

When you make this step, what’s happening is God gets a beach head in your life. The Bible calls it conversion or being born again. It just means God gets a presence in my life. Does that mean everything in my life is perfect? Absolutely not. It means God’s in your life, He’s got a beach head and the rest of your life He’s going to be setting you free, little by little by little. It’s a process.

Maybe you worry that in this battle you couldn’t hold on and hold out. God says Don’t worry. It’s not your job to keep it. He says, “I do the keeping.” “Cast all your cares on God because He cares for you.” He says, “I care for you. I hold you in My hand.”

Maybe you are afraid that God will abandon you like everyone else has. You start this process, this walk and you make a mistake and that’s all she wrote, God is out of there. That is not the God of the bible. You cannot sin so badly that God gives up on you.

2 Timothy 1:12

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”
Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Jesus didn’t die on the cross for the sins you committed before you gave your life to him and after that you better do what he says perfectly or you will on the outside looking in. No, God knows you are a work in process. The blood of Jesus is the only thing that can save us. It doesn’t wash away the old sin and now we have to complete our own salvation. It doesn’t work that way. He is able to keep us, he is performing the work in us and will continue as long as we want Him too.

5. **Doubt**. “I want to believe but my faith just seems so small.” You need to know the story of a guy named Jairus in the Bible. Jairus came to Jesus one day. “Jesus, I know You can heal people. My daughter needs to be healed.” Jesus said, “If you have faith then she will be healed.” Jairus was read honest. He said, “Lord, I’ve got a lot of doubts. I want to believe. Help me with my unbelief.” Jesus said, “That’s good enough.” And He healed the girl. Maybe you need to say like Jairus, “God I want to believe that you will help me with my life. Help me with my unbelief.” That’s good enough. Don’t you have to have a big faith? Look at what the Bible says. “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, nothing will be impossible for you.” It’s not the size of your faith that matters, it’s the size of what you put it in, the size of your God. You can have giant faith, put it in the wrong thing and get no results. Faith is not the issue. The issue is what do you put it in. A little faith in a big God gets big results. Don’t let any of these things keep you from taking this step.

*** Testimony***

I asked O.D. Thompson to share his testimony with us this morning.

Some of you say I’ve tried this before and it didn’t work. I’ve tried giving my life to God and it just didn’t work. My evaluation of that is that you probably didn’t fully understand what it all involved. You were involved you just weren’t committed. Like the kamikaze who went on 33 missions. He was involved but not committed.

II. HOW DO I TAKE THIS STEP?

What does it mean to take this step?

1. **I accept God’s Son as my Savior.** I need to be saved. I need help. I realize I need Him in my life. You believe on Jesus. You believe not only that He existed, but He is God manifest in the flesh and that He lived, died and rose from the dead so that you can stand before God free from sin and completely blameless. The response to this belief is to do what the word of God says which is to be baptized for the remission of our sins.

2. **I accept God’s Word as my standard for living.** From now on I’ve got a manual that I’m going to live my life by. God says this is your standard by which you evaluate life around you. All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

3. **I accept God’s will as my strategy, as my goal in life.** God, what do you want me to do? I don’t even have to understand it but I’m living my life on Your terms because You made me for a reason. You have a purpose and I want to fulfill that purpose that You made me for.” And God’s will becomes my strategy for life, whether I understand it or not.

4. **I accept God’s power as my strength.**

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength
No longer do I have to rely on my own energy. Things work better when they’re plugged in. You get plugged into God, you’re not so tired all the time. God says, “I will give you My power to be all I want you to be.”

Jesus says, “I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door I will come in and fellowship with him.” Jesus says, “I’m standing at the door of your life and I’m knocking and I’m saying I want to come into your life. Step Three means to open the door. The key that unlocks that door is willingness. You don’t need willpower; you need willingness to accept God’s power in your life, go by His controls, His system.

Pilots, when they fly planes, fly always either by IFR or VFR. IFR stands for Instrument Flight Rules. VFR stands for Visual Flight Rules. Every pilot is flying by one or the other. IFR is when you taxi out on a runway, you might go over to the control tower, you submit to the controls of the system, you set your instruments, and it’s a done deal. You’re controlled by the instruments—a very safe way of flying. VFR—Visual Flight Rules—you just kind of taxi on the runway, look around, looks OK, and take off and just fly around and use your sight. VFR is fine as long as you can see everything—if it’s clear weather and not a lot of traffic. But one day, if you fly enough you’re going to eventually hit bad weather. You’re going to get lost in some clouds and at one point you have to pick up the microphone and say, “I need to switch over to IFR” and you submit to the controls of that channel. All airlines fly IFR. All pros fly IFR but a lot of amateurs fly VFR. The FAA says that a lot of these small plane crashes, many of those could have been prevented if the person in the cockpit, when they get lost in the clouds and weather had simply picked up the microphone and said, “I need help.” Are they going to do that?

You have made it pretty well along to this point in life flying VFR and you’ve controlled everything but it’s an inevitable part of life that you’re going to have bad weather. You’re going to hit the tough spots. You’re going to hit the clouds where you flip upside down and you don’t even know which direction you’re going. At that point you’ve got to pick up the microphone and switch to God’s system. I surrender to the care and control of Christ or it’s an invitation to disaster.

It’s very important for you to let somebody else know of your decision and making this commitment.