

Hi, My names are Brian, Forgiven, Loved, Redeemed, Brave, Messenger and Son. I'm a grateful believer in Jesus, a recipient of His **amazing Grace**, **celebrating** progressive freedom over a sexual addiction and I am **still healing** from all of my **hurts, insecurities**, rejections, and character defects.

Tonight I have the privilege of sharing some thoughts on **Denial**.

> **Denial.**

I was not real familiar with the topic, and it seems like **no one wants to talk about it, especially if they are in it.**

A good friend of mine **early** in recovery, got all mad one time when we told him he was in denial, it seems **no one likes** being told they are in denial ... whatever that is, so let's take a look into this word. It seems there are many **Types** of Denial, Repressed memories, actually not seeing an issue, the Pharisee denial of self righteousness, the Willow Board denial of only seeing the good in a person they knew well and the list goes on. Come to find out there is a reason this lesson comes **BEFORE** step one, prior to admitting... Step 1 and Principle 1.

> **Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.**

– Romans 7:18

> **Principle 1: Realize I'm not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do wrong things and that my life is unmanageable.**

Denial is not admitting that you are powerless and not fully seeing that your life is unmanageable. So, my main take away thought for tonight ... Ready?

> **Denial is minimizing the truth.**

Denial is thinking you can handle your life and your **drug** of choice. I think there are **three** types of people, those that **know** they have an addiction, those that **do not** have an addiction, but they have other **sin issues** and hurts in their lives, and those that are actually in **denial** that they are **in one of** those first **two** categories.

Denial is often thought to be, **not seeing** that you have a problem. **I think** it is more often just **minimizing** your problem and **not fully seeing** the severity or reality of **destruction**, the **effects** on others, the **unmanageability** and the **dangers** lurking around the corner.

Denial says, **“I don’t** have a **serious** drinking problem.” Or, **“I can control** my drinking, I just like a few beers now and then.” See if any of these resonate with your or someone you know, “God just created me with a high sex drive, pornography doesn’t hurt anyone” or, “as long as I’m not breaking the law,” or, “I can stop if I want to” ... maybe, “now, **so and so** has an addiction, at least I’m not as bad off as them” or, “At least I am not doing as badly as I once was, ya, today I am still using on occasion, but it’s **not that big of a deal.**” Do any of these sound familiar? We all need to consider if there is still some **minimizing** or **denial** in our thinking! Many times we need people **outside** our view, our blind spot, to show us **the truth. That’s why they call it denial, you** can’t see for yourself, **if you are in denial.**

While preparing this talk, I had a good, from my life, unfortunate illustration come to my awareness. I did not fully realize how strong my denial was. My wife and I were not sure we wanted to share this, but it was too good. To illustrate this, here is a photo and video for you.

> **Photo, Jazz**

Now, **how cute** is this little guy. This is our baby as a puppy, **his name is Jazz? 4 1/2 years** he has enhanced our life and marriage. Here he is loving the snow and running over to grandma’s.

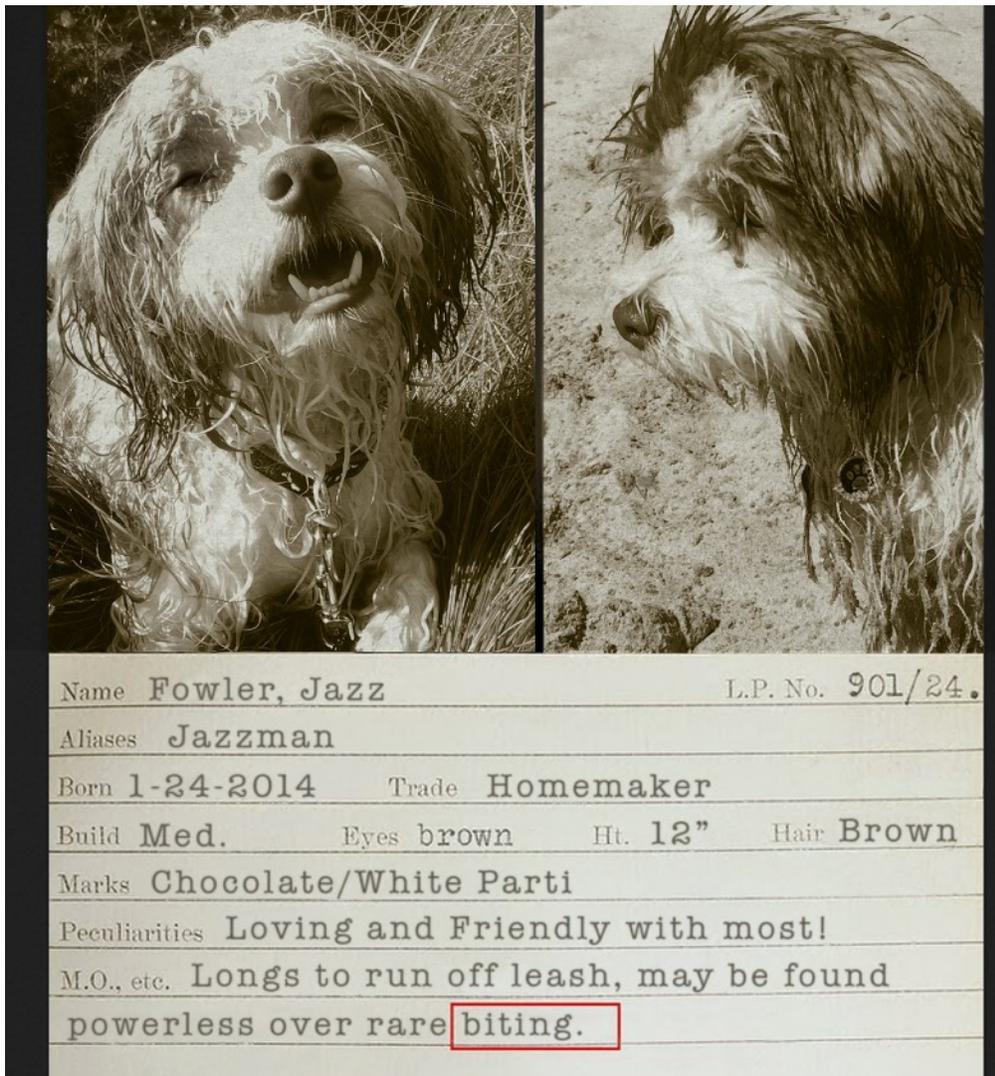


> **Video, Jazz, running as puppy, then BLANK BLACK**

So what was my **denial**, prior to **July 27th**? That my precious little guy had a **biting problem**. Ya, there was that one fluke time he bite my neighbor Andy, but he was just wanting Andy to play with him and he was walking away. He and Andy just haven't clicked. Ya, he did get **kicked out** of my mother-in-laws rehabilitation center, for nipping at some staff and visitors pant legs, but it was **nothing** too serious. Oh ya, there was that one **worker** across from where we live, but I should have not let him out without his leash, that was **my fault**. Man was that guy angry! But Jazz was just "protecting our property." Ya, it did start to be more noticeable and frequent, but I'm sure it is not that serious. There are just some **people** and dogs he does not seem to like. But hey, don't we all feel that way? Oh well, I'm sure it's not that big of deal, it's not like he has really **hurt anyone**, too much.

Then there was July 27th. I look outdoors, no one within notice and so I do what I have done 100's of times over the last 4 years, I say, "go see Grandma" and away he runs, he **loves** running off leash, free and as fast as the wind, he seems so happy to take off. But this time he spots a little old lady a couple of condo's away, watering her flowers, as he bolts over her way, I call him ... **too late** ... my life and **his** change, as he bites her in the back of her bare leg. I run up to

check it out and there is blood and a serious bite. I am **horrified** and so is she. She is **91** and quite upset, as I apologize, grab Jazz, take him home and come back. She is on the phone with her daughter and asks me for a ride to **Emergency**. I take her and continue to apologize and **promise he will never be off leash again**. Later that day; **The police** show up at my door for a report.



> **Mug Photo, Jazz, 1, 2, 3** (follow 1, immediately with close ups)

My little boy now has a police record and I am no longer in DENIAL! And yes our life changed and I can no longer **minimize** his problem and the severity of this problem. So I had a little fun with his mug shot, but to be clear, there was **nothing funny** about this, let me show how serious this is ...

> Photo, Wound

This is the **reality**, this is what it took to **break me out** of my denial and my **minimizing** the truth. No longer can I **only** look at his loving, fun, friendly personality. This is a small **illustration**, of what it often takes for us to **break out of denial**, of own addiction or anger issue. Or denial with regard to a loved one, an abusive spouse or boyfriend, a “drinking problem” or a prescription drug usage, a persistent struggle with pornography, but we **minimize** it’s damage. **What will it take** to get our attention, to break the **chains** of minimizing and denial? Often it involves **pain** and a significant **incident** of **dramatic** proportion.



Like **maybe** a medical bill. Yes we paid the, **\$574.00** bill. **What will it take** to break you out of your denial, your minimizing and begin a lasting recovery program? Both for his future and any possibility of another incident, I have finally committed to him not being off leash, that **I am responsible**. He seems to be **powerless** over these sudden urges and some kind of instinct kicks in and he becomes someone we do not even recognize. **Sound familiar?** This incident, we claim to be **hitting** bottom and I now accept **responsibility** to protect him and **others** from any future incident. I can not even **think** about the **consequences** or severity of another slip or relapse. He can no longer be **trusted**, or off leash. (59 days sober) What was our main thought?

> **Denial is minimizing the truth.**

Ok, I do not think **most denial** is complete unawareness of a problem, rather a **minimizing** of the problem, minimizing the truth and minimizing the **severity** of the issue, and/or our own **powerlessness** over it. Alright, here comes the CR **Acrostic**, Follow me on your handouts, if you like. The word is, of course, **DENIAL**:

> **D. Disables our feelings**

> **VS: *They promise them freedom while they themselves are slaves of destructive habits—for we are slaves of anything that has conquered us.*** – 2 Peter 2:19 (a powerful verse for those wrestling with any destructive habit).

Addiction is largely about **numbing** our emotions. **Medicating** the **pain** of our story. **Escaping** into a place of denial and **minimizing the truth** of our pain and wounds. Then, once trapped in denial or addiction, our emotions get cut off, both the negative ones and the positive emotions of love and joy. My primary emotion, **became anger**. Some actually **disassociate**, as the pain of their abuse is too great and the brain can not accept, or deal with the reality. They disable their emotions, numb out, and **learn to cope** with the trauma and life with a minimal range of emotions. They disable their feelings.

> **E. (when in Denial) Energy is lost**

> **VS: *He frees the prisoners . . . he lifts the burdens from those bent down beneath their loads . . .*** – Psalm 146:7b–8

When **in** denial, there is often a **low grade depression** and a feeling of loss of energy. They say depression is often, **anger turned inward**. Life is a **burden**, love and joy seem absent. Often we need professional help, to guide us back into our story. They say, **we can not heal, what we can not feel**. Some question the value of going back and drugging “all that stuff up again.” Well I am a huge believer in the importance of going back and bringing **healing to our wounds**.

There is a time to forgive, which is part of the healing. And there hopefully is a time to move forward and to the best of our ability, as Paul says, ***Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win.*** But not before we heal the past wounds.

> **N. (Denial) Negates growth**

How can **you grow**, in an area you are **in denial of**? **Denying** or minimizing the truth about an issue or character defect, **is not going to help us grow** in that area. Denial is also why we are often not **open** to God, or our spouse, and not revealing new areas that need growth. While in our open share group guidelines, we clarify that in group, we are not trying to **fix** one another, I hope that outside of group, you are open to **feedback** and **insights** from your sponsor and accountability partners. Ask him or her, for what **they might see** as areas you could be **minimizing** or in **denial of**. We often **can not see**, what we are in denial of. Ok, the Psalmist says,

> **VS: *Then they cried to the Lord in their troubles, and he rescued them! He led them from the darkness and shadow of death and snapped their chains.*** – Psalm 107:13–14

That is our hope. We have our part and we have a God that is at work.

> **I. (Denial also) Isolates us from God**

> **VS. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*** – 1 John 1:7 If we walk in the light.

How can denial isolate us from God? Well, if our feelings have been **disabled**, our **energy** lost, we are numb, our **growth** is stunted, shame becomes our identity, I guess that might affect our relationship with a loving, Holy God. By the way many of us in the early stages of pain, addiction and recovery, often feel **isolated** from God, even **abandoned** by God. Many times **angry at God**, for the things he apparently **allowed** to happen. Reconciling our **understanding of God**, is a huge part of recovery. Many of you are in a good place with God

and your knowledge and experiences with God have **aligned**. You came in tonight with an anticipation of worship and you entered into the song lyrics with gratitude. But if we take a little time as we begin a **new year** of CR, I want you to take a **minute** and think back on your **worst** days or your **early** recovery and your thoughts at that time, was God clearly a **God of love and deliverance?**

Here at CR, we always want to be thinking about the “new comer,” and the most **hurting** person, the person that was **fearful** about coming tonight, perhaps **ashamed** of their story and perhaps not even **knowing** or **understanding** God. Or perhaps they know and believe in a God, but perhaps like me, early in my recovery, they **can not see God as faithful**, or see him as a God that is **actually helping**, or able to offer **freedom** from a pervasive sin or addiction and they lack **hope** that He could work *“all things together for good!”* I remember.

So if any of this resonates with you, I encourage you to just **keep coming back** and be **honest** in your group. These 12 steps begin with **breaking out of denial, or minimizing and admitting the reality that you are powerless** to fix yourself and that **your life is becoming progressively unmanageable**. Admitting you feel **isolated** from God, is also a good place to start. Share your honest feelings and **doubts**, your **anger, your questions** with your open share group. No one will judge you for sharing your **honest feelings**.

> **A. (Denial also) Alienates us from relationships**

I have had the privilege of being in this program now with many of you, for over 2 years and one of my main words is **connection**. I believe **recovery** is all about connection. Developing connections with accountability partners, finding a **sponsor**, your open share group brothers or sisters, step studies, strengthening our **connection with God** and others. Denial, isolation and minimizing the truth, alienates us from relationships. **Denial hides** how lonely, angry, sad, fearful, hurt, rejected, hopeless or despairing we feel. Recovery is **complicated** and often **hindered** by our feeling **alienated** from essential relationships. Many times our families have **hurt** or **disappointed** us, our best friend had an **affair** with our spouse, a parent was **abusive** or abandoned us, a church or a christian disappointed us. Addiction and denial, **progressively alienate us** from most all relationships. If this is true for you, if you have **lost hope** and lost many relationships, I propose you are in a good place, a place where you can begin to

build some **new relationships**. In my early years, my life was **saved** by a ragamuffin group of guys, in yes, Sex Addicts Anonymous, that understood me, could show me empathy, grace, love and compassion, unlike many that did **not understand me** or my addiction.

Bill W., the founder of AA and the 12 steps, proposed to his drunk friend, that they **begin meeting** to help each other get sober. His friend thought he was **crazy** and asked, “**how is that going to work?**” Bill simply answered, “it will be **one drunk**, helping another drunk get sober.” That is exactly what we are doing here. It is also our belief, if we come to understand **Jesus, as God**, start a personal relationship with Him and begin building **honest** relationships with **other** humble, broken believers, that we can break out of **shame** and feelings of **isolation** and find **freedom, hope and recovery**. Amen? Paul says,

> **VS. No more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ’s body we’re all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself.**

– Ephesians 4:25

> **The final letter, the L, in DENIAL. Lengthens our pain**

Makes sense that denial, lengthens our pain. **Minimizing the truth** about our pain, our wounds, our feelings, our character defects, our addictions, does not help us **heal** and find freedom. Oh, Did I mention, I got my first **tattoos** this last June? The 6 missing keys to recovery. Well the first word, the first Key on my arm, is the word **PAIN**, Why Pain? It is my observation that, perhaps the person has just not had enough pain yet. Perhaps the **consequences** have not been severe enough yet. Perhaps they have not **lost enough yet**, to break out of their **denial** and become **willing** to DO **whatever** it takes, to get the help they need. So, if **denial** and minimizing, lengthens our pain, it makes sense to me to ask yourself, “**have I had enough pain?**” You usually can not know or see that you are in denial, that’s why **they call it denial**.

So as the man of wisdom, King Solomon once said in the book of proverbs, ***The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*** And, ***Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.***

We need a **multitude** of people giving us counsel and wisdom, to help break us out of our denial and minimizing. Now we have to be careful that we are not trying to **fix** and **offer advice** when it is not wanted, certainly not in open share group and not at CR, without them asking for it! So if denial lengthens pain and **healing** our pain is one of the keys to recovery. We need **one another** and we need a loving God. Look at this verse, that CR uses for “**Lengthens your Pain**”, in Jeremiah we read.

> **VS.** God’s promise: ***I will give you back your health again and heal your wounds.*** – Jeremiah 30:17a

We can not heal alone and yes, God heals **in His time**, yet often with our cooperation. Healing may not always look the way we hope or think it should, but we can all certainly **seek healing of our emotional wounds**. We also know **God’s ways** and thoughts are not always on our desired **time schedule**. So we do our part, we pray and **many times wait**. So in conclusion, remember denial is not always an **unawareness** that we have a problem, but many times ...

> **Denial is minimizing the truth.**

Well there you have it, DENIAL. If you are **not sure if** you are in denial, or minimizing the truth, **you probably are**. Ask you **sponsor** and get some perspective from **others**.

Well **thanks** for letting me share some thoughts on denial. It is my hope and prayer, that this might open your thoughts, minds and hearts to the possibility that you might be in **denial** about something and that you would **ask, seek and knock on many doors, until you find the keys, the help and wisdom you need to live free. Thanks for letting me share.**

> **Group Focus Question: In what areas of your life are you now beginning to face the truth and break the effects of DENIAL?**