

Hi, I'm Brian, a believer in Jesus, a recipient of His **amazing Grace, Loved** by the Father, **celebrating** progressive freedom over a sexual addiction that was killing me and still healing from all of my wounds and poor choices.

> **Relapse**

Tonight I have the privilege of talking with you about the topic, **RELAPSE** and the underlying principle and step! This is a very personal topic to me, as I have had personal experience in my family, with the terror of relapse and the trauma this can bring to a family. The cost of relapse is higher than one ever expects.

> **Principle 7: Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading and prayer, in order to know God and His will for my life and to gain the power to follow His will.**

> **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 power to carry that out.**

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. – Colossians 3:16

Okay, my main take away thought for tonight, the **same one** I used last year, for this talk: **Ready?**

> **Trust Me, You don't want to Relapse.**

How many of you have heard the quote, "Addiction or Relapse will take you **farther** than you ever wanted to go and cost you **more** than you ever **planned to pay!**" **Yes, very true, right?** We are told, **Relapse** happens, but I say, **it does not need to!** How do we guard ourselves against **relapse?** Well, we need to be **aware** of our own vulnerabilities and weaknesses. We don't accidentally "FALL" into relapse. Tonight I will share some thoughts on Relapse Prevention and I encourage you to **continue** that discussion, as a topic in your **Open Share Groups**. There are usually warning signs. Ok, Here comes the CR **Acrostic**, Follow me on your handouts, if you like. The word is, of course, **RELAPSE:**

> **R. Reserve a daily time with God** (and yourself).

Daily quiet time. Daily **self love** time. Daily **study** time. Daily **“with God,”** time. Are we reserving daily time to pray and spend time in God’s written word. We must recognize that **we will face temptations**. Even Jesus was tempted. Even Jesus relied on His quiet times, prayer, scripture and his close daily connection with His father. He would say, **“Not my will, but thine be done.”** Something **I am just learning to do**. He would often get away and spend **quiet times** with His father. Do we have that kind of relationship with God, and understand Him to be a **loving father**?

> **VS:** Mark 14 say, *Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

Most of us can relate to that. Our spirit is willing, but our flesh is often weak. So the question is, How do we **strengthen** our spirit and **die to**, get victory over, our flesh? Well our first letter is a good start, **Reserve a daily time** both for our self love and our relationship with this **mysterious** God. Sounds a little like, “daily **devotions** or **self** discipline, phrases I still cringe a little over, as they remind me of my legalistic religion. It has been helpful for me to **reframe** the term, **self discipline**, as this was not easy or natural for me. Self discipline sounds like a **negative**, where as **self love, self care** is a much more **helpful** concept to me and my recovery. Next time you face something you think requires **self discipline**, rethink it as **self love**. So when we think about reserving daily time, I think this also includes **self love, self care** around such **fundamentals** as diet and exercise, work, sleep, fun, organization, relationships, finances, work and **all** the important things in a life of recovery. Understanding our human **limitations** and fighting **daily** for margin and **balance, realizing these** are essential principles to recovery and **avoiding relapse**.

> **E. Evaluate.** This sounds like,

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

Steve recently talked about taking an **ongoing**, daily and periodic **inventory**. **So, we evaluate** our life, our actions, our thoughts, our needs, our emotions, our **HEART, daily**. So, speaking of heart: Here are a couple of recovery tools;

> **HEART/HALT** Ask yourself, am I Hurting, Exhausted, Angry, Resentful or Tense? These are huge warning signs just like a similar one I learned years ago. **HALT**, are you Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired?

We must be aware of our **triggers**, our weaknesses, we must **evaluate** our **needs** and take quick **action**. We must **call** an accountability partner or sponsor and find a **new, healthy way** to meet the need! Many times our **needs** are fine, it is our **unhealthy ways** we have developed for **medicating** those **needs** that are the problem. Or we may have patterns of just trying to **deny** or **numb out, our needs, medicating and trying to escape** from the very things that **need** our attention. Paul says in Romans 12,

> **VS: Be honest in your estimate of yourselves. ...Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of good. Love each other.**

> **L. Listen to Jesus.**

This might be a part of the idea of meditation in Step 11.

We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God ... This requires quiet time and being in study of the Bible. **Listening** and waiting to hear from God is a skill or discipline.

Often we are **too busy**, or we think Jesus is **not listening to us**. Or how about the times when you are wanting to hear, wanting to listen to Jesus, but **all you seem to hear is silence**. We are not alone in this, there are many examples throughout the Bible of those that got discouraged, **waiting to hear from God**. This is still a challenge for me. There are so many distractions in our lives. When I feel I hear God's whisper, it is often about **3am** in the morning. I guess that is the time He feels, He can get my attention. One thing that is clear, are Jesus words in the New Testament. Here is one challenging word from Jesus, in **Luke**.

> **VS: But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.**

Challenging words, does **anyone** come to your mind? Ya, me too. Some of us are familiar with what was called the **red letter Bible**, where all the words of Jesus were printed in red. This is one good way to **listen to Jesus**. And so, the acrostic continues ...

> **A. Alone and quiet time.** A continuation of **listen**.

Does anyone see a theme here? When I hear, have you had your “**quiet time** or your daily devotions,” it still sounds a little like fingernails on a chalk board for me. Especially early in my recovery, anything that sounded “churchy” or “legalistic” was difficult for me and something I still can struggle with. There was always this idea that, if I just did the **right** things, I would get the **right** results.

I’m sure there is some **truth** in that, but recovery and **life** are often **not that simple**. At one time, it became all about Performance. Perfectionism. Getting it right. Do’s and Don’ts. Although when it comes to “**quiet time**” we can not deny, if we look at the **life of Jesus**, this was certainly a priority and practice of his. This is not a religious “ritual” or a “**have to**”, but rather a **healthy** part of a **balanced life** and building a **relationship** with our creator. I am glad to say, I am doing so much better in this area, especially in these last two years since being involved in CR. So, here’s a good, simple thought from the **Psalms**, on this topic,

> **VS. Be still and know that I am God!**

What a great reminder. For me, it is important to look regularly to the sky, to look at the clouds and remember, **God is** still in control and **He is not anxious**. Let’s learn to put our trust in Him.

> **P. Plug into God’s power, through Prayer.**

Are we **connected** to the power? The illustration of the vine in the Bible, is very good here. One of Jesus’ disciples, John said, we must remain connected to God, if we want an abundant life. That we are like the branches of a vine and in order to

bear **fruit**, we must have a healthy connection with the source of life. If we want fruit and freedom, we have to be **connected**. We know we **can't** do this recovery thing alone. Not only **connected to God** through prayer, but **connected to one another** in recovery. My open share group is a great example of this in my own life. If I am isolated and cut off from my **blade brothers** in recovery, I am **not** in a good place. And I think they feel the same way now. Jesus said He would send power, through the Holy Spirit. So how do we experience more power? I believe it is simply through more **connection**, more connection to **God**, to the Bible, to **meetings** and connections with **good people**. **Powerless** is the opposite of **Power**. So **when are we powerless?** When we are caught in **our addiction and alone**. When do we have **power, when we are connected, confessing**, in prayer and in **honest** community! So, **Plug into God's power, through Prayer**. Paul in Philippians says,

> **VS. Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything, tell God your needs and don't forget to thank him for his answers. (jingle, Don't worry, be Happy!)**

> The **S**, in Relapse. **Slow down long enough to hear God.**

A favorite theme of mine, **slow down** and get plenty of rest. Well that is not exactly what it says, but still true. **How do we hear from God? Some** struggle with this, as they might want a more direct word or answer. Sometimes God gives clear words, sometimes He seems **silent**. He certainly speaks through His written word and often speaks through wise, **spirit filled people**, but then there is the idea of just slowing down and creating space for God to speak to us. In the book of **Job**, someone with plenty of **suffering**, confusion and disappointment in God, we read God's words to Job:

> **VS. Listen to me, keep silent and I will teach you wisdom!**
God said at least 8 times in the book of Job, **Listen to me!**

When was the last time we **slowed** down, got off the tread mill of life, the rat race and just spent time **alone with God?** Time evaluating, **listening**, celebrating, enjoying, relaxing. We need to celebrate our progress each day we are sober and

growing. We need to slow down **long enough** to hear from God. Somebody came tonight that **needed to hear this very word** from God. **Slow down!** Remember, **when we don't slow down**, when we **don't listen**, we may become vulnerable to addiction and relapse. For me, **tired, angry and stress** are main triggers, for my addiction. This idea of slowing down, is the opposite of a performance driven, **people pleasing**, “**you need to do more good works**, mentality.” So, we reached our final acrostic letter!

> **E. Enjoy your growth.**

Remember our Christian life and our **recovery** is a journey, not a destination, a marathon, not a sprint. Sometimes we forget, **life is to be enjoyed**. We need to pause, celebrate and **enjoy our growth, our progress!** Paul says in the book of Thessalonians:

> **VS. *Be joyful always, pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life with Jesus.***

Guess what is found in the word **ENJOY? JOY**. Do we have joy in our trials? **Joy in our recovery?** When is the last time you felt joy? Sometimes this recovery thing, this **life** thing, can be pretty heavy and seem mostly like a burden. **Or is that just me?** Do we **Celebrate our Recovery and enjoy our growth!?** **Fun** is something Kim and I have tried adding into our marriage, **Friday** night cards with our best friends is a pretty high priority. It is easy to get burdened with life and **forget to make time for joy**. So do you **enjoy** your growth? Are we enjoying each step of our progress? Are we grateful, content, are we **enjoying** the benefits of our recovery? **Does our new life have JOY? Remember, our recovery life should be attractive to others. Is our Christianity attractive to others?**

By the way, **in 2 weeks**, we will be looking at the topic of **Gratitude**, which is a great way to live and reflect on our growth! Ok, there is our acrostic. Now, let's briefly consider, a couple more things. **Quickly**, I would like to share some thoughts on some **top 10 relapse preventions tools**.

> **Top 10 Relapse Prevention Tools**

There will be no time for you to write them down, so if interested, just ask me for a copy. Here they come.

> **Top 10 Relapse Prevention Tools**

- 1. Stay connected and in the light vs. isolated in the dark.**
- 2. Continue your group meetings.**
- 3. Work the steps, including having a sponsor.**
- 4. Stay completely honest with your accountability team.**
- 5. Manage expectations and transform your mind.**
- 6. Have an escape plan ready and look out for triggers.**
- 7. Work on healing your wounds.**
- 8. Guard against and minimize temptations.**
- 9. Live a balanced life, loving self and serving others.**
- 10. Prioritize and seek spiritual growth and input.**

Now in conclusion, and on a more personal note, let me tell you about something I call the **5 keys to recovery**. Well it was the **5 keys and now it is the 6 keys**, as I found something new that was missing in my own recovery. For years I questioned, what was missing in someone's life, my life, my recovery, why was someone not getting recovery. Why are **they** relapsing and entering their third rehab? Why is one person still struggling and another has **8** or more years of sobriety? Have you ever asked that? I remember struggling in my thinking to consider what might be missing, what are the **missing keys** to recovery? Here they come:

> **The 5 Keys to Recovery**

Pain, Humility, Love, Knowledge, Healing

So as **briefly** as I can, the first key, **Pain**. Have you **suffered enough pain**. **Humility**, maybe there is still pride or denial. **Love**, have you ever been **loved well** by a friend? Kissed on the cheek by an elderly women that had prayed for you for 8 years? Have you experienced God's love, often through a God person? Have you learned to love yourself well? **Knowledge**, sometimes a person just needs a better understanding of addiction, recovery tools and principles. Then **Healing**,

without healing our hurts, our wounds, our losses and abuse, without the healing that comes from grieving, sharing our stories and forgiveness, we will still medicate and relapse. So then about a year and 1/2 ago, my 5 keys, **became 6 keys**, as I began to realize what was missing in my own recovery. **Surrender**, a word I never liked or really understood.

> **The 6th Key to Recovery, Surrender**

Surrender, it always felt cliché, simplistic, churchy, “have you surrendered that to Jesus?” **Let go and let God**, maybe you just need to surrender more, well ... maybe that’s just me? I even remember struggling with the serenity prayer, when it would say, “**If I surrender to your will!**” **So it’s simply up to me to surrender?** Well I did not really think of it as surrender, but in **February 2017**, **I embraced the CR sobriety definition and in March 2017**, my wife and I had a breakthrough, as she “released me from the expectations of income” and said, “**Go and give your life away, to help men.**” then **May 28, 2017**, my son’s drug overdose and **new thoughts on surrender became even more real**. I finally took my first simple, plastic, **blue surrender Chips, and on ...**

June-5-17 - realizing my son would live, I surrendered **my Life and My Will**, probably for the first time, at least at a deep meaningful level. Then on ...

September-11-17 - I surrendered **my Son** back to God’s care.

April-2-18 - 3 months ago, after my own teaching; oddly, I remember feeling led to surrender, my **Insecurities**, my **Self Doubt**, my **Shame** and my **Fear** of being bold.

Then **May 28th**, exactly one year after my son’s incident, I boarded a plane for South Africa and many things came together for me, as I walked in **boldness** and a new freedom. By the way, thanks to my **Celebrate Recovery family**, for your prayers, I totally felt your support. While there, I was also inspired to get **my first tattoo**, with these **6 keys**, the keys that had **opened the doors** to my new life ... and then a day later, my **second tattoo!** Yes and these **6 keys**, my supportive **wife and Celebrate Recovery**, opened the doors to my fully embracing my new names.

> **My New Names**

Forgiven, Loved, Redeemed, Brave, Messenger and Son.

So, I hope this teaching on **relapse** will serve to challenge us all and remind us **why we are here. Why** are we are in recovery. **Why** we continue, why we get in a **step group, why** we confess, why we get a **sponsor** and stay connected to our team! Why we **never quit quitting**. Why we **ask, seek and knock**. Why we **pray** and **seek** to understand and know God better, and why we stay **connected** to our support team, And why we **remind one another** of God's **grace, love and power!** Why we do **everything possible** to **avoid relapse!** This is serious stuff, **life** and death stuff. So in conclusion, **say it with me,**

> **Trust Me, You don't want to Relapse.**

Now I hope you have some good discussions in your open share groups about the **relapse prevention tools**, that have worked for you!

Thanks for letting me share, on the dangers of Relapse and the value of staying connected in recovery.

> **Group Focus Question: What are some tools you have developed in your recovery, to prevent relapse?**