

Please hold your, “Hi Brian,” as I give the **longest** ever introduction. Hi, I’m Brian, a believer in Jesus, **a grateful recipient** of God’s amazing Grace, a **son** of the Creator, **chosen** and elected, **celebrating** my new name, **Brave**, **redeemed** from the **powerless grips of a sexual addiction** that was **destroying** my mind, body and life, **lifted out of** the pit of despair and hopelessness, **and God is still at work** creating in me a **new heart** and mind, as He and I continue to **work on my character defects**, such as selfishness, greed, lust, envy and pride, through a **process** of **surrender, dying** to my flesh, good **connections** and **becoming progressively overwhelmed** with a real comprehension of **God’s infinite love**, His finished work on the cross and **His calling** me a **new creation in Christ**.

Tonight’s topic is on **Action**.

### > **Action**

When I think of **Action**, I think of **choices, doing** my part, **taking** personal responsibility. Many of my friends know, one of my favorite words, is the word **intentional**. If you want to accomplish most anything, you will have to, take **action** and be **intentional**. **Action** begins to be expected in **step 3**. We are moving from, **step 1**, acknowledging we were powerless over our addiction or habit and admitting our lives have become increasingly unmanageable. To **step 2**, reaching a place of hope, humility and faith that there may be, must be a higher power, greater than ourselves, that **could** restore us to **sanity**.

We all know the familiar **definition of insanity, doing the same things over and over again and expecting different results**. We are **moving from** insanity and powerless, to a place of **hope in** a higher power. And not just any higher power, at CR we like to refer to Jesus, the God of creation, as the **highest power**. **Melinda** recently reminded us, **we matter to God** and that we can move from Chaos, to Hope, to **Sanity**. And then two weeks ago, **Elise** talked to us about those first steps of trusting and **turning** our lives over to God. In **step 3**, we begin to stop **blaming** others for **our** lack of progress. We begin to start asking, am I **doing** my part, am I **taking action**, am I **working** the steps? Am I willing to surrender? Remember, we are only **Powerless UNTIL**.

This lesson is again focused on **Step 3, Principle 3** and the word, **ACTION**. So let's take a look at them.

> **Step 3.** We made a decision to turn our lives and our wills over to the care of God. *“Therefore, I urge you, brother and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – that is your true and proper worship.”* – Romans 12:1

> **Principle 3.** Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ’s care and control. *“Happy are the meek.”* – Matthew 5:5

We made a **decision** to turn our lives and our wills over to the care of God, I guess CR is calling that **action**. Well, it appears the action they are talking about is the **act of surrendering our lives and wills**. I have often struggled to understand that. I can still struggle with many churchy **cliches** as I hear them, like, “you just need to **surrender** that”, or “**have you surrendered** your life to Jesus,” or how about the one, “**God is good**, all the time!” ... not always an easy pill to swallow during difficult times. Although there is **truth** in these statements, sometimes they just sound **too simplistic**.

I now believe that I never fully **surrendered** my **life** and **will**, like I did at CR on **June 5**, 2017, just 6 days after my son’s tragic incident, his nearly dying, his brain injury and the miracle of his healing and uncertain life. By the way, he has now been given the green light to drive, has a new job and is doing amazingly well. But please, keep praying.

**Now** when I read, **made a decision** to turn our lives and our wills over the care of God, that is **becoming** a description of **surrender for me**.

If you embrace the words **powerless** and **unmanageability** of **step one**, **surrender** begins to make some sense. If you are in a **battle** and you **know** you **can not win**, you might consider **surrender**. Often **pride**, **self** and **ego** keep us, keeps me, from surrender. **Surrender**, **turning** our lives and our wills over the care of God, is more **literal** now than I ever comprehended. How about surrendering **our addiction**, our drug of choice or our pattern of coping with life

in unhealthy ways? Are we ready to **give that up?** Let me try to give you a picture of surrender. **Ask yourself, am I willing to say,** are you willing to say, here is my **life**, here is my **cell** phone, my **finances**, my **freedom to choose**, my **will** to go here or there. You take **control**, you **lead**, I will **follow**. Saying yes to **God ...** but there may very well be an appropriate time for and a **person or recovery program**, that you need to enter into that kind of **surrender relationship with** for a period of time early in your recovery. I think this whole idea of surrender is often **strengthened** by turning our will and our lives over to a **sponsor** or mentor, someone we **trust** has our best interest in mind. Could you ever **imagine** doing that? Someone early in recovery, told me, “your **best choices** have gotten you where you are” **Point taken.** Admitting I need help making important, life changing choices, is part of this recovery process.

Imagine saying, in order for my life to **change**, I am going to have to make some **huge changes** and I need your help. **I choose to surrender my life** and will to your ... **9 month** recovery program! Some of you in the gateway program have done just this. I have **great respect** for those that choose to do this type of surrender for a period of their life.

Which also leads me to again ask **if you have a Sponsor, this is so essential in recovery.** Being **willing to humble ourselves** and ask for guidance from a sponsor is so important. I often ask guys in my recovery program, what are you **willing to do** and what are you **not willing to do** for your recovery, for your **sobriety**, for your family, your **future?** **Are you willing** to talk to your father? Are you willing to **quit your job? Give up your rights to a computer or phone? Are you willing to do anything it takes?**

As I thought of tonight's lesson, **step 3** and the word **Action**, my **one take away** thought or slogan for tonight, what I hope we remember and **take with us** this week.

### > **Action Starts with Surrender**

The only **action** being asked of us in step **3**, is **surrendering** our will and our lives over to the care of God. Only, this is **no small thing!** Actually this may be the **most important** step and **action of all.** Have **you** taken this step?

Also, this will be something we **continue** to do, as we grow in understanding of all that **surrender** really means and requires of us. As we work through **steps 1, 2 & 3**, do you remember the stages Wibke showed us? As she gave an overview of the CR program, she broke the steps into 4 stages. Does anyone remember **the word for stage one, steps 1-3?** What was stage one? **Humility**.

> **HUMILITY, Stage 1 of Recovery** (Wibke Chart)

I'm sure you would agree, that it certainly takes **humility to surrender, to turn your life over to God**. Tonight is about **how to move on**, in humility, how to get unstuck and **take action** toward **working step 3**.

Okay, So guess what is next? Yep, the CR Acrostic. ACTION.

> **A. Accept**

A well known reading from the **AA** Big Book is on Acceptance. For many this is as significant as the Serenity prayer, it reads; **“Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing or situation-some fact of my life unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God’s world by mistake. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life’s terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes.”**

That is an important thought on **acceptance** and you may see some parallels to the phrase in the **serenity prayer, God grant me the serenity to accept the things I can not change. Acceptance** of life and our humanity, our limits is huge in recovery. In **CR**, we are wanting to emphasize a new idea on the word **accept**. And that is the importance and essential life changing **decision** to **accept Jesus** as our higher power, our **highest** power. This is the **ultimate** idea of **surrendering our will and our lives over to the care of God**.

Not the God of our understanding, but the **life changing, faith choice to accept and believe in Jesus** as the God of **creation**, the God of the **Bible**. This is the ultimate connection. We are talking about, by faith, **connecting and surrendering** to Jesus as your **highest power**. Now, I want to come **back** to this thought at the end of our time tonight.

### > **C. Commit**

Often not a favorite word for us addicts. Or maybe that's just **my issue**. **Commit** sounds like **rules** to me, works, law, legalism or maybe being restrained in a box. Enough confession, we know it is important to make and keep commitments. **What do we need to commit to?** Certainly our recovery, **being honest, showing up** and working the steps. Are we committed to learning, to loving ourself well, to loving others? **If we** accept Jesus as our higher power, we will also want to begin to **commit** to **seeking**, knocking and **asking what God's will is** for our lives. **Principle 3 says, *consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control.***

Wow, that's a mouth full and a lot to ask. Most of us have tried to run our lives **on our own power** and will, only to fail again and again. Even as believers in Jesus, we have somehow **lacked the power to commit** to doing what we **know is right** to do. All my life and will to Christ's care and control? That's huge. This is a **process** of learning, surrendering and becoming, **sometimes failing and then learning, surrendering and becoming**. We learn to **ask for help** and guidance from sponsors and accountability friends, as we **fall and get up again** and learn to walk around **the hole** we have fallen into so many times. Many times we fail at the things we commit to and it becomes more and more difficult to **commit to anything**. I guess the **most** important thing to commit to, is **getting up again, to never giving up, to going again**. We learn to keep commitments and trust, **not** in ourselves, but in the power of God, **the power of connection**. As we **grow in our faith** and learn to **trust** in a loving God, we will increasingly be able to commit our lives, our wills, our recovery, **over to God**.

### > **T. Turn it over**

Sometimes these feel like cliché, simplistic, pat answers to our complex battle with complex issues. *"You just need to turn it over!"* Well, we know there is nothing simplistic

about this journey. What does it mean or look like to “**turn it over**”?

**Sounds like surrender to me.** Do you ever feel the burdens and concerns in your life are **too much for you to carry**?

> **Jesus says** in the book of Matthew, (in the message)

*“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”*

Sharing our burdens with God and others, finding **rest** for our recovery journey! Have you learned to live **freely and lightly**? Have I? Is this your experience? I believe this is part of connection again, understanding God, as one who wants to **share in our burdens**, not the religious God that wants to give us a list of do’s and don’ts that seem impossible to carry out. I believe part of the idea of our **open share groups** is to “**turn it over**”, confess, surrender, **learn of grace**, **share** our burdens and walk out a little **lighter**.

> **I. It’s only the beginning**

I’m sure we all agree with this one! Remember this is a life journey of, **humility and surrender**, step 3, stage 1, is only the beginning. Thus our thought for the night, **action starts with surrender**. Not only is it **only the beginning** for the new person, but those of us with some years in recovery, need to be reminded of our need to **continue** to work the steps and **return again** to **surrendering** our lives and will over to God. We are always continuing in recovery, always learning, growing and **becoming**. A favorite verse of mine, Paul says in the book of Philippians, *being confident of this, that He who begun a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*. That is comforting, that it is not just “**up to me**,” that God is **at work**, **continuing** the work **He has begun in me**.

### > **O. One day at a time**

**One day at a time**, sometimes it's **one minute** at a time! Another one of those slogans that can sound cliché or empty at times. But this is **so true** and so important. We can not change our past or **remain** chained to our past, we must learn to live in the moment, to live in today. We also can not fully imagine tomorrow or our future and certainly we know how ineffective it is to **worry** about tomorrow. Even the Bible says, *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

We would all love to **change many things** in our past, but the only real question is, **what can we do and change today?** Our future is in some regards, an accumulation of the choices we make **today**. I also believe this would apply to working the steps, **one step at a time**. If you have never worked step 4 and 5 and it sounds scary, continue to process and comprehend steps 1, 2 and 3 to the best of your ability. This now brings us to the NEXT STEP. See how I made that transition?

### > **N. Next step**

This reminds me of a slogan I like, that can often be helpful, **“what is the next best step?”** Or the the next **right choice**, the next **right step**. At every crossroads or challenge, it can be helpful if we can try to simplify our thoughts and simply ask ourselves, “what is **the next best choice?**” We also can not change what happened an hour or a minute ago, but we are challenged with making the **best possible next step choices, each moment** of the day. So there is our acrostic on ACTION. Now I want to remind us of our main thought for tonight, **have you taken the first step of surrender?**

### > **ACTION starts with SURRENDER.**

This step, this **concept**, this **idea** of making a **decision** to turn our lives and will over to God, is **huge**. **Surrender**, we know **this is not a one time thing**. Surrender and turning our lives and will over to the care of God, is daily and continues for a **life time**. We simply **find** more things to surrender, deeper understanding of what this requires, we **discover** that there is always more to learn, **more to surrender**, as we continually learn to **trust God** with our lives.

Now I want to go back a minute to the A in Action. **Accept Jesus as your highest power.**

> **A. Accept**

Have you accepted Jesus as your highest power? **I have never** asked this question in a public setting! It feels awkward, maybe because this is my first time asking a group that question. Maybe because **I believe** it is a very important and personal question. And it is, but **maybe God** is going to speak to **one person** tonight and call them to a first time faith decision, when we move into our **surrender time!** While surrender continues as we learn, accepting Jesus as your higher power, is a **one time life changing thing.** Have you taken this step of faith that would take you on a whole new journey of **connection to God?** Choosing to believe that **Jesus is** the God of creation?

If this is your first or second time at CR, we do not want you to feel uncomfortable or think we talk about **accepting** Jesus every week. We want you to feel **welcome, wherever you are at in your faith** journey and understanding of God. But **our** core belief is in the essential importance of this **step of surrender.** Maybe you even cringe at some of the expressions you have heard that just don't make sense to you and that's ok. There are so many versions of this **Accept Jesus** thing and it can feel very overwhelming and maybe even confusing. **Have you asked Jesus into your heart? Have you been born again? Have you accepted Jesus as your Savior?** Have you been confused by this concept? This is a **huge, eternity changing** and most important question. Have you, **by faith** (which implies you may still have some questions and may not fully comprehend it) **chosen to believe** that the historical person of **Jesus** was actually the visible, human **expression of God, the God** that **created** the universe?

If you feel lost, powerless, maybe your life is unmanageable, if you are aware of your **sin** and you feel an invitation, a stirring to surrender your life, to choose Jesus as your higher power, this might be your time. We are going to move into our surrender **time** and God might be prompting you to start a conversation, to choose by faith, to choose to give your life to Jesus. Sin? **Sin is** missing the mark of

perfection, the Bible says, **all have sinned** and most of us here have no problem admitting we have sinned.

**But, giving up our free will,** our rights to run our own life, that's another thing. We think no more fun, or we have to follow all these religious rules, we have many ideas that are false. What we **need to believe is that** we need to be rescued, saved from our own sin and choices, that **God is love** and only wants the best for us. He knows us and wants to give us **a new life,** a better life. He does not take away our free will, and the process of healing, growing and surrendering continues. But **until we invite Him,** choose Him, ask Him into our life, we do not have life, we do not have His power living in us. Life without God is death, eternal death. We will all die, but those that choose to believe that Jesus died to pay the penalty for their sins, for those that choose, by faith, to believe that Jesus was the God of creation, surrender their life, they will live after their physical death. Life with God, in a most amazing place where there will be **no more sin, no more sickness** and we will **live in joy, health,** great food, great music and experience an **eternal celebration!**

Those that **do not humble themselves, do not surrender** their life and will to God, will be separated from Him in an eternal death. **Eternal life** is a gift we receive by faith. For the **first step** of surrender, **all you have to do** is choose by faith, to believe and **accept** this GIFT, this difficult to understand, **wild truth, that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life,** that no man comes to the Father, except through **believing in Him.**

> Romans 10:9 says, ***If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.***

If you have not made this decision, if you have not **surrendered** your life to Jesus, the visible expression of God, then it makes sense that **you can not expect to have the power** that comes through that **connection.**

Now we want to take some time to **invite you to come** and perhaps start a conversation with one of our **leaders.**

To perhaps for the first time, **choose** to surrender your life and will to Jesus, and **accept Him** as your new highest power. Or just to **begin** a conversation about **what this all means**. Specifically, I have asked, **Kelly** and **Melinda** if they would make themselves available to talk with you after our surrender time tonight. Please stand. Any of the leaders really, but many of us are running off to lead open share groups.

Or if you are **a believer** and you know you have been **disconnected** way too long, you feel like **you** are not **experiencing** God's power in your life, you feel **weighted down** and **without hope** and you want to **surrender** your life and will in a **new deeper, more comprehensive way**, you are invited to come also. Maybe you need to surrender and **die to** your drug of choice. And as we often do, come and **surrender** anything, take a first step **in any area of your life**, write it on a piece of paper, toss it in the waste basket as a symbol of **surrender**, come take a blue surrender chip and turn your issue, your burden, over to the care of God. Remember, **no decision, no action is a decision**. Take the **first action step of surrender** tonight. And remember,

> **Action Starts with Surrender**

Play music VIDEO, O Come to the Altar, Elevation Worship, Here as in Heaven