

Celebrate Recovery[®]

Stepping Out of
Denial into God's Grace

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE I

John Baker is the founder of Celebrate Recovery®, a ministry born out of the heart of Saddleback Church. Over the last twenty years, more than 11,500 individuals have gone through this Christ-centered recovery program at Saddleback. The Celebrate Recovery program is now being used in over 20,000 churches nationwide. In 1993, John and Pastor Rick Warren wrote the Celebrate Recovery curriculum which has been published and translated into twenty-three languages.

John began serving at Saddleback as a lay pastor in 1991. In 1992, he was asked to join the Saddleback Church staff as the Director of Small Groups and Recovery. In 1995, his responsibilities increased as he became the Pastor of Membership. In this position, John's responsibilities included pastoral counseling, pastoral care, Celebrate Recovery, support groups, small groups, and family, singles, and recreation ministries. In 1996, he oversaw the development of Saddleback's lay counseling ministry.

In June 1997, John became the Pastor of Ministries, responsible for the recruitment, training, and deployment of church members to serve in one of the more than 156 different ministries at Saddleback.

In 2001, Rick Warren asked John to become the Pastor of Celebrate Recovery. This is John's shape, his passion, and his calling. In addition, he is part of Saddleback's Purpose Driven team. John is a nationally known speaker and trainer in helping churches start Celebrate Recovery ministries. These ministries, in thousands of churches, reach out not only to their congregations but also to their communities in helping those dealing with a hurt, hang-up, or habit.

John and his wife, Cheryl, have been married over forty years and have served together in Celebrate Recovery since 1991. They have two adult children, Laura and Johnny. Laura and her husband, Brian, have twins. Johnny and his wife, Jeni, have three children.

REVISED EDITION

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PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE I

A recovery program based on
eight principles from the Beatitudes

JOHN BAKER

FOREWORD BY RICK WARREN



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FOREWORD BY RICK WARREN

You've undoubtedly heard the expression "Time heals all wounds." Unfortunately, it isn't true. As a pastor I frequently talk with people who are still carrying hurts from thirty or forty years ago. The truth is, time often makes things worse. Wounds that are left untended fester and spread infection throughout your entire body. Time only extends the pain if the problem isn't dealt with.

Celebrate Recovery® is a biblical and balanced program that can help you overcome your hurts, habits, and hang-ups. Based on the actual words of Jesus rather than psychological theory, this recovery program is more effective in helping people change than anything else I've seen or heard of. Over the years I've witnessed how the Holy Spirit has used this program to transform literally thousands of lives at Saddleback Church and help people grow toward full Christlike maturity.

Perhaps you are familiar with the classic 12-Step program of AA and other groups. While undoubtedly many lives have been helped through the 12 Steps, I've always been uncomfortable with that program's vagueness about the nature of God, the saving power of Jesus Christ, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. So I began an intense study of the Scriptures to discover what God had to say about "recovery." To my amazement, I found the principles of recovery — in their logical order — given by Christ in His most famous message, the Sermon on the Mount.

My study resulted in a ten-week series of messages called "The Road to Recovery." During that series my associate pastor John Baker developed the four participant's guides, which became the heart of our Celebrate Recovery program.

As you work through these participant's guides, I trust that you will come to realize many benefits from this program. Most of all, however, my prayer for you is that, through Celebrate Recovery, you will find deep peace and lasting freedom in Jesus Christ as you walk your own road to recovery.

Dr. Rick Warren
Senior Pastor, Saddleback Church

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the “Road to Recovery.” You are in for an exciting and amazing journey as you take the hand of the true and only Higher Power, Jesus Christ, and walk with Him toward healing and serenity.

The purpose of this program is to allow us to become free from life’s hurts, hang-ups, and habits. By working through the eight recovery principles found in the Beatitudes with Jesus Christ as your Higher Power, you can and will change! You will begin to experience the true peace and serenity you have been seeking, and you will no longer have to rely on your dysfunctional, compulsive, and addictive behaviors as a temporary “fix” for your pain.

By applying the biblical principles of conviction, conversion, surrender, confession, restitution, prayer, quiet time, witnessing, and helping one another, which are found within the eight principles and the Christ-centered 12 Steps, you will restore and develop stronger relationships with others and with God.

To begin our journey, we will need to step out of denial and into God’s grace. This is what working through Principles 1 – 3 will help us accomplish. We begin by looking at the toll *denial* has had on our ability to face the reality of our past and present. Then we need to admit that we are *powerless* over certain areas of our lives, and that, alone, we do not have the power to control them.

In Principle 2, we find the *hope* that our Higher Power, Jesus Christ, can restore us to *sanity* and that through Him alone we can find the power to help us recover. And finally, in Principle 3, we take the *action* to *turn* our lives and our wills over to His care and direction.

After each lesson, there is an exercise for you to complete. Answer each question to the best of your ability. Don’t worry about what you think the answer *should* be. Pray and then write down the answer from your heart. Remember John 8:32: “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

After you have completed the exercise, share it with someone you trust. Your group, an accountability partner, your sponsor (someone farther along in recovery who has agreed to be your “travel guide”; sponsors are explained in Participant’s Guide 2, Lesson 7), or a close friend in recovery are all choices. You do not recover from your hurts, hang-ups, and habits just by attending recovery meetings. You must work and live following the eight principles of recovery found in the Beatitudes and the 12 Steps and their biblical comparisons. God bless you as you walk this road.

In His steps,
John Baker

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Eight Principles Based on the Beatitudes

By Pastor Rick Warren

1. **Realize** I'm not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable.
"Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor."
(Matthew 5:3)
2. **Earnestly** believe that God exists, that I matter to Him, and that He has the power to help me recover.
"Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."
(Matthew 5:4)
3. **Consciously** choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control.
"Happy are the meek." (Matthew 5:5)
4. **Openly** examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.
"Happy are the pure in heart." (Matthew 5:8)
5. **Voluntarily** submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask Him to remove my character defects.
"Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires."
(Matthew 5:6)
6. **Evaluate** all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others.
"Happy are the merciful." (Matthew 5:7)
"Happy are the peacemakers." (Matthew 5:9)
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.
8. **Yield** myself to God to be used to bring this Good News to others, both by my example and by my words.
"Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires." (Matthew 5:10)

TWELVE STEPS AND THEIR BIBLICAL COMPARISONS*

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.

“For I know that good itself does not dwell 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)

2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

“For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.” (Philippians 2:13)

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

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship.” (Romans 12:1)

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

“Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.” (Lamentations 3:40)

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

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” (James 5:16)

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.”
(James 4:10)*

7. We humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

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

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6:31)

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

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23 – 24)

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

“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1 Corinthians 10:12)

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 message of Christ dwell among you richly.” (Colossians 3:16)

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

“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1)

* Throughout this material, you will notice several references to the Christ-centered 12 Steps. Our prayer is that Celebrate Recovery will create a bridge to the millions of people who are familiar with the secular 12 Steps (I acknowledge the use of some material from the 12 Suggested Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous) and in so doing, introduce them to the one and only true Higher Power, Jesus Christ. Once they begin that relationship, asking Christ into their hearts as Lord and Savior, true healing and recovery can begin!

SERENITY PRAYER

If you have attended secular recovery programs, you have seen the first four lines of the “Prayer for Serenity.” The following is the complete prayer. I encourage you to pray it daily as you work through the principles!

Prayer for Serenity

*God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time ;
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace ;
taking, as Jesus did,
this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it ;
trusting that You will make all things right
if I surrender to Your will ;
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with You forever in the next.
Amen.*

Reinhold Niebuhr

CELEBRATE RECOVERY'S SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES

The following five guidelines will ensure that your small group is a safe place. They need to be read at the beginning of every meeting.

1. Keep your sharing focused on your own thoughts and feelings. Limit your sharing to three to five minutes.
2. There is NO cross talk. Cross talk is when two individuals engage in conversation excluding all others. Each person is free to express his or her feelings without interruptions.
3. We are here to support one another, not “fix” another.
4. Anonymity and confidentiality are basic requirements. What is shared in the group stays in the group. The only exception is when someone threatens to injure themselves or others.
5. Offensive language has no place in a Christ-centered recovery group.

DENIAL

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

*“Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor.”
(Matthew 5:3)*

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.

“For I know that good itself does not dwell 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)

Think About It

Before we can take the first step of our recovery, we must first face and admit our denial.

God tells us, “You can't heal a wound by saying it's not there!” (Jeremiah 6:14, TLB). The acrostic for DENIAL spells out what can happen if we do not face our denial.

Disables our feelings

By repressing our feelings we freeze our emotions. Understanding and feeling our feelings is freedom.

“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, GNT)

Energy lost

A side effect of our denial is anxiety. Anxiety causes us to waste precious energy running from our past and worrying about and dreading the future. It is only in the present, today, where positive change can occur.

“He frees the prisoners . . . ; he lifts the burdens from those bent down beneath their loads.” (Psalm 146:7 – 8, TLB)

Negates growth

We are “as sick as our secrets.” We cannot grow in recovery until we are ready to step out of our denial into the truth.

“They cried to the Lord in their troubles, and he rescued them! He led them from their darkness and shadow of death and snapped their chains.” (Psalm 107:13 – 14, TLB)

Isolates us from God

God’s light shines on the truth. Our denial keeps us in the dark.

“God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. 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 1:5 – 7)

Alienates us from our relationships

Denial tells us we are getting away with it. We think no one knows — but they do.

What is the answer?

*“Stop lying to each other; tell the truth, for we are parts of each other and when we lie to each other we are hurting ourselves.”
(Ephesians 4:25, TLB)*

Lengthens the pain

We have the false belief that denial protects us from our pain. In reality, denial allows our pain to fester and grow and turn into *shame* and *guilt*.

God’s promise: “I will give you back your health again and heal your wounds.” (Jeremiah 30:17, TLB)

Accept the first principle of recovery. Step out of your denial! Step into your Higher Power’s — Jesus Christ’s — unconditional love and grace!



Write About It

1. What areas of your life do you have power (control) over? Be specific.

2. What areas of your life are out of control, unmanageable? Be specific.

6. How do you handle pain and disappointment?

7. How can you begin to address your denial?

8. In what areas of your life are you now beginning to face reality and break the effects of denial?

9. Are you starting to develop a support team? Are you asking for phone numbers in your meetings?

List them here or on the inside back cover of this participant's guide!