**12 steps in 6 weeks**

**– suggestions for a Lent journey**

January 2024

Offered by Strathclyde Inclusive Recovery Church

This course is using the ’12-steps’[[1]](#footnote-1) of Recovery from addiction, shaped for Christian discipleship. The steps are grouped over 6 weeks to reflect the Lent period.

Preachers have been provided with suggested Bible readings and sermon ideas. The material below is offered for personal or small group use during the week. This material is based on various documents, including ‘The Life Recovery Workbook’.

Through these six weeks, we hope to offer you a simple journey of discipleship in preparation for the highest point in the Christian calendar: the death and resurrection of our Lord. That journey could be made as individuals and also as a community.

We also suggest that during that time we read and meditate attentively on the well-known prayer attributed to Reinhold Neibuhr (1892-1971) called the Serenity Prayer. It is used by 12-steps fellowships across the world at each of their meetings. It is a source of inspiration, comfort and encouragement for disciples especially in times of personal or collective hardship. So, let us pray:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;

courage to change the things I can;

and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;

enjoying one moment at a time;

accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;

taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;

trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will;

so that I may be reasonably happy in this life

and supremely happy with Him

forever and ever in the next. Amen.

**Week 1: Powerless but not helpless** *(w/c Sunday 18th February 2024)*

**A liturgy for use in church:**

Leader: We admit we are powerless over life’s challenges and that our lives can become unmanageable *(Step 1)*

 Will you take the journey towards the cross?

**All: We are not strong. We need God.**

Leader: God will be your companion on the journey.

**All: We will take the first step.**

*(A clay jar or broken pot is placed at the front of the church)*

**Bible studies or personal reflections:** Focus on Acts 9:1-19

1. Imagine Saul’s downfall and the emotions he went through.
2. Could Paul’s experience (vv 4-9) happen to us as a nation/community/individuals?
3. Can you imagine any powerful or famous people who know or have known an experience like Saul’s?
4. Some say that imperial Britain is undergoing this now; would you dis/agree? Why?
5. In times of difficulties, who are the people we go to or are we waiting for our own Ananias?
6. As people, do we rely too much or not enough on ourselves or the state/community?
7. What about Ananias?

**Week 2: There is something bigger than us** *(w/c Sunday 25th February 2024)*

**A liturgy for use in church:**

Leader: We commit to surrender to a power higher than ourselves and to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God *(Steps 2 and 3)*

Will you take the journey towards the cross?

**All: We are not strong. We need God.**

Leader: God will be your companion on the journey.

**All: We will take the next step.**

*(a full rucksack is paced at the front of the church)*

**Bible studies or personal reflections:** Focus on Deuteronomy 30: 10-20

1. How do I picture God? Is there any image(s) of God which scares me and limits me in my connection with God? Why?
2. What are the things I fear the most and how do these fears influence my choices?
3. Someone said that after we reach 25 years of age, the path of our whole life is set. Do you agree? How trapped are we in our life choices?
4. How free am I really? What is the stuff that stops us being free (money, mortgage, work, family, social expectations…)?
5. How much are we ready to surrender to God?
6. Does to surrender mean faith or trust?

**Week 3: Who are we? Truth and identity** *(w/c Sunday 3rd March 2024)*

**A liturgy for use in church:**

Leader: We must learn to be honest with ourselves and God. We become ready to allow God to help us to remove or manage our defects of character *(Steps 4, 5 and 6)*

 Will you take the journey towards the cross?

**All: We are not strong. We need God.**

Leader: God will be your companion on the journey.

**All: We will take the next step.**

*(A plumbline is placed at the font of the church)*

**Bible studies or personal reflections:** Focus onGenesis 3:6-13

1. What do you think the theologian Ulrich Lehner means by the title of his book; ‘God Is Not Nice: Rejecting Pop Culture Theology and Discovering the God Worth Living For’?? Do you dis/agree? Why?
2. Why would Adam/Eve be concerned about God’s reactions?
3. As a society, are there things we prefer to hide under the carpet? Why? What should we do about them?
4. Same question about the Church and the churches?
5. How do these ‘shames’ slow down our journey to the Kingdom of God?
6. Read James 5:16. What do you think?
7. Is ‘confessing’ the same as lightening a burden or honesty and truth?

**Week 4 – Just do it** *(w/c Sunday 10th March 2024)*

**A liturgy for use in church:**

Leader: Are we bold enough to approach God as a new person asking forgiveness for our shortcomings. There are always ‘good’ excuses not to move forward - yet God waits for us *(steps 7, 8 & 9)*.

 Will you take the journey towards the cross?

**All: We are not strong. We need God.**

Leader: God will be your companion on the journey.

**All: We will take the next step.**

*(a robe is placed at the front of the church)*

**Bible studies or personal reflections:** Focus on Luke 18: 10-14

1. Reflect on potential shortcomings of the pharisee and the tax-collector. Jesus is using stereotypes but can you imagine similar stereotyped people in our world? Who could they be?
2. What is the key difference between these two characters? Why could we be tempted to justify ourselves because we attend church, give money to the church/charities or have Christian discipline and others don’t?
3. How tempted are we to compare ourselves to others thinking ‘we are not that bad’ because others are worse in our eyes? Can you think of any examples?
4. Have you ever shared with God things you regret having done/said or not done/said? How does it feel?
5. What does it mean to be humble? How does humility differ from humiliation? How can we grow from humility?

**Week 5 – Stronger yet still powerless** *(w/c Sunday 17th March 2024)*

**A liturgy for use in church:**

Leader: We are aware of potential backsliding so we continue to ask for God’s help on the journey through discipleship. We are seeking steadfastness and harmony with God *(steps 10 & 11).*

 Will you take the journey towards the cross?

**All: We are not strong. We need God.**

Leader: God will be your companion on the journey.

**All: We will take the next step.**

*(a torch or lamp is placed at the front of the church)*

**For Bible studies or personal reflections:** Focus on Psalm 105: 1-7, 12-15

1. Reading the Bible is one of the Christian disciples’ means of maintaining a steadfast(-er) faith. How do you feel when reading the Bible? Are you bored? Never read it? Find comfort and life inspiration? Find a sense of community?
2. Which discipline feeds your faith: Prayers? Retreat? Reading? Worship? Singing? Meditation? Contemplations? Which ones are good for you and which ones don’t work?
3. Can you see or experience changes in your life? Are life’s changes scary or exciting? What scares or excites you in life’s changes? Do you feel that your faith remains steadfast when your life changes? Why (not)?
4. Has a growing faith or religious practice offered you a more content life (i.e. a life of happiness, peace of mind or stability)?

**Week 6 – God’s love is in its sharing** *(w/c Sunday 24th March 2024)*

**A liturgy for use in church:**

Leader: We are rejoicing in our spiritual rebirth with its highs and lows, but a steadfast direction. We are seeking to share the Good News with others through words and deeds *(Step 12)*

 Will you take the journey towards the cross?

**All: We are not strong. We need God.**

Leader: God will be your companion on the journey.

**All: We will take the next step. We are always on the journey.**

*(a chalice is placed at the front of the church)*

**For Bible studies or personal reflections:** Focus on 1 Peter 4: 1-6

1. What do you think leading a Christian life means? What are the specific differences from non-disciples (non-believers)?
2. What are the worldly pressures which keep you away from God or limit your relations with God? Do you feel you are in full control of your life?
3. With time, do you feel you are getting closer to God? How and why?
4. We are finishing our 12-step journey; which have been the most challenging? What work still needs to be done to get closer to your true self that God has made?
5. The 12-step process is never ending but needs to be re-explored again and again. Is it depressing or a relief to know that righteousness (getting closer to God) is a permanent process? Why?
6. What is the next step?
1. <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/about-aa/the-12-steps-of-aa> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)