

BREAKING FREE FROM ADDICTION

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STEPS
TOWARD
FREEDOM**
P.12

**Helping
a Loved One**

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2010 | Issue 3



WELCOME

new church connection

Connecting you with a New Christian spirituality for everyday life



Recently, I attended a workshop offered by counselor Rev. Mark Carlson. During his talk, Rev. Carlson briefly defined addiction as "an external solution to an internal problem." What a perfect definition for a big, tangled issue.

Under this definition, we're all prone to addiction. When we experience internal chaos, an external object can seem like the easiest means of regaining control over our lives. Of course, addictions vary in nature and severity. Whether the object is drugs, food, love, or another fixation, an addiction can have negative effects on our health, our work, and our relationships.

This issue offers support for those dealing with addiction, be it their own or another's. One man gives a moving account of his experience with alcoholism—first his father's, and then his own (p.6). On p. 14, read some suggestions about how to help a loved one struggling with addiction. Gather a few friends together and follow a twelve-step program toward greater spiritual freedom (p. 11).

We may not be able to feel the Lord's presence during low times. However, He offers hope in His Word. His mercy is forever. We may pass through dark valleys, but He is with us. In fact, the New Church teaches that the Lord is closest to those who are struggling against temptation.

This issue is a powerful one because it touches on some dark and painful places. I hope you'll come away feeling uplifted.

Taryn Frazier

Taryn Frazier

New Church Connection makes the connection between religion and life. Every issue features content that highlights the personal nature of spirituality, providing applicable ideas to support your journey with insights from the New Church (Swedenborgian) faith.

The Lord neither shatters your illusions nor stifles your desires. Instead He bends them toward truth and good.

—SECRETS OF HEAVEN 25

What's next?

Look for these upcoming issues:

- Pause: Making Space for God
• Family and Parenting



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Photo by JARED ALDEN SMITH

The path to recovery can be filled with confusion. Rev. Mark Perry responds to some questions along the way.

Life is full of QUESTIONS

You will know the truth and the truth will make you free.”

—JOHN 8:32



photo by CALEB KERR

Q CAN I CHANGE?

a Definitely! Spiritual growth underscores every twelve-step program of recovery. The question is not so much “Can I change?” but “Am I willing to change?”.

Q DOES GOD LOVE ME?

a Absolutely! No matter how far down the scale people have plummeted, the Lord sees the potential good in everyone. All that is required is honesty, open-mindedness and a willingness to seek Him. There is more joy in heaven over the one sinner who repents than over the ninety-nine just people who need no repentance (see Luke 15:7).

SHARE YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT LIFE.
Email questions@newchurch.org
Mention “New Church Connection”.

Q ARE WE INCLINED TO ADDICTION?

a The Writings for the New Church teach that all people incline to evils of every kind. Some medical research suggests there is a genetic connection: genes which, if present, open the addiction door a little wider. Other evidence suggests that nurture—the people and environments which surround us—is a factor too. To me, it seems clear we love our evils. If we did not, they would be easy to get rid of.

Q HOW DO I KNOW IF SOMETHING (EATING, CAFFEINE, EXERCISE, ETC.) HAS BECOME AN ADDICTION?

a Ask yourself this question: “How much time do I think about or do it?” Addiction becomes all-consuming. Addiction takes time and resources (usually money). It takes away love and trust from family and friends. As addiction progresses, the addict will begin not to care about loved ones. He or she constantly thinks, “Where am I going to get the money for it, and when can I do it next?”.

Q DO OUR PHYSICAL ADDICTIONS FOLLOW US INTO THE NEXT LIFE?

a The Writings for the New Church suggest that there are no physical handicaps or ailments in the next life. We become whole and healthy angelic

forms manifesting the affections and loves we have developed for ourselves in this world. What I find fascinating is that recovery from physical addiction prior to death depends upon addressing one’s spiritual condition. Then and only then can mental and physical recovery happen.

Q ARE ADDICTIONS HEREDITARY?

a Medical research professionals are perhaps better qualified to answer the question of heredity and addiction. Still, I have found that certain addictive behaviors do seem to follow families. The chance of a child becoming an alcoholic is greater if both parents are themselves alcoholics, although this is not a hard-and-fast rule. There is a common denominator with all addicts: at some point they can no longer control and enjoy their drug of choice, and they plunge into a terrible spiral of despair. But there is hope! The world of recovery is simply wonderful. There, you will find people who are willing and able to help you recover from a seemingly hopeless condition of mind and body. You grow spiritually and find God. Only He (a power greater than human power) can remove that terrible obsession and set you free. “If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).



Rev. Mark Perry is a Pastor at the San Diego New Church. For more information www.sandiegonewchurch.org or cmperry@san.rr.com.



Deno Brannon shares the story of his lifelong struggle with alcoholism. He passes on the hopeful message that with God, all things are possible.

least give me some food. How bad could it be if my mom said it was okay?

As an adult, I struggled with my anger. A man asked me when I'd first felt that way. I immediately recalled my 13th birthday, and my whole body shook. My party had been canceled because my dad had been drunk. The same man asked me, "What lessons did you learn?" I realized I'd learned that I couldn't depend on happy moments lasting because they never did. I'd learned to attack people before they could see how scared I was.

I pushed a lot of people away like that. It was better, I thought, to push people away because if they got to know me, they wouldn't like me. I thought it was safer that way. If I let people in, I'd hurt them sooner or later or, worst of all, they would hurt me. Meanwhile, I was hurting myself by pushing away the people who could love me.

I had all these harmful messages—these strikes against me. As much as these messages were reinforced in my childhood, I knew there was something wrong—that they were not right. But I didn't have anybody to tell me that.

These confusing messages started to play out in high school. I didn't know where I belonged. I wanted to be accepted by everyone. I would do anything for that. In my head, drinking was the cool thing to do. I drank a lot—mostly beer. I'm not proud of it. It didn't really matter what was going on. I could go for months without a drink, but if I had one drink I couldn't stop.

I was president of Sigma Delta Pi, a boys' service club, so I had to be careful not to get into trouble. Back then, I was afraid to ask for help, so I would try and do things myself. I would say yes to everything, and I dropped the ball all the time. This made me feel even more isolated and cemented my belief that I was a failure. When I drank, I didn't have to think about all that. It was an escape.

That pattern—wanting people in my life and pushing them away at the same time—showed up continually. It showed up with my wife Carol. She and I dated in high school. I would let her start to get close, then I'd push her way. She married me for some reason anyway.

After high school, Carol and I stayed in town to take care of my parents. I worked

Jesus said, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

—LUKE 18:27

Like a lot of people, I thought I could quit by myself. Soon, though, I realized I needed support.



I grew up with an alcoholic father. He was physically, verbally, and spiritually abusive. I'm the youngest of six kids. If you interviewed all six of us, I believe you'd think we had six different sets of parents.

I got some pretty harmful messages from my dad. By example, he sent the message that a "man" is supposed to drink and to be loud. The only emotion a man can show is anger. Showing other emotions was a sign of weakness. I was always the emotional one in the family so I started to isolate myself. I would go down to a corner in the basement and read comic books. I remember hearing my dad rant and rave at my mom, and I can remember sitting there crying because it hurt.

Sundays was one of the few days my dad wouldn't start drinking until the afternoon. I remember go-

ing to church—just my mom and me. When we came back, my dad was usually at the dining room table. His silence was deafening. The message I got from my father—from the man who was supposed to be my mentor—was that church and God were a waste of time.

My dad wasn't the only one sending confusing messages. I'd gone to work for a woman in my community in the summer after sixth or seventh grade. Her grown son would spike my soda. I thought it was wonderful. I came home drunk. My mom called the woman, but she didn't say, "Tell your son not to give him alcohol." I think mom had given up fighting at that point. She told her that if I got drunk to at

landscaping jobs in the area. One of the companies would hold meetings at a restaurant with an open bar. I'd work all day and then put alcohol right into my system. That's when I started drinking hard liquor.

My drinking started getting worse. I began to have blackouts. I would get to work the next day and someone would tell me how funny I'd been or that I'd cursed out the boss. I had no memory of these things.

My turning point came in June of 1988. My coworkers and I were hanging out after a meeting, drinking. It was 11 o'clock at night, but I didn't have a clue what time it was. The man at the bar said there was a phone call for me and that it was urgent. It was Carol, and she was hysterical. She was seven months pregnant at the time. The meeting had been over hours ago, and she had no idea where I was.

Carol is not the type of person who raises her voice, but when I got back home, she stood there in our tiny kitchen and screamed at me. As we stood there, I was seeing my mom and dad arguing. I hit rock bottom when I saw Carol and heard

my mom's voice instead. I can tell you truthfully that in that moment, as drunk as I was, I said to myself, "My father will not raise our child." My last drink was June 7, 1988, and I've been sober ever since. My daughter has never seen me drunk.

Like a lot of people, I thought I could quit by myself. Soon, though, I realized I needed support. I tried Alcoholics Anonymous, but for me there was something missing. When our daughter Justine was born, we started going to church services. I joined men's religious organizations, and they have helped very much.

Several years ago, I was having a spiritual battle. I prayed to the Lord, saying, "Please help me understand what's keeping me from loving You." I said that prayer for months. I went on a weekend church retreat for men, and I was asked to role-play the part of a boy getting beaten by his father. In that instant I was not playing a part. I was a child again, and my dad was beating me with a belt. One of the leaders of the weekend had to grab me and take me outside. I was surrounded by a bunch of men who watched over me.

The Lord works in mysterious ways. I did 44 years of anger work that Saturday afternoon. On Monday, I stayed home from work. Carol was out, and my daughter Justine was at school. I had been journaling about what had happened on Saturday, and I believe the Lord opened my spiritual eyes. I saw the events on Saturday happening again, and this time I saw what was really going on. I had been on the ground, yelling at my dad, "How could a loving father treat his son like that?" I had really been asking, "How could a loving God let this to happen to a little boy?"

My anger with the Lord had been keeping me from loving Him. The truth was, He had never left me. He had always been with me, He is with me now, and He'll always be with me. On Saturday, I'd been able to write at the end of the entry, "I love you, Dad." When I wrote in my journal on Monday, I was able to sign, "I love you, Lord."

Since then, I've been making peace with my past. My dad was a retired Air Force serviceman. He fought in World War II, Korea and

Vietnam. I have been blessed to be a part of Vets Journey Home, an organization formed for veterans of combat. Hearing stories of the hell these men and women experienced has given me compassion for my dad.

I've tried to teach my daughter the messages I never received: God and religion are necessary and important; my "yes" means nothing until I can say "no"; I'm loved for who I am, not for the number of things I can do.

I am one drink away from being an alcoholic, and that's after 21 years of being sober. My hope in telling this story is that perhaps someone dealing with addiction—any addiction—can have hope that with God's help anything is possible. I'm happiest when I'm conscious, and I'm most conscious when I'm connected to the Lord. ●

What Is Your Story?

How has your life been impacted by living New Christian spirituality? Send us your story.

newchurchconnection@newchurch.org

Deno Brannon lives in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania with his wife Carol and his daughter Justine.

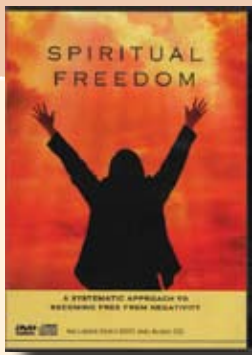


My anger with the Lord had been keeping me from loving Him. The truth was, He had never left me. He had always been with me, He is with me now, and He'll always be with me.

God does not tempt anyone. In times of temptation He is constantly trying to deliver a person from it.

—Secrets of Heaven 2768





Spiritual Freedom

The 12 steps presented in the “Spiritual Freedom” program are tools designed to help individuals release negative thoughts and feelings.

In this video series, Peter Rhodes guides a woman through twelve simple steps of spiritual growth, using insights from the teachings of the New Church. Ray Silverman narrates. Peter and Ray emphasize that people are powerless over negative thoughts and emotions. They underscore the importance of self-examination. These principles are at the core of many spiritual growth programs, whether found in the Writings of the New Church or in a twelve-step program.

OUTLINE for a small group study of the “Spiritual Freedom” program



Getting Started

The “Spiritual Freedom” video is divided into eight five-minute segments.

Available as a video series on <http://www.youtube.com> (search 'spiritual freedom peter rhodes')

Available as DVD with audio CD at <http://www.store.newchurch.org> or 267-502-4980

Worksheets available at <http://www.riseaboveit.org>

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	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5
THEME	Introduction	STEP 1 Life is Unmanageable	STEPS 2, 3, and 4 Higher Power, Letting Go, and Personal Inventory	STEPS 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 Admit Wrongs, Ready to Change, Prayer, Prepare for and Make Amends	STEPS 10, 11 and 12 Admit Wrongs, Pray to Higher Power, Live a New Life, and Share Path with Others
VIDEO	watch segments 1 and 2	watch segments 3 and 4	watch segments 5 and 6	watch segment 7	watch segment 8
WEEKLY QUOTATION	“The first thing we need to learn is that our happiness is not dependent on the external world or on the gratification of our ego.”	“It is a divine impossibility to satisfy the ego.”	“[Our] honesty will open the way for God to lead [us] away from ego and into spiritual freedom.”	“If we are in a negative state, no amount of talk will get us out of it. We need God. We need prayer. We can't rely on our own ego.”	“With God all things are possible.”
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	What life situations come to mind that you might want to work on? In what ways can you see selfishness in your conflicts? How does the idea that happiness comes from letting go of selfishness make you feel?	Have you experienced situations like the one Martha describes? Have there been times when what started small became a huge issue? What were some of the thoughts and feelings you wrote down? What insights did you gain through this process?	What came up for you as you filled out the worksheet? Can you identify with Martha's shame? Have you experienced the recoiling and shame that Peter talks about? How do you feel about the idea of working to separate yourself from your ego?	How do you react to these steps? Do they feel possible? Impossible? In what ways are you willing to lay down your egotistic life? How would your life change if you allowed pure love to replace your ego concerns?	Will you return to these steps and tools? What are your reactions to the program as a whole? Which steps are the most challenging for you?

When one's ego is threatened, it triggers negative thoughts and feelings about another person.

Peter Rhodes and Ray Silverman explore a sample situation and explain how to work through the negative thoughts and feelings that arise, using the twelve "steps" to the right. These steps can empower a person to work through a situation, rationally and peacefully, and relieve negativity. ●

STEP TWO SAMPLE WORKSHEET

List your thoughts (falsities) and negative feelings.

THOUGHTS	FEELINGS
If my wife loved me she would have picked up my mail.	Anger
She always forgets to do what she promises.	Contempt
She is only interested in herself.	Irritation and Frustration

SAMPLE SITUATION

"I am waiting for a letter that I asked my wife to pick up from the post office on her way home, and she forgot. By the time I found out, the post office closed and I would not have the information I needed in time for a board meeting that afternoon. I had hoped to demonstrate my value to the group and thereby enhance my reputation."

12 STEPS

STEP ONE I am powerless over the following thoughts and feelings, and at this moment my life and marriage are unmanageable.

STEP TWO I believe that a power greater than myself can free me of thinking and believing these thoughts and of acting from these feelings, and thereby, return me to sanity.

STEP THREE I made a decision to turn these thoughts and feelings (my life and my will) and the pleasures of these insanities over to God. This means that I became willing to accept the outcome as God's will and as the best possible outcome for me.

STEP FOUR I did a personal self-examination of these activated concerns (using chart available on www.riseaboveit.org).

STEP FIVE I shared this inventory with God and another person. I shared the list of the exact ego concerns for the world and for myself that were activated.

STEP SIX I became willing to surrender the identified ego concerns and the related character defects to God.

STEP SEVEN I prayed to God to become free of the bondage of these ego concerns of my ego (implore God for help).

STEP EIGHT I forgave my spouse of any real or imagined wrongs.

STEP NINE I made direct amends to my spouse for any injury (acts or attitudes) expressed when these concerns of self were activated and when I was acting from these negative thoughts and feelings.

STEP TEN I continue to be aware any time these thoughts and feelings recur, and surrender them.

STEP ELEVEN Having surrendered my will, I prayed only for the knowledge of God's will for me and the power and willingness to carry it out in my relationship with my spouse.

STEP TWELVE Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of this work, I interact with my wife from love and concern for her and for God's will, free from the burden of my "self."

Rev. Ray Silverman is the chaplain of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. Peter Rhodes is a counselor who has led workshops on spiritual renewal for more than twenty years.



ABOUT SMALL GROUPS

- > Gather 6-8 friends.
- >Decide on host, time, and refreshments.
- > Get a copy of *New Church Connection* for each person. (e-mail outreach@newchurch.org or call 267-502-4911 for additional copies).
- > Meet weekly to discuss the readings and to support each other in your efforts.

MEETING STRUCTURE:

- > Open with a prayer.
- > Have each person share how he or she is doing and then how the topic and discussion went that week.
- > Together, watch this week's video
- > Some weeks include a worksheet. We recommend that each person does the worksheet after watching the video and before the discussion
- > Use the discussion questions provided to start conversation.
- > Have each person share a brief closing thought.
- > Close with a prayer.

The Challenge of Addictive Behavior

realchallenges

Someone close to me is struggling with addiction.

How do I help them?

The friends and family of a person struggling with addiction must walk a fine line between supporting the individual and enabling destructive habits.

realsupport

If a good friend accidentally splashed coffee onto your dress shirt, you might quickly assure him, "Don't worry, no harm done. I'll just put a little soap on it, and I'm sure it will come out." Not many of us would raise our eyebrows and say, "This shirt cost me fifty bucks. Fork it over! I want you to experience the consequence of your mistake." In this kind of situation, playing hardball seems a little insensitive. So where do we draw the line between helping others and enabling destructive behavior?

When it comes to everyday interactions, most of us enjoy being able to make another person's life a little easier. We hold the door open for the person with her hands full; we turn the light on for the friend who's reading in a dimly lit room; we hand a tissue to the kid who has the sniffles. These things allow us to feel that we're having a positive effect on the world.

It becomes much harder, though, when we're dealing with someone who struggles with an addiction. Should we help him recover from his hangover in the morning? Should we call her office and tell them she's "sick"? Should we loan him money to pay for the car accident he had while under the influence? Should we patch up the hole in the wall and pretend nothing happened? Should we tell her that she can stay with us when she's kicked out of her home?

When our conscience seems to pull us in two different directions, the teachings of the New Church may help us determine the best course of action. In the Writings of the New Church, Emanuel Swedenborg conveys the idea that real charity involves careful discretion, which he calls "prudence." He writes that when we give assistance to someone who's involved in poor behavior, we actually end up hurting others through this person: "for through the assistance which we render,

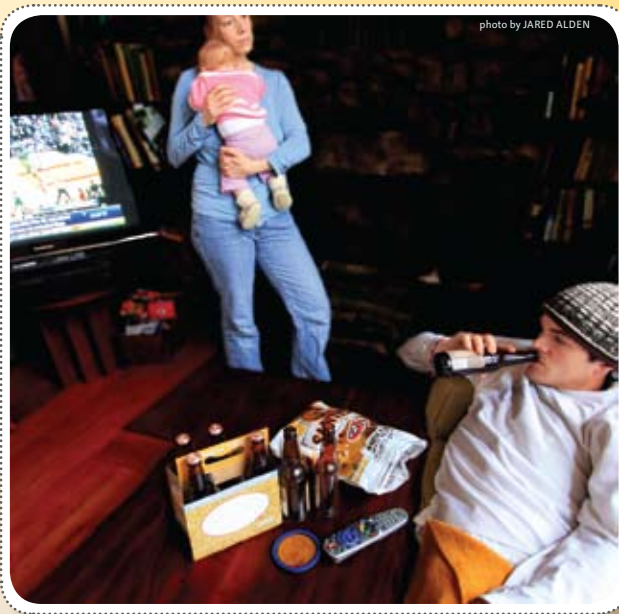


photo by JARED ALDEN

Genuine charity proceeds from those who habitually practice it with justice and judgment....
—True Christian Religion 425

about the courage and strength of her mother's decision.
Another step we can take when a loved one has an addiction is to begin finding peace within ourselves. It can help to take time each day to reflect, noticing the ways we've been reacting to upsetting situations, and beginning to learn healthier responses. It may also help to seek the advice of professionals who are trained in dealing with addiction.

we confirm him in evil, and supply him with the means of doing evil to others" (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 100).

So what can we do? One thing we can do is refuse to undo the consequences that result from an addiction. This can be very difficult. We may suffer embarrassment, exposure, loss of familiar situations, loss of financial stability, or temporary separation. The benefits come later, though, as the gradual process of healing begins. One woman told a story about how surprised and hurt she'd felt when her mother forced her to leave home, after discovering her crack addiction. Years later, having hit "rock bottom" and slowly learned to face her own fears, the recovering daughter spoke with gratitude

Learning how to best support a loved one who suffers from addiction can be a tremendous struggle, but there is also enormous opportunity for growth, when it is undertaken with patience, prudence and prayer. If you are currently in this situation, may the Lord bless you and the ones you love on your journey to emotional health and recovery. ●



Changing for Goodness' Sake

by Rev. Nathan Gladish

So much of life is about making changes, and the Lord wants us to change for the better. What significant changes do you want to make in your thinking or habits? Rev. Nathan Gladish overviews two plans for change that can help you organize and track your efforts. One is drawn from psychology and the other from the teachings of the New Church. Use them together to gain insight into how you can progress toward a new, happier life.

Is it easy or hard to make changes? It's both, of course. Sometimes the hardest changes are the best and most rewarding. I have a simple saying when attempting to make a difficult but important change: "It may not be easy, but it will be worthwhile." One of my favorite teachings of the New Church supports this: "Nothing whatever takes place, not even the smallest thing, except in order that good may come out of it" (*Secrets of Heaven* 6574). The Lord wants us to change for goodness' sake. He wants the best for us. As He tells us in Jeremiah, He has plans

for us, "For peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (29:11).

Our efforts to change can be easier using a step-by-step method. So many things go on behind the scenes—details we don't easily see, schedule, or monitor such as unconscious attitudes, feelings and influences. Fortunately, the Lord is overseeing the whole intricate process, but we need to do our part. He invites us to take initiative and use our freedom, rationality and talents to make changes. For me, it helps to have an overarching, systematic plan to follow.

I live in Motor City, where the auto industry pioneered systems for step-by-step change. Think of the complexity of an automobile assembly line, bringing together thousands of unique parts in order to manufacture a fully functioning car. When the steps of the whole procedure are clearly defined, all the people and aspects of the system can work together toward the common goal.

Current self-help literature overflows with suggestions about the number of steps of change and what they involve. Some experts recommend as few as three steps. Others identify more details, such as the famous twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. One model I've used extensively in my counseling practice comes from a book called *Changing for Good* by Prochaska, Norcross and DiClemente. Based on a large study conducted in the 1990s, the results outline a framework of six stages, each with its defining attitude. As you read the chart below, which stage and attitude applies to you?

Each stage of change has its unique qualities and opportunities. They apply to all sorts of situations and to people of all

ages. And at any given point in life, you could be at a different state in the process of working on various changes.

Now look at the other chart (on the next page) showing the steps of repentance as identified in the New Church teachings of *True Christianity* 530. I've added my own interpretation of the defining attitudes that go with them.

Nothing whatever takes place, not even the smallest thing, except in order that good may come out of it.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 6574

As a counselor, I love seeing the relationship between these two models. Both address similar concepts in the essential human process of change. Taken together, they form a framework for making effective and lasting change.

It's common to have anxiety about change. You might think, "Nothing will change," "Things may get worse,"

Defining Attitude

STAGES OF CHANGE

1. Pre-contemplation	"I don't need (or want) to change."
2. Contemplation	"I'm thinking about changing; I might change."
3. Preparation	"I've decided to change; I'm developing plans."
4. Action	"I'm actively making changes based on my plans."
5. Maintenance	"I made the changes I want; now I'm maintaining my gains."
6. Termination	"I'm free from a long-standing problem."

Defining Attitude

1. Self Exploration	"I'm examining and evaluating my spiritual states and needs for change."
2. Recognition	"I see something false or evil in myself that needs to change."
3. Acknowledgement	"I accept responsibility for my part in the falsity or evil as well as for my part in plans to change."
4. Prayer	"I'm actively turning to the Lord for help, including studying His Word for inspiration, motivation, and for tools to use in effective change."
5. Stop the Old	"I'm ceasing and desisting from the old behavior with its thoughts and feelings."
6. Begin Anew	"I'm living in a new way, free from a spiritually debilitating problem."



"Change won't last," or a thousand other pesky ideas. A simple set of steps can provide perspective, reduce these fears, and increase the sense of motivation to pursue healthy change.

The Lord really wants you to experience positive and lasting change, and He will help all the way. He's working behind the scenes, "always present with everyone, urging and pressing to be received" (*True Christianity* 766). Whatever you receive from His love and wisdom can be used to make significant improvements. If you follow the steps He wants you to take, you will see improvements in various areas of your life. So don't fear. Trust

His constant presence and leadership, His oversight of the intricate details of life. Then take the steps of change toward greater happiness and peace. ●

The Lord wants the best for us. As He tells us in Jeremiah, He has plans for us, "For peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (29:11).



Nathan Gladish is the assistant pastor of Oak Arbor Church and principal of Oak Arbor School in Rochester, MI. He is also a licensed counselor. Learn more at www.oakarbor.org.



The Lord really wants you to experience positive and lasting change, and He will help all the way.

EXAMPLE of blending the two plans for change

These stages of change and steps of repentance (pages 17 and 18) may be easier to understand with an example. Below, I've blended the two approaches to illustrate how the information from the Lord's Word can be strengthened and applied using information drawn from the psychological study.

PRE-CONTEMPLATION / SELF EXPLORATION

Ted wasn't sure what all the fuss was about. People were making too big a deal about his recent mistakes. That's all they were as far as he was concerned—no harm intended; it wasn't his problem. But that night he lay awake, angry about what happened and anxious about what to do next. He started reviewing the details of his mixed-up situation.

CONTEMPLATION / RECOGNITION

Throughout the next day, Ted thought long and hard about all the stress he felt and the worries swirling in his head. He began to consider some of his options and to ask how he could better his life. Realizing his negative attitudes had led to rather immature behavior, he decided he needed to make some significant changes in his thinking and habits.

PREPARATION / ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

During the week, Ted started doing some research, talking to a few trusted friends, reading the Word and gathering new in-

formation from several sources. He was feeling more open to insight and more determined to put some of the suggestions to work. He began writing down some goals and plans.

ACTION / PRAYER

Then he took a big step. Looking both inwardly in prayer and thinking outwardly about his hopes, he began to let go of the baggage of his old habits. Drawing on an inner motivation, he started to take on a new attitude about his potential to act with more integrity.

MAINTENANCE / STOP THE OLD

Over the next few weeks, Ted gradually found a rhythm in avoiding his old ways and experimenting with new more healthy attitudes and habits. He also noticed how easy it was to relapse, so he reminded himself not to become complacent, and he sought support to maintain his plans.

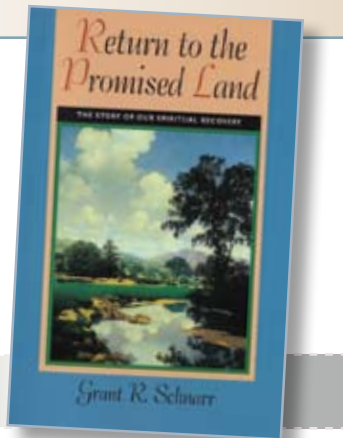
TERMINATION / BEGIN ANEW

It took a lot of effort at first, but over time, Ted felt a growing sense of confidence that the changes he was working on could last. Even close friends complimented him on his new efforts. There was no turning back. Ted had worked through the stages of change and steps of repentance and had emerged with a new, better way of living.

Return to the Promised Land

The Story of Our Spiritual Recovery

By GRANT SCHNARR



Recovery from addiction does not come in an instant. Just as the children of Israel did not return to the promised land in one day, so we cannot find peace from addiction in a moment. In his book *Return to the Promised Land*, Rev. Grant Schnarr provides readers with a detailed description of spiritual growth, a journey based on the biblical story of Exodus.

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTRODUCTION

Thousands of years ago, an ancient group of people went on a journey, searching for a home. God calls every person—of whatever time, background, and religious orientation—to this same journey. He calls us out of the slavery of egotism and mistaken wants, out of addiction, whatever the form, to freedom. Many call it the “road to recovery”; the Israelites called it the “return to the promised land.”

Return to the Promised Land is about the parable of the children of Israel's struggle to become a nation—a symbolic representation of our own lives. Not merely a loose correlation between the history of a people and our own personal lives, each significant person, place, tree, rock, body of water, and stick in the hand has a specific spiritual meaning that corresponds directly to our spiritual growth. Even as God did not abandon His people so many thousands of years ago, He does

The freedom that goes with self-centeredness and materialism, and their accompanying wants, is anything but freedom; it is utter slavery.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 2884

not abandon His people today. He leads each one of us, if we let Him, to happiness and inner peace.

I will spare you my war story with alcohol, but I will tell you that I decided to get

OVERVIEW

Preceding each chapter are biblical passages that are later explained. You are encouraged to delve into their symbolic meaning in your own life.

Each chapter begins with a quote from a work by Swedenborg and ends with simple, practical exercises intended to help you put your newfound knowledge into immediate action.

Return to the Promised Land can help guide you from addiction to freedom, from spiritual hunger and thirst to being filled and satisfied, from the fury of inner spiritual warfare to lasting spiritual peace.

“Schnarr’s understanding of the archetypal depths of the journey home to Canaan will inspire readers to revisit this Old Testament story.”

—LIBRARY JOURNAL

help. Three months after being ordained as a minister, I woke up one morning and decided to quit. I didn't want alcohol to interfere with my efforts to be helpful to others. I got help through Alcoholics Anonymous and began my journey from the slavery of addiction.

Leaving the addiction of alcohol behind was a relief. But finding peace in the wilderness afterwards was a difficult task. I found other potential addictions: addictions to work, love, food, and even counseling. One by one these enemies presented themselves, each in their own way. It took a lot of spiritual labor and combat to remove these barriers to having a happy and healthy life.

Through the search for wholeness and

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION: MY JOURNEY

- 1 SPIRITUAL BONDAGE: EGYPT
- 2 ROAD TO RECOVERY: EXODUS
- 3 BITTER REALIZATIONS: BITTER WATERS
- 4 SPIRITUAL SUSTENANCE: BREAD FROM HEAVEN
- 5 REFRESHING INSIGHTS: WATER FROM A ROCK
- 6 REPELLING NEGATIVE THOUGHTS: AMALEKITES
- 7 PERSONAL REVELATIONS: SINAI
- 8 OVERCOMING FEAR: GIANTS IN THE LAND
- 9 CONQUERING SPIRITUAL FOES: JERICHO
- 10 MINOR CHALLENGES: AI
- 11 MAKING PEACE WITH SHORTCOMINGS: GIBEONITES
- 12 SPIRITUALITY: PEACE IN THE LAND

Grant Schnarr is also the author of *Spiritual Recovery: A Twelve-Step Guide*.



my own “promised land” I found Him. God, as I understand Him, lifted me up time and again, and protected me, fed me in my wilderness search, and brought me to spiritual recovery. I now enjoy this recovery one day at a time and thank God for the help He gives me every day. And the journey continues.

May you learn a great deal about your own spiritual journey from these descriptive biblical stories, from their deeper meaning brought to light by Emanuel Swedenborg, and from my own experience with pain, with growth, with life.



Rev. Grant Schnarr is a New Church minister. He has led seminars on recovery, spiritual growth, and men's issues for more than twenty years. To learn more or to order his books, visit www.grantschnarr.com.



Congregations around the world

The New Church is a new Christianity that provides a clear path to eternal happiness and addresses your questions about God, love, and life after death. The teachings are immediately practical and deeply spiritual. The New Church is based on the teachings of the Bible as illuminated in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

The New Church (General Church of the New Jerusalem) has congregations around the world. All people are welcome to join in worship and participate in the life and community of the church.



Photo by CHRIS BOWN



photo by CHRIS BOWN

FOCUS ON THE NEW CHURCH IN Alexandra, Gauteng, South Africa

The New Church in Alexandra welcomes neighbors to join in worshipping the Lord God Jesus Christ. Alexandra is one of the oldest New Church congregations in South Africa, and its members are passionate about sharing the message of the New Church.

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New Church TEACHINGS

The perspectives in this magazine are based on the teachings of the New Church found in the Old and New Testaments and the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Core teachings of the New Church:

- There is one loving, personal God, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. His providence is powerful and unending. God guides each person's spiritual path, from the smallest things up to the biggest things, and His angels are with us every moment.
- The Old and New Testaments have a deeper meaning, revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which help people lead happy and useful lives to eternity.
- Spiritual growth is a process. Through recognizing our sins, praying, shunning evils, and living a new life, we are transformed and united more closely with God.
- All religions have goodness in them. People of every faith are saved if they live sincerely according to their religion.
- Each of us continues life as a complete person immediately after the death of the body.
- While people are free to choose to live in hell, God wants everyone to live with Him in heaven to eternity.
- Marriage can last forever, for God blesses people with a special love in marriage that goes on after death, even to eternity.

About Swedenborg and Works Cited

Emanuel Swedenborg was an 18th century scientist and philosopher who continually studied the Word, later devoting his life to the revelation of the New Church. In the New Church we believe his later works are a divinely inspired revelation for the modern age, touching on all the different aspects of religion with a rational and common-sense approach.

In this issue the following works of Swedenborg are referenced: *Heavenly Secrets*, *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*, and *True Christian Religion*.

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A person
is continually
falling,
but is continually
being raised up
by the Lord.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 8391