



MY JOURNEY FROM *Alcoholism to Sobriety*

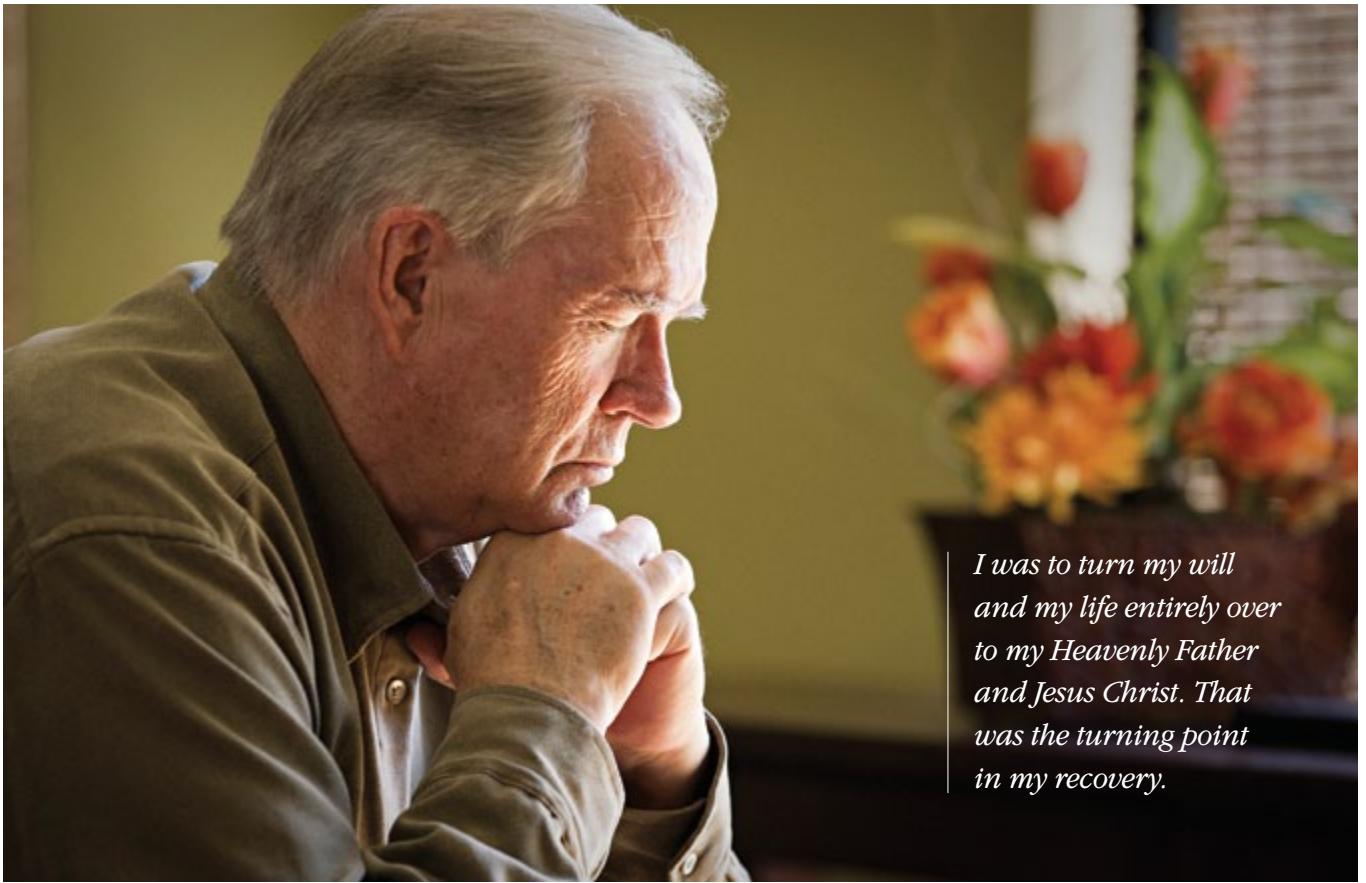
*Alcohol put me on a path to destruction and misery.
The Addiction Recovery Program helped put me
back on the path to Heavenly Father.*

By Gary LeRoy Evans

Please, Father in Heaven, help me.”
These are the words I cried in desperation to the Lord. I was
under the influence of alcohol at the time, and I simply didn’t know
what else to do.

I had been raised in the Church by wonderful, loving parents. I went on a mission to England and Scotland, came home, and married my childhood sweetheart in the temple. I chose the broadcasting industry as my profession. I gained great popularity and became very prideful. Later, as a sports announcer, I traveled a lot and started drinking socially on occasion.

Decades later, at 68 years of age, I finally realized that drinking had made my life a total mess, a tragedy. Divorced for 20 years, lonely, inactive in



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the Church, miserable, and deeply in debt, I was ready to give up. It was in that desperation I pleaded with the Lord, “Please, please help me.”

The next day I was arrested for the second time for driving under the influence of alcohol, which brought with it a large fine, a yearlong suspension of my driver’s license, and 10 days in jail. I wanted to die.

A Path to Recovery

While I was in jail, my sister invited me to live in her family’s trailer in the desert when I got out. What a great break! This surely was an answer to my prayer.

The first day I was there, I took my dog for a walk and found a spot where no one would disturb me. I fell to my knees in prayer. This spot became my sacred place where hour after hour, day after day, I pleaded with the Lord for help.

I learned through an ad in the newspaper about a meeting for the LDS Addiction Recovery Program, a 12-step

program. The meeting was held at an LDS meetinghouse, and although I hadn’t been active in years, I thought I might as well try it. When I arrived at the meeting, I was greeted by a kind senior missionary couple.

The meeting started with prayer. I was not really at ease, but I felt a warm, comfortable feeling. As people at the meeting shared their life stories, I felt connected to them. Their honesty touched me, and I realized that others had the same problems I had and, like me, were trying to get rid of them. After the closing prayer, I quickly left.

But the next week I went back. And I kept going. People who attended the meeting were so honest in their sharing. I began to pick up on things that I could use to help myself. I knew that my life had become unmanageable and that by myself, I was helpless to stop drinking.

The Blessings of Obedience

One day when I was very discouraged—depressed, really—I again asked the Lord for help. When I came

in from praying in the desert, I started ironing my shirts. Suddenly, from nowhere, came the words, “Be not discouraged; many blessings will be yours.” This startled me. Where did those words come from? Then I realized that the Holy Ghost had spoken to me, an alcoholic, so unrighteous and undeserving of the Lord’s blessings. I was astounded.

By this time, I had learned much about the 12 steps of the Addiction Recovery Program. Step three stated that I was to turn my will and my life entirely over to my Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. That was the turning point in my recovery. After much prayer and fasting I was determined to do that, and I went forward.

I started going to church. At first it was uncomfortable—no one greeted me or said much—but I kept going. After a few weeks, the bishop greeted me, and we had our first meeting. He was loving and kind, forgiving and understanding. He told me that if I would attend church, not drink, pay my tithing, and do some other things, that I could take the sacrament. What a special blessing!

But how was I to pay tithing? My job barely covered my living expenses. I still had my fine to pay and my large debt. But I was determined. No matter what—*no matter what*—I was going to pay my tithing.

Then the blessings came. Five days after I paid tithing for the first time, my brother called and told me that our mother’s house had finally sold (she had passed away) and that I would receive a share of the proceeds. It was almost the exact amount of my debt. I felt the Lord was blessing me for being obedient.

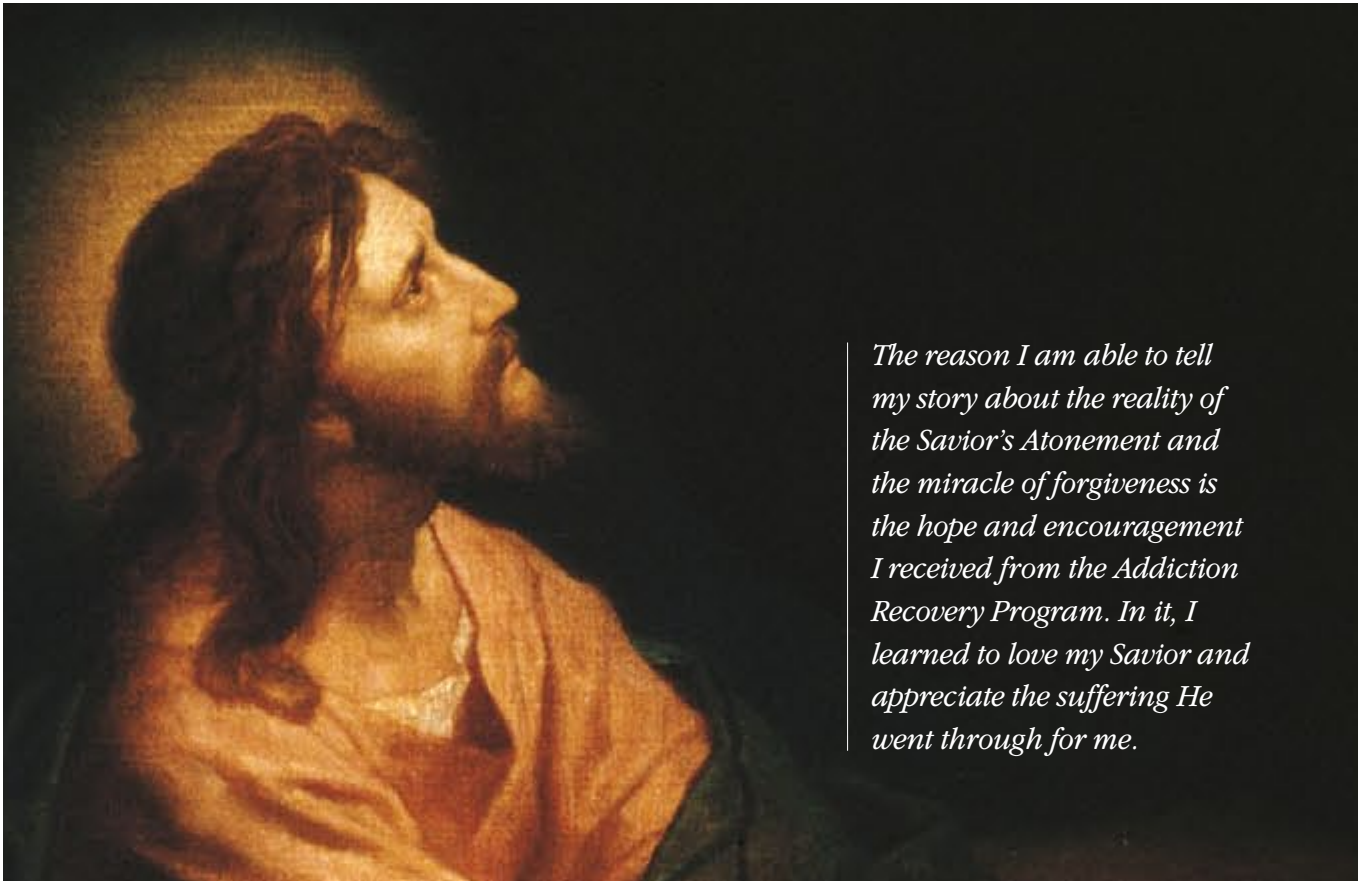


FERVENT PRAYER IS KEY

“Priesthood leaders can help as those with addictions seek counsel from them. Where necessary, they can refer them to qualified licensed counselors and LDS Family Services. The addiction recovery program, adapted from the original 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, is readily available through LDS Family Services.

“To those who are dealing with an addiction personally or within your family, I repeat, fervent prayer is key to gaining the spiritual strength to find peace and overcome an addictive craving. Heavenly Father loves all of His children, so thank Him and express sincere faith in Him. Ask Him for the strength to overcome the addiction you are experiencing. Set aside all pride and turn your life and your heart to Him. Ask to be filled with the power of Christ’s pure love. You may have to do this many times, but I testify to you that your body, mind, and spirit can be transformed, cleansed, and made whole, and you will be freed. Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life’ (John 8:12).”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “O That Cunning Plan of the Evil One,” *Liahona and Ensign*, November 2010, 110.



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Continued Progress and Peace

I continued going to church and meeting with the bishop regularly. I did all the things he asked me to do. I also continued going to the Addiction Recovery Program meetings twice a week, where I was able to help others by sharing how the Lord had helped me. There were other blessings, too: I got a new job with higher pay, accepted callings in the ward, and received wonderful priesthood blessings from my stake president.

One day the bishop asked me if I would like a temple recommend. My tears flowed as he interviewed me. I loved the temple and went often. Additionally, I was called to be a missionary in the Addiction Recovery Program, where I had the opportunity to help others like me.

Then I was blessed to become a veil worker in the temple. How could that be? Just a short time ago I was living in darkness, and now I was serving in one of the most holy places on earth. Only through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the miracle of forgiveness could this have been possible.

Unimaginable Gifts

About a year later, I married again. What a special blessing to have a choice companion to share all of these blessings with!

Immediately after our marriage, we received a call to serve together in the Addiction Recovery Program. We currently serve as regional coordinators in the program, which we view as a great responsibility as well as an opportunity to help others who are struggling with addiction.

The reason I am able to tell my story about the reality of the Savior's Atonement and the miracle of forgiveness is the hope and encouragement I received from the Addiction Recovery Program. In it, I learned to love my Savior and appreciate the suffering He went through for me in the Garden of Gethsemane. In addition, I learned of my Heavenly Father's great love for me and for all of His children when I received the answer to my desperate prayer: "Please, Father in Heaven, help me." ■

HOPE AND HELP

If you or someone you love struggles with addiction, there is hope. Addiction recovery groups sponsored by LDS Family Services are available to help you and your loved ones overcome addictive behavior and more fully enjoy the blessings of Church participation. To find out more, see your priesthood leader, visit ldsfamilyservices.org, or contact the LDS Family Services office nearest you.

The program's manual, *Addiction Recovery Program: A Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing*, is available in many languages. To buy a printed copy, visit store.lds.org; to download a free PDF, visit providentliving.org.

THE 12 STEPS OF THE ADDICTION RECOVERY PROGRAM SPONSORED BY LDS FAMILY SERVICES

LDS Family Services' Addiction Recovery Program has adapted the original Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. into a framework of the doctrines, principles, and beliefs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

Step 1—Honesty: Admit that you, of yourself, are powerless to overcome your addictions and that your life has become unmanageable.

Step 2—Hope: Come to believe that the power of God can restore you to complete spiritual health.

Step 3—Trust in God: Decide to turn your will and your life over to the care of God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Step 4—Truth: Make a searching and fearless written moral inventory of yourself.

Step 5—Confession: Admit to yourself, to your Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ, to proper priesthood authority, and to another person the exact nature of your wrongs.

Step 6—Change of Heart: Become entirely ready to have God remove all your character weaknesses.

Step 7—Humility: Humbly ask Heavenly Father to remove your shortcomings.

Step 8—Seeking Forgiveness: Make a written list of all persons you have harmed and become willing to make restitution to them.

Step 9—Restitution and Reconciliation: Wherever possible, make direct restitution to all persons you have harmed.

Step 10—Daily Accountability: Continue to take personal inventory, and when you are wrong promptly admit it.

Step 11—Personal Revelation: Seek through prayer and meditation to know the Lord's will and to have the power to carry it out.

Step 12—Service: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, share this message with others and practice these principles in all you do.

