

The 12 Steps Through Lent

A collaborative devotional written by the LuMin-Austin community

Why the 12 Steps of Recovery?

Background and Devotional Reading Tips

The 12 Steps of AA/NA/MA/HA/Recovery are utilized by communities of people who identify as addicts to a substance for the purpose of overcoming their addiction. The LuMin-Austin community has recognized these programs as offering invaluable wisdom, not just for addicts, but for all of us in our human brokenness. We are using the structure of the 12 Steps of Recovery to guide us through the season of Lent and using this liturgical season as a time of internal healing done alongside each other.

There will be at least one installment of this devotional for each of the 12 Steps. The 12 Steps we are working through are as follows:

- 1.) We admitted that we are powerless over [x]*-- that our lives had become unmanageable.
*The original wording of AA uses alcohol here. As alcohol is not the same addiction we are all suffering, you are called to insert anything here that is relevant to you and your own human brokenness.
- 2.) Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3.) Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
- 4.) Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5.) Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6.) Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7.) Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- 8.) Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9.) Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10.) Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- 11.) Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12.) Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others*, and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.
*The original wording of AA uses alcoholics here. Since we are expanding these Steps to heal from any form of brokenness that we are all subject to in some form, we are also expanding this call to share this message with all.

As you read through each devotional (updated on Instagram, FaceBook, and this document), you are encouraged to do the work of these Steps internally and specifically related to whatever may be keeping you from a closer relationship to God. Journaling on the reflection questions included with each devotional is highly encouraged so you may see a documentation of your journey through Lent as well as to bring upon focus and routine to your spiritual practices this season. Free journals are available at LuMin-Austin (2100 San Antonio Street) to all who are interested.

Step One

We admitted that we are powerless over [x]*-- that our lives had become unmanageable.
*The original wording of AA uses alcohol here. As alcohol is not the same addiction we are all suffering, you are called to insert anything here that is relevant to you and your own human brokenness.

A devotional from a LuMin-Austin community member:

"I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." (Romans, 7: 18b-20)

Some of you are probably familiar with the Greek myth about Sisyphus. He's the guy who fooled the gods by cheating death not once..but three times! His eternal punishment was to roll a massive rock up a hill, but just as he'd get to the top - oopsie daisies - it'd roll back down, forcing him to rolling it back up over, and over, over...

Anyone who's tried - under their own will or strength - to quit something that's gained an outsized place in their life can relate to this guy Sisyphus and his futile task. The narrative usually goes like this: "As hard as I tried to quit, the burden was too great...I'd grow weary and slip. I'd stare at the rock at rest, and think to myself: it's no big deal. I got this. But when I tried again it wasn't long before I was reminded otherwise: "Nope...No. I don't have this." over, and over, and over.

Sometimes entering Lent feels like this too. You get your ash in church on Wednesday. Tell yourself, "For Lent, I'm gonna give up X...or try to do Y...or take on Z."; And maybe you're successful right up until...say, the Second Sunday in Lent, when you discover just what a heavy lift it is to quit X, do Y, or take on Z.

The Sisyphean task is real: shoving up and out of our lives whatever has become massively unhealthy or burdensome - one and for all. Such is the case for like every single human EVER.

Lent, if anything, is a time that we admit, like Paul, that we cannot do that which we know to be right and good on our own. We are powerless, our lives have become unmanageable. Every single last one of us needs help.

Reflection questions:

- What habit/routine/relationship/etc. feels outsized when compared to the relationship you would like to have with God?
- How do you respond to tasks that feel Sisyphean, or unending? How would you like to respond to your burdens?
- In what areas of your own life do you feel powerless?

Step Two

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

A devotional from a Isabella G., a LuMin-Austin community member:

*“For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”
(Romans 8:6)*

“Why do you believe in God?”

Oh the age old question. I have been asked this by peers, by family, and most notably, by my campers at summer camp. This is no easy question to answer as you may imagine, however my answer usually goes a little something like this... “if I died and all of this wasn’t real, it wasn’t for nothing because I lived a life of love and hope in a power higher than myself and that brought me comfort”. I’ve gone back and forth on if this is a selfish answer or not and have recently come to accept that God would want this from me. He would want me to be dependent on him and the life-giving opportunities and hope that comes with living a life in Christ. Romans 8:6 says “For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace”. How true and fitting this is, not only in our season of lent, but in the current state of the world. In a season that feels dark and looming, we are invited to seek God’s power which is greater than ours, to ground us.

Reflection questions:

- Where do you find your mind set on the flesh and fleshly desires?
- How might you invite God into those spaces?
- What attributes of God make you pause and reflect on his higher power? How are these attributes different from things humans can do themselves?

Step Three

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

A devotional from Madi C., a LuMin community member:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit yourself to Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

(Proverbs 3:5-6)

Last year when I started college, I had a hard time trusting that God was working in my life. My first year was extremely difficult and I was struggling to understand why God would put me in a position where I felt so unhappy. I was very hesitant but ultimately made the last minute decision to return to camp for the summer to hopefully strengthen my relationship with God. In the end, it was exactly what I needed and I found that God was with me every step of the way.

While I was at camp I got to lead 4th through 6th graders in Bible study and be part of their faith journeys; I later realized that they also got to be a huge part of mine. I got to share my own experience with God and growing up in the church with campers and their adult leaders. They all accepted me for who I was. They didn't see the version of myself that I was overwhelmed by: someone who was struggling or as someone who wasn't good enough. They got to know me, heard my story, and saw someone who was wonderfully made by God.

Returning to camp and feeling that love reminded me that my relationship with God doesn't always have to be perfect for him to be present. We may not always understand what is happening, we may feel anxious about where God is leading us, and we may question if God is with us, but God is always there, and He will always guide you to people in your life that will remind you of His love. I know He has a plan for me and for you too, just remember to put your trust in Him.

Reflection Questions:

- What is a time that others have seen you through God's eyes rather than your own?
- How have you made the decision to trust God in your life?
- Where have you seen God working through you recently?

Step Four

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

A devotional from Sydney N., a LuMin-Austin community member:

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.”
(Psalm 139:23)*

Making and searching for a moral inventory of ourselves is one of the most challenging steps because it demands complete honesty. As a premed student, it is easy to measure my value by numbers. My science GPA, research hours, and exam scores, all make me feel that success reflects who I am. However, this step forces me to look beneath the surface. Do I serve others out of genuine compassion, or out of a desire for recognition? In a competitive environment, pride, jealousy, anxiety, and quiet resentment can grow unnoticed. A true moral inventory means admitting when I procrastinate, judge classmates, or let ambition overshadow empathy. It also means acknowledging strengths like discipline and perseverance, not to glorify them, but to understand how I can use them well. Lent is a season of examination before renewal. Just as a physician must carefully diagnose before treating a patient, I must examine my own heart before I can grow into the kind of doctor I hope to become. Genuine self-reflection is uncomfortable, but it is the foundation of humility and transformation.

Reflection Questions:

- Take an inventory of your strengths and weaknesses in your faith. This could be a bulleted list, a longer written meditation, or whatever best suits your reflections process.
- How can you turn these strengths and weaknesses over to God in your daily life?
- How does it feel to examine yourself as the devotion author models? Do you feel like it's easier for you to examine your strengths or your weaknesses?

Step Five

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

A devotional from Virginia V., a LuMin-Austin community member:

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”
(James 5:13-16)

A prayer of thanksgiving and confession:

Dear God, thank you so much for all that you give to us in our lives. We confess that we have sinned against you in ways that are known and unknown and we ask for your forgiveness. Guide us into a life of honesty with others, ourselves, and God. *Amen.*

All are invited to speak this prayer out loud, to give to God silently, or to write it down. Take this prayer and claim these words of radical and whole confession as your own. Ask for forgiveness from God and rest in the comfort that it is freely given by the Savior. Let this model of confession and forgiveness with God be reflected in your earthly relationships as we are called to confess our shortcomings and wrongs to one another and mend brokenness between ourselves and neighbors.

Reflection Questions:

- What have you been struggling with? This could be an internal or external struggle.
- Have you done something this week that you feel you need to apologize for?
- Think of a time when you messed up and someone gave you grace. That’s what God does for all of us when we make mistakes. Take a minute to breathe deeply and ask for forgiveness.

Step Six

We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of our character.

A devotional from Paul C., a LuMin-Austin community member and alumni:

“God created humanity in God’s own image, in the divine image God created them.... God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.”
(CEB Genesis 1:27a, 31a)

I grew up a Lutheran, a preacher’s kid, and went to worship services whenever they had worship at church. This could have been really neat but given that I experienced church at a time when my home congregation emphasized sin all the time it seemed, I basically considered myself a sinner. That’s not all bad either, but I didn’t hear or internalize deeply enough that I was created good, in God’s image and likeness, and that forgiveness in Christ is always as close as my getting things wrong and missing the mark. Yes, we are saints and sinners!

It is easy to be distressed by the violence of human leaders, by greed, nationalism, the destruction of creation and the ways we project our brokenness onto others. Can I ever do enough? Much of my recovery centers in knowing and accepting the Creator’s original blessing and goodness, first of all in myself, but also in others with whom I disagree. I pray that we can more clearly see the divine image within ourselves and within our neighbors, fully restored through God’s grace in Christ our healer.

Reflection Questions:

- What aspects of yourself are easy to see as “supremely good”? What aspects are difficult? How do these reflections change when trying to see the supreme good in others?
- What does it mean to you to be *ready* for God to remove the defects of character in yourself?
- Write down your own prayer, specific to your own moral inventory from Step Four, asking God to help you see the divine image in yourself.
- Activity: Complete a loving-kindness meditation. The loving-kindness meditation is a mindfulness practice that asks participants to wish themselves grace and goodwill and then wish that goodwill onto those around you– ones that are easy to love and ones that are more difficult. There are many versions of this out there but one example can be found here: [Greater Good in Action Loving-Kindness Meditation](#)