Lesson 2

Powerless

**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.

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom fo heaven.” (Matthew 5:3)*

**Step 1**: We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and com

pulsive 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)*

**Introduction**

In Principle 1, we realize we’re not God. We admit we are powerless to control our tendency to do the wrong thing and that our lives have become unmanageable. As soon as we take this step and admit that we are powerless, we start to change. We see that our old ways of trying to control our hurts, hang-ups, and habits didn’t work. They were buried by our denial and held on to with our false power.

Tonight we are going to focus on four actions: two things we have to *stop* doing and two things we need to *start* doing in our recoveries. We need to take these four actions to complete Principle 1.

**Four Actions**

In Lesson 1 we talked about the first action we need to take.

***1. Stop denying the pain.***

We said that our denial had at least six negative effects: It disables our feelings, wastes our energy, negates our growth, isolates us from God, alienates us from our relationships, and lengthens our pain.

You are ready to accept Principle 1 when your pain is greater than your fear. In Psalm 6:2 –3 David talks about a time when he came to the end of his emotional and physical resources: “Have mercy on me, Lord, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long?.” When David’s pain finally surpassed his fear, he was able to face his denial and feel the reality of his pain. In the same way, if you want to be rid of your pain, you must face it and go through it.

The second action we need to take is to:

***2. Stop playing God.***

You are either going to serve God or self. You can’t do both! Matthew 6:24 says, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Another term for serving “ourselves” is serving the “flesh.” Flesh is the Bible’s word for our unperfected human nature, our sin nature.

I love this illustration: If you leave the *h* off the end of flesh and reverse the remaining letters, you spell the word *self.* Flesh is the self-life. It is what we are when we are left to our own devices.

When our “self” is out of control, all attempts at control —of self or others — fail. In fact, our attempt to control ourselves and others is what got us into trouble in the first place. God needs to be the one in control.

There are two jobs: God’s and mine! We have been trying to do God’s job, and we can’t!

On the flip side, He *won’t* do our job. We need to do the footwork! We need to admit that we are not God and that our lives are unmanageable without Him. Then, when we have finally emptied ourselves, God will have room to come in and begin His healing work.

Let’s go on now to the third action we need to take:

***3. Start admitting our powerlessness.***

The lust of power is not rooted in our strengths but our weaknesses. We need to realize our human weaknesses and quit trying to do it by ourselves. We need to admit that we are powerless and turn our lives over to God. Jesus knew how difficult this is. He said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

When we keep doing things that we don’t want to do and when we fail to do the things we’ve decided we need to do, we begin to see that we do not, in fact, have the power to change that we thought we had. Life is coming into focus more clearly than ever before.

The last action we need to take is to:

***4. Start admitting that our lives have become unmanageable.***

The only reason we consider that there’s something wrong, or that we need to talk to somebody, or that we need to take this step is because we finally are able to admit that some area — or all areas — of our lives have become unmanageable!

It is with this admission that you finally realize you are out of control and are powerless to do anything on your own. When I got to this part of my recovery I shared David’s feelings that he expressed in Psalm 40:12: “For troubles without number surround me, my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs on my head, and my heart fails within me.”

Does that sound familiar? Only when your pain is greater than your fear will you be ready to honestly take the first step, admitting that you are powerless and your life is unmanageable.

Tonight our acrostic will help us to focus in on the first half of Principle

1: powerless.

**Powerless**

Our acrostic tonight demonstrates what happens when we admit we are POWERLESS. We begin to give up the following “serenity robbers”:

**P**ride **O**nly ifs **W**orry **E**scape **R**esentment **L**oneliness **E**mptiness **S**elfishness **S**eparation

The first letter in tonight’s acrostic is *P*. We start to see that we no longer are trapped by our PRIDE: “Pride brings a person low, but the lowly in spirit gain honor.” (Proverbs 29:23).

Ignorance + power + pride = a deadly mixture

Our false pride undermines our faith and it cuts us off from God and others. When God’s presence is welcome, there is no room for pride because He makes us aware of our true self.

Next we begin to lose the ONLY ifs. That’s the *O* in Powerless.

Have you ever had a case of the “only ifs”?

Only if they hadn’t walked out.

Only if I had stopped drinking.

Only if this. Only if that.

How reluctantly the mind consents to reality. But when we admit that we are powerless, we start walking in the truth, rather than living in the fantasy land of rationalization.

Luke 12:2 –3 tells us: “There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear of the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.”

The next letter in powerless is the *W*, which stands for WORRYING. And don’t tell me that worrying doesn’t do any good; I know better. The things I worry about never happen!

All worrying is a form of not trusting God enough! Instead of worrying about things that we cannot possibly do, we need to focus on what God can do. Keep a copy of the Serenity Prayer in your pocket and your heart to remind you.

By working this program and completing the steps, you can find that trust, that relationship, with the one and only Higher Power, Jesus Christ, so that the worrying begins to go away.

Matthew 6:34 tells us, “Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

The next thing that happens when we admit we are powerless is that we quit trying to ESCAPE. That’s the *E*.

Before we admitted we were powerless, we tried to escape and hide from our hurts, habits, and hang-ups by getting involved in unhealthy relationships, by abusing drugs such as alcohol, by eating or not eating, and so forth.

Trying to escape pain drains us of precious energy. When we take this first step, however, God opens *true* escape routes to show His power and grace. “But everything exposed by the light becomes visible - and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why is is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” ” (Ephesians 5:13 –14).

The *R* in powerless stands for RESENTMENTS.

If they are suppressed and allowed to fester, resentments can act like emotional cancer.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:26 –27: “‘In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”

As you continue to work the principles, you will come to understand that in letting go of your resentments, by offering your forgiveness to those who have hurt you, you are not just freeing the person who harmed you, you are freeing you!

But if we try to maintain our false power, we become isolated and alone. That’s the *L* in powerless: LONELINESS.

When you admit that you are powerless and start to face reality, you will find that you do not have to be alone.

Do you know that loneliness is a choice? In recovery and in Christ, you never have to walk alone again.

Do you know that caring for the lonely can cure loneliness? Get involved! Get involved in the church or in your neighborhood or here at Celebrate Recovery! If you become a regular here, I guarantee that you won’t be lonely.

“Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prisons as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.” (Hebrews 13:1 –2).

When you admit you are powerless you also give up another *E*, the EMPTINESS.

When you finally admit that you are truly powerless by yourself, that empty feeling deep inside —that cold wind that blows through you —will go away.

Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10). So let Him fill the emptiness inside. Tell Him how you feel. He cares!

Next you will notice that you are becoming less self-centered.

The first *S* stands for SELFISHNESS.

I have known people who have come into recovery thinking that the Lord’s Prayer was “Our Father who art in heaven ... Give me ... give me ... give me!” Luke 17:33 tells us, “Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it.” Simply said, selfishness is at the heart of most problems between people.

The last thing that we give up when we admit that we are powerless is SEPARATION.

Some people talk about “finding” God —as if He could ever be lost.

Separation from God can feel real, but it is never permanent. Remember, He seeks the lost. When we can’t find God, we need to ask ourselves, “Who moved?” I’ll give you a hint. It wasn’t God!

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, not angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38 –39).

**Wrap-Up**

The power to change only comes from God’s grace.

Are you ready to truly begin your journey of recovery? Are you ready to stop denying the pain? Are you ready to stop playing God? Are you ready to start admitting your powerlessness? To start admitting that your life has become unmanageable? If you are, share it with your group tonight.

I encourage you to start working and living this program in earnest. If we admit we are powerless, we need a power greater than ourselves to restore us. That power is your Higher Power —Jesus Christ!

Let’s close in prayer.

*Dear God, Your Word tells me that I can’t heal my hurts, hang-ups, and habits by just saying that they are not there. Help me! Parts of my life, or all of my life, are out of control. I now know that I cannot “fix” myself. It seems the harder that I try to do the right thing the more I struggle. Lord, I want to step out of my denial into the truth. I pray for You to show me the way. In Your Son’s name, Amen.*