

Heartbeats

The Official Newsletter of
Heart t' Heart

January 2009

A Twelve Step Support Group for the LDS Community

Volume 19 — Issue 1

The Twelve Steps of Heart t' Heart

1. We admitted we were powerless over compulsive/addictive behaviors--that our lives had become unmanageable. (*Mosiah 4:5; Alma 26:12*)
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. (*Mosiah 4:9; Alma 26:12*)
3. Made the decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. (*2 Ne. 10:24; Omni 1:36; Mosiah 3:19; 2 Nephi 4:34*)
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. (*Alma 15:17; Mosiah 4:2; Jacob 4:6-7; Ether 12:27*)
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. (*Mosiah 26:29; Alma 22:18*)
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. (*Helaman 3:35; 2 Nephi 31:19; Mosiah 2:20-21*)
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. (*Alma 36:18; Alma 38:8; Moroni 10:32; Mosiah 5:2; Alma 34:15-16*)
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. (*3 Nephi 12:9, 24, 44-45.*)
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. (*Mosiah 27:35; 3 Nephi 12:25; Mosiah 26:30*)
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. (*2 Nephi 4:18; 2 Nephi 10:20; Mosiah 26:30*)
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. (*2 Nephi 32:3; Alma 37:37; Helaman 10:4*)
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others still suffering from the effects of compulsive behaviors and to practice these principles in all our affairs. (*Mosiah 27:36-37; Alma 5:7; Moroni 7:3*)

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THE LITTLE BLACK COAT

It's almost three years ago now — I was shopping at one of my favourite stores and found a spacial display of black winter coats. It would only be there for two weeks. I thought I'd check it out — and to my amazement, I actually found a coat that I REALLY liked!

So much of this was a new experience for me then. First of all, it had only been a few years that I fit into clothes that were a relatively normal size. Secondly, I had never really developed a taste for what I liked or didn't like in terms of clothes - mostly because my size was so large that choice of style wasn't ever really an option. Thirdly, I had never really WANTED anything in terms of clothes. Clothes were just something to cover my nakedness - nothing more.

But on this day, three years ago something awakened in me that had been sleeping for years - a desire to feel pretty, to be feminine, to CHOOSE.

I searched through the several styles of coats - and there it was - a black, cashmere coat, with a fur trim around the hood - and it fit! -----and it cost \$299.00!!!!!! I had NEVER spent that much on a coat before. Never thought I ever would.

My husband and I had started a savings account several months before, so that when things came up we would have the money and not have to dip into credit - as has been our habit in the past. We had enough money for the coat - but wasn't spending \$299.00 (plus 14% taxes) incredibly extravagant? Could I actually have a coat like this?

I went home and discussed it with my husband, my sister, my Mother, my friends. Everyone seemed to think I should buy it. Much of the positive feedback came from the thinking that I had lost a LOT of weight, and I "deserved" it. Somehow, that just didn't feel comfortable to me. I still felt unsettled inside, so I prayed.

Somehow, even that seemed silly to me. Does God REALLY care whether I get a certain coat or not? The feelings just kept hanging around, and I wanted to know FOR CERTAIN what God would have me do. I waited.

(The Little Black Coat--cont. from p. 1)

I remember going back to the Lord about this several times. "What can I do Lord? What should I do? What would Thou have me do?"

Finally, the answer came — a BIG surprise!

A scripture started to come to my mind. At first I didn't make the connection - but one day, the Lord rehearsed it to me at a time when there was no misunderstanding.

Here's the scripture: Matthew 25:40 ". . . verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

Now, I can't explain how my understandings came together - it felt like it happened in a split second AND over several days all at the same time - but there it was - several insights into scripture I had never seen before.

1. As much as I might THINK I may have the world by the tail - sometimes - when everything is filtered away and I am left alone with God - I AM one of the least of these. NEVER had I EVER seen this before!

2. The way I am given through Christ, to treat myself is an indication of how He feels about and treats the least of these.

3. When I allow Him to minister unto me - when I live in His mercy and love, I am more filled with His mercy and love for others.

4. I bought the coat!

I found out that there is a difference between feeling I "deserve" something because *I* have reached some milestone in recovery(not true, *I* haven't reached ANY of the milestones in my recovery - the Lord has brought me to each and every one!) . . . and understanding the humility of Christ - that I don't "deserve" anything - but that He loves even "the least of these".

I found out that when I come to Him, He always patiently listens to my thoughts and feelings - and then He teaches me. This time He taught me a principle I had not understood before - an eternal principle that now applies to the way I live my life, in Him. He taught me that I can ALWAYS come to Him, that there isn't anything below or outside of, His sphere of love.

I found out, yet again, that I can "seek this Jesus" and He will come to me. That what others might consider a "petty concern", He does not. I found out that His love is boundless.

Every time I put that little black coat on I am reminded of my place in this world. I am reminded that I AM one of the least of these. I am reminded that even as "one of the least of these" my story, my concerns, my thoughts, and even my will, matters very much to God.

Since I bought that coat the Lord has taught me even more about the principles behind that purchase. I had never spent that kind of money on a coat before - for the reasons I had mentioned earlier, but also because my weight fluctuated up and down so much that there was no point in making that kind of investment. The coat still fits me today - just like it did almost three years ago. The Lord has steadied my life so that these things, and many others are now possible.

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Today, I feel my heart has much more generosity towards those I perceive to be among "the least of these". I WANT to share more of what I have with those who I now consider very much a part of my world. My understanding has expanded, and I can see that there is no room for me to look down my nose anymore - and what a burden has been lifted from my shoulders. I am among them. I am theirs and they are mine.

Something about that little black coat turned a switch in my heart, and I am ever grateful!

GOD IS GOOD!

Mary S. ☐



In the next two articles, two brothers in our fellowship share on what it would be like, conversing with the Lord as "one man converses with another."

CAPTURING FROM CLEAN HANDS, PURE HEART

A question in Clean Hands, Pure Heart goes like this:

Joseph Smith said, "It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another." Prayerfully consider and write about what you imagine your conversation with the Lord would be if you could have a private priesthood interview with him.

In response to this question, one brother wrote the following:

I think He would express a lot of interest in how I'm doing. I think He would be a real good listener. He would look me in the eye and smile a lot. He would have a friendly and loving way about Him. His love would probably overwhelm me. Of course the Spirit would be very strong. He may kiss me on the cheek. He would tell me how pleased He is with all that I am trying to do right.

With respect to anything I need to change He would reassure me that He has complete confidence in me. He would give me any advice He could on what would help me.

I feel certain that He would tell me not to be so hard on myself - but to love myself as he loves me.

We would rejoice in each other's company and I would not want the interview to end.

He would tell me what's going on with my loved ones who have passed away and reassure me that they are well, and that they miss me, that they pray for me, and that they long to be with me. He would tell how pleased they are with me.

He would tell me many, many positive things about myself - my good qualities, my faith and testimony. He would mention many people that I have loved, blessed, and served. He would tell me that Heavenly Father loves me. He may give me a priesthood blessing.

I would leave feeling enormously good about myself.

Anonymous □

CHRISTMAS WITH THE LORD

As I was thinking about Christmas and its meaning, I began to wonder what the Lord thinks about our celebration. I wondered what it would be like to talk with Him about it. I pictured us walking along a snow covered street in town, with red and green lights decorating each store, and Santa Claus images in the windows. I imagined to myself talking with the Lord about what we were seeing.

"Lord, what do you think about Christmas?"

"It's my favorite time of the year," He said. "How about you?"

"I enjoy a lot of it," I replied. "I especially love the music."

"So do I," He said. "I inspired it, you know. At least the original versions of most of the songs. It is such a joy to me that people remember my birth in song and story. It helps to anchor their souls in the eternal. That's one of the reasons this time of year is unlike any other."

I was brave enough to offer my own opinion here. "I have noticed a change in recent years, especially in a lot of school presentations. The music has gravitated more and more to non-religious music. I remember when I was in grade school coming to school a few minutes early, and we gathered around a huge Christmas tree in the hallway, and sang Christmas carols before class started. That was a special time. Now it seems the schools allow songs from Jewish and Muslim religious traditions, but exclude music that is specifically about you and your birth."

He was quiet for a moment, then He said, "Yes. It is a great sorrow to me. But I rejoice that there are still many people who remember the old songs, and even

write new ones. You heard yesterday on the radio that John Rutter has written a new Christmas Carol, based on lyrics that are centuries old.”

“Yes,” I replied. “I am glad that people are still writing new music.”

We walked on down the sidewalk. Two small children came toward us, chasing each other as they came. We stepped aside, and Jesus smiled. I ventured to ask Him another question.

“What do you think of Santa, Lord?”

“I think it is a sweet tradition to give gifts. It is an ancient tradition, and goes back to the beginning of time. There is a sweetness to it that pleases me very much. The Santa Claus or Saint Nicholas tradition is not harmful, but I think it is important to recognize that all gifts come from our Father in Heaven, as King Benjamin declared. As he said, ‘Are we not all beggars?’”

I ventured to ask further, “Do you have any concerns about how commercial Christmas has become? That is a warning we hear frequently.”

“Yes,” He answered. “It is not good to sell oneself into the bondage of debt, even for gift giving. But if people listen to the promptings of my Spirit when making their purchases, they can keep in the right spirit. It is pleasing to me that people want to bring joy to others.”

We walked a while in silence, noticing the people hurrying along the walks, and in and out of the stores carrying gaily wrapped packages of various sizes and shapes. Then we came to the city square, where a manger scene was displayed. We stood, contemplating the scene for a few moments.

“How do you feel about how your birth is remembered, Lord,” I asked. “For example, we picture it in winter, yet we know through revelation that it was in the spring.”

“It pleases me greatly that it is remembered so widely, so fondly,” He replied. “It doesn't matter that tradition has forgotten the details of what time of year it was. Remembering and rejoicing in the gift that the Father gave all of us is the important thing.”

I was surprised at His words. “Why do you include yourself in the gift of the Father?” I asked. “I have always thought the gift was from you and the Father to the rest of us.”

At this, He looked at me and smiled. “When you give a gift, how do you feel, watching someone’s delight at what you have given them?”

“I enjoy it a lot,” I answered. “It’s one of the most joyful experiences in life. But your gift was given at such great cost, Lord. Even at the price of your own blood, your own suffering, your own life.”

“Yes,” He answered slowly. “It was a great price. But it also blessed my life too. Do you recall what I said to the Nephites, that they should become perfect, even as I and their Father in Heaven, were perfect?”

“Yes,” I said. “I have noticed that your words were different than how you said that in Jerusalem. There you only mentioned the Father as being perfect.”

“That is because my sacrifice was an essential part of my spiritual journey. True, it was essential for all mankind, for their salvation. But also, I needed to make that sacrifice in order to become all that our Father intended me to become. My sacrifice was also a gift from the Father to me. Do you see that?”

Tears filled my eyes as I contemplated the vastness of the Father’s plan, and how much He cares for all of us. “Thank you for what you did, Lord,” I said. “I know we think of your sacrifice more at Easter than at Christmas, but they are inseparable, aren't they.”

“Yes, they are,” He replied. “I am so glad you remember. I was not just the baby in the manger, but also the Savior in the garden and on the cross. You will always remember that, won't you?”

“Yes, Lord. I will always remember. That is why we have the Sacrament, isn't it.”

“Yes, it is,” He said.

I looked once more at the manger scene, and saw behind it the cross on Calvary’s hill. I turned to the Savior and found myself at once in His arms, so safe and secure. Then we turned and began to walk toward home through the gently falling snow.

Phil H. □



JUST HOW “LITTLE” A “LITTLE CHILD” I MUST BECOME

Become as a little child—to me that phrase is translated into this reality from God’s words to my heart:

“Trust me enough to lay down and become an infant so young that you can not even crawl to follow me. All you can do is lay on your back, 100% helpless with out me and cry out to me. Trust me that much. Trust me that I will come and pick you up and comfort you and carry you on my arms, on my shoulders back to our Heavenly Father and Mother, back to our Heavenly Home. Trust me that I will clean up the messes you make.

“Trust me that I will teach you to walk when the time is appropriate. Trust me that I will always be with you, holding your hand every second. Don’t think this life is a time to walk on your own. That stage, at least for you, is in the eternal future. For now, be this needy, this dependent on me.

I will be your Savior. I will be your legs and your eyes and ears. I will bring you safely Home. I will be your Home away from Home.

“I will be your Savior. I will be your legs and your eyes and ears. I will bring you safely Home. I will be your Home away from Home.

“Cleave to me as I long to have you cleave to me. Snuggle into my bosom. I will cover you in the robes of my righteousness. You can peek out from within my robes.

“I am the one Nephi trusted in, despite his weaknesses—and I am the One that you can trust in 100%.

“I know you’re very short on right-thinking, right-feeling, right-doing, but I have enough energy and vision to share all you need. Just settle into my heart and mind and let me give you the gift of myself. Let me be your Way, your Truth and your Life. Give up seeking

your own way, your own truth and your own life outside of me.

“Return to me and to the devotion to me that you felt and displayed before this world began.”

Colleen H. □



KNOWING GOD’S WILL

I was writing to someone this morning about seeking to know God's will and thought it might be good to share this in the Forum. These are just my own thoughts, so if they don't ring true for you, that's okay. I can only share from my own experience.

I think knowing what God's will is, is the most difficult thing about this journey! How do I know the will of God? I struggle to know my own will!

The only thing I know is to develop a relationship with Him, as I do in the capturing, and then trust that through listening as best I can to the spiritual feelings I have, following those feelings is following His will for me. If something feels true, I trust I'm following the Lord's will. If something I do is all that I can honestly do, I trust that is His will for me, too. After all, He never asks us to run faster than we are able and He values truth.

That's the best I can do at describing what I feel when I believe I'm following the Lord's will for me. Mostly, I think it is paying careful attention to what I feel is true, deep in my gut, while praying to sense His presence with me.

It's sometimes quite elusive. I think I am going to make mistakes as I try to sense what His will is, that I may very well confuse personal feelings with His will, but as long as I am actively, fervently seeking Him with great desire, He won't let me stray too far from His side.

God is good! Because He sees the true desires of my heart to know Him, I think I don't have to worry too much how I can ever hope to know His will for me. I think He will make His will known to me because He wants me to hear Him.

PegW. □



EVEN MY RECOVERY CAN'T BE DONE WITHOUT GOD

For what it's worth, the progress I have been having lately has come at the expense of doing everything perfectly regarding recovery. I do try to engage in some recovery work daily, but I am not always successful. I do try to capture and study the scriptures daily, but I am not always successful. I try to avoid the negative and despairing thoughts and actions that lead to my acting out, but I am not always successful. Nonetheless, I can say with a straight, sincere, and not-self-deceptive (I think) face that I am progressing.

The problem for me is that I had been thinking that I had to earn my recovery. If I did all the things I was supposed to do, then God had to give me recovery. As a result, I tried to do everything every day. I got frustrated (and frightened) if I wasn't able to do any one thing, because that weakness was like a chink in my armor, an Achilles heel. For that matter, even if I did do everything, I still felt my addiction raging around me. I was white-knuckling it to both do my recovery work and, after that, to avoid acting out. My recovery wasn't bringing me peace; it was making me more stressed than ever. This didn't help.

It meant realizing that I can do nothing without God, including (especially) recover.

Eventually, I realized that I wasn't able to be perfect, including in my recovery. I wasn't going to be able to capture daily or to attend every meeting. With that realization came the additional realization that it wasn't necessary. God would meet me where I was, at the level of devotion I could attain. I finally began to realize what surrendering to the Lord meant: for me, it meant surrendering the notion that I would be able to live up to some arbitrary (or non-arbitrary) set of standards without God. It meant realizing that I can do nothing without God, including (especially) recover.

I don't know if this is helpful for you, but it is what I have come to lately. This past year, in many ways, has been a series of personal recovery setbacks and I can see that they often stemmed from an anger at God for giving me an impossible task, for abandoning me to addiction, for not recognizing my efforts, and for not taking the

addiction away when I had sincerely asked. All my life I thought of myself as loving God, but this past year I was mostly angry at Him. It has only been since I convinced myself that progress was impossible without Him, that I learned to approach Him in a manner that worked.

John C. □

SOME SHARING ON FOURTH STEP INVENTORY

As I do this fourth step inventory, I recognize my faults and sins. I'm having quite an interesting experience with this process. I'm mostly aware of my codependency in relation to how much I seek the opinions and attention of other people. The "confession" part of this process is easy for me especially if I can talk to another person in the fellowship. Much of my recovery work in the past has included someone who is right there with me on a day to day or week to week basis. However, this time around I'm finding myself being invited over and over to continue in this work whether or not there is another person listening or encouraging me forward. It is a new feeling. It's like the Lord is asking me to search my heart and ask myself whether or not I will continue in this work even when there is no encouragement or feedback when I confess. Will I be still and trust Him that putting this on the forum is sufficient public confession and will I let His encouragement and counsel be enough?

I'm not sure that I am. Nevertheless, I know this one thing. There is no other name whereby salvation comes. I need my Savior to deliver me from my sins and transgressions. I know that I don't have to be perfect for this to occur. I'm grateful for His willingness to be so long-suffering with me. The atonement is about His sacrifice for me in Gethsemane, but for me the deeper truth is that I can have the at-one-ment with Him that He had with Father. I know that I can know Him as I seek His spirit and I let His thoughts become my thoughts and His will my will. It isn't always easy.

I'm really struggling with this question and my answer. I'm not sure why. I love the Lord, but I am struggling to let myself be at-one with Him. The world is constantly tempting me to turn away from Him. I always come back because I do know I need Him.

Colleen B. □



December GSB Contributions

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Online Meetings

To attend one of the online meetings go to:
<http://www.heart-t-heart2.org/chat>.
(Note: New address)

All are welcome to attend. If this is your first time, review the information on the regular Heart t' Heart webpage: <http://www.heart-t-heart.org>.

OL-04 - Sunday through Friday: Every morning, 6:30 a.m. - 7:30 a.m. General Focus (MST).

OL-02 - Tuesday, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Mountain Time Zone (USA). General Focus, Book Study: HDDMFB. Open Sharing.

OL-03 - Saturday, 7:00 - 8:30 a.m. Mountain Time Zone (USA). General Focus, Book Study: HDDMFB. Open Sharing.

Phone Meetings

Sunday-4:00 pm, MDT
Wednesday-7:00 pm, MDT
(See website for details)

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We encourage reader contributions to Heartbeats. Ideas for articles:

- 1 In-depth study/analysis of principles found in Steps or Traditions
- 2 Personal experiences with the Steps, Traditions, Tools – how they work in your life
- 3 Capturing from the scriptures, *Big Book* or *He Did Deliver Me From Bondage*
- 4 Open sharing with positive recovery messages
- 5 Program from the Prophets – quotations from modern prophets with a “recovery” message
- 6 Short quotes, thoughts or one-liners

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