**Step 3: Learning to Trust God**

Deciding can be challenging, can't it? Sometimes, the most straightforward choices are the hardest to make. For example, you are figuring out where to have dinner. There are many choices—Chinese food, comfort food, breakfast, hamburgers, chicken, Italian food, or Mexican food. Then, once you decide what kind of food you want, you must decide which restaurant you want to go to. Should we go to David's Burgers, Freddy's, or Five Guys? Do you want to visit Santo Coyote, Las Palmas, or Cactus Jacks? IHOP, Cracker Barrel, or Littlefield’s? Popeyes or Chick-fil-A? So many decisions!

All this talk about food has made me hungry. Is there anyone here tonight whose birthday is today? (Give gift card.) Is anyone here who is celebrating their sobriety birthday today? (Give gift card.) Have some dinner after Forever Free. Maybe Marsha and I will see you there!

Decisions like choosing a restaurant are hard enough, but buying a car or a house is super tricky, which reminds me of my **mom**. Decisions were almost impossible for my mother. My **dad** was not nearly as indecisive, but my mom never allowed him to make quick decisions. Take buying a car, for example. It took Mom and Dad over two years to get the deal and the car that mom wanted. They literally went to look for cars almost every weekend for TWO YEARS! Car salespeople hated her because they would spend hours working on a deal, and then she would leave after several hours of trying to satisfy her. Finally, Mom and Dad drove home with a brand new 1974 Chrysler New Yorker that looked a lot like this **baby** right here.

If you think buying a car was hard, buying a house took almost 20 years for them to pull the trigger. We would look for houses a couple of times per month. They started house hunting a couple of years before I was born and finally bought a **house** when I was 18 years old, after all of us kids moved out! Decisions were hard for my mom!

Some of you struggle with making decisions, especially significantly life-altering ones. You might even relate to my mom. However, daily decisions are just part of life, especially in recovery.

Step 3 is a turning point in the lives of those in recovery. We decide to turn our lives and our wills over to the only Higher Power, Jesus Christ. In this step, you take action and step out in faith. You give up the illusion that you have control of your life and give it to God. You remove yourself from the equation and allow God to direct your every step. The most important decision of your life is made in this crucial step: You put your **faith** in God.

To decide to turn your life and will over to the care of God is to put your **faith** in Him. Faith is belief, trust, and loyalty to God*.* Having faith is havingcomplete trust. Having faith and complete trust is a tall order for many of you. For many, your belief and trust in others has been broken. You have been hurt deeply by those who should have cared for and nurtured you. For others you, yourself, have not been trustworthy, so having faith in anyone else is very difficult. Listen to me… I understand how you feel. Faith and trust were two attributes I did not possess for many years. That is, until I met Jesus. **I learned to trust in God**.

Step 3 is about **learning to trust God.** Tonight, I will share the process with you. Inside your bulletin, you'll find this outline (see outline). Make sure you take good notes.

Pastor John Baker, the founder of Celebrate Recovery, loved acrostics. In honor of him, tonight’s acrostic is TRUST.

The T stands for **turn it over**. The first step in trusting God is to decide to give it all to Him. Give Him your hurts, your past, your insecurities, your addictions, your relapses, your divorce, your pain, your suffering, your failures, your doubts, and your lies. Give Him all the bad stuff in your life!

And give Him the good stuff, too. Give Him your hopes, your dreams, your desires, your plans, your marriage, your kids, your finances, your job. EVERYTHING! Just say, “God, I give it all to You: the good, the bad, and everything in between. God, I need you to take control of every aspect of my life. I can’t handle it anymore. My way isn't working. Your will, not mine, be done!" 1 Peter 5:7*Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.* God cares for you, so turn it all over to Him!

The R in trust stands for **relying on God**. Develop God-reliance, not self-reliance. Proverbs 3:5- 6:"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Part of learning to rely on God is **remembering what it was like** when you did things your way rather than His way. I call that playing the tape. When you think about acting out, **play the tape**. When you start believing you don't need Forever Free anymore, **play the tape**. When you begin to think that your decision-making without God is solid and sound, **play the tape**.

It never turns out well when you stray from God's ways and follow yours. Listen to the words of 2 Peter chapter two:

2 Peter 2:20-22*And when people escape from the wickedness of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then get tangled up and enslaved by sin again, they are worse off than before. It would be better if they had never known the way to righteousness than to know it and then reject the command they were given to live a holy life.**They prove the truth of this proverb: “A dog returns to its vomit.” And another says, “A washed pig returns to the mud.” (NLT)*

This passage describes how, when people stray away after experiencing the hope they found in Jesus, their lives crumble and are worse than ever before. When the addict or alcoholic relapses, they are soon worse off in their addiction than they were when they quit. It's as if they never stopped using. This is why staying involved in your recovery and church is so critical.

The chances of significantly relapsing back into old destructive behaviors diminish when you ditch your self-reliance and develop God-reliance.

Next, **unplug from unhealthy influences**. That's the U in trust. Learning to trust God requires changes in your life. You must disconnect from or even remove people or activities that interfere with your relationship with God. That can include music you listen to, hobbies, places you go, and the people you spend time with. 1 Corinthians 15:33*: "Do not be deceived: Bad company ruins good morals."*

The old adage "birds of a feather flock together" is quite true. If you want to learn more about God and learn to trust Him, spend time with people who live for Him and whose lives reflect they belong to God. Worldly people look like the world.

1 John 2:15*: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

Which brings us to the S in Trust. Trusting God requires you to surrender your life and your **will to Him**. Step three is where you decide that you’ve had enough and where you commit to surrendering **it all** to God. James 4:7-8*: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."*

I want you to understand that surrendering everything to God is not instantaneous. It doesn’t just magically and instantly happen. It’s an ongoing process. In Step 3, you make the decision.

Let me give you an example I read from a book on recovery titled *A Hunger for Healing:*

Deciding to do something is only the first part of doing it. For example, if I choose to buy a house, I still need to buy the house, and I certainly can't move in this afternoon. There are a series of things I must do after deciding to buy a house before I have actually bought it. I have to find a house, get a realtor, a lawyer, a banker, check taxes, check a certificate of title, and do all kinds of other things. Then, finally, at the end of the process, I bought the house, and I'm living in it. In Step 3, if you decide to turn your will and life over to God, you're ***deciding***. You're committing to "buying the house." You're committed to turning your life and your will over to God. But you still need to **complete the transaction** when you say the words of commitment.

Complete surrender of your life and your will… *buying the house*… happens as you work steps four through twelve. During the rest of the steps, you turn your **whole** life over to God—the past, the present, and the future. Your relationship with God grows on an ongoing basis, as does your ability to completely surrender your life and will. Step 3 is where this critical ***decision*** is made.

The Last T in Trust stands for **talk to God**. This is one of the most critical steps in learning to trust God. Another word for talking to God is prayer. Prayer is a direct form of communicating with God. Relationships grow when there is ongoing communication. Psalm 55:17*: "Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice. (NKJV)"*

I've never seen a healthy marriage where two people don't talk with one another consistently. In fact, I see the opposite. Healthy marriages are based on trust, and trust is rooted in healthy, consistent communication. When communication breaks down, so does trust.

The same can be said about your relationship with God. If you pray at least two or three times per day, your trust in Him will stay the same. Relationships are established by healthy, consistent communication. As the relationship grows, trust will grow, too.

I want to pause and remind you of the importance of listening to God, which we call **meditation**. Prayer is talking to God; meditation is listening to Him. After you have spent some time in prayer, take some time to listen. When I pray, God speaks to me through the Holy Spirit. Sometimes I get an answer right away, and sometimes I don't. Psalm 37:7 instructs us to *Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.* Learning to trust God also means learning to listen for His answer patiently.

Another way God communicates with you is through His word, the Bible. Read about Him to get to know Him better, and your confidence in His **faithfulness** will grow. The answers to life's questions can be found in **this book** (Hold Up Bible).

I know I’ve shared this several times in the past, but a great way to get in the habit of reading the Bible is to get an **annual Bible**. You can also get a translation of the Bible that you can understand, like the NIV, NLT, or even the Message. Get a **recovery bible**, like the Life Recovery Bible, which you can get at our Resource Table. If you hate reading, start by reading 5 minutes a day. The point is, get to know Jesus by reading all about Him and you will learn to trust God!

So, let’s recap what we’ve learned tonight about learning to trust God:

* First, you decide to **turn everything over** to God. You realize your way is the wrong way, and something has to give, so you give it to God.
* Next, you **rely on God**. You begin to trust the Lord with all your heart and stop relying on your own understanding. You submit to Him in all of your ways, and he helps you go down the right path. You develop **God-reliance** rather than **self-reliance**.
* Then, you **unplug from unhealthy influences.** You start spending time with people in recovery rather than people engaged in unhealthy addictions and compulsions. You unplug from people, places, and things that have been a stumbling block and find new healthy influences in your life.
* You decide to **surrender your life and your will** to God. Your relationship with God begins to grow when you do so. Over the course of the fourth through the twelfth steps, this decision will result in a deep reliance, faith, and trust in God. This is truly the beginning of a life change!
* Lastly, you start the communication process…. by **talking to God.** You begin tapping into an unending river of hope by praying and listening to Him, coupled with Bible reading. **Prayer changes everything**!

Step 3 is where you take action. You make a **decision**. You say, “This isn’t working anymore. I can no longer handle my life as it is. Something has to change." Then, you begin the change process by **turning**, which is **giving** your **life** and your **will** over to the care of God. You're saying, "God! Here's my stuff (hands out), and here's my life (hands up)! I’m choosing to trust You with it all!”

Learning to trust God requires you to make a decision. A decision that you're sick and tired of the old way and willing to try a new way. If you are tired of doing things the old way, your way, I want you to stand up. **Come on now!** You didn't show up tonight because everything is all good in your life. You're here because you're broken, so stand up if you want change!

Now, I’m going to ask you to make a declaration. A declaration that you will start trusting God with your life and your will. In fact, let’s all make this declaration together.

So here we go… Please repeat after me…. **God, I trust you! With my life. And my will!** Let’s say it again, but as loud as you can! **God, I trust you! With my life and my will! Because you’re a God of your word!**

**Leader’s Question:**

* Have you decided to turn your life and will over to God?
* Do you trust Him?