

THE **LIFE**  
**RECOVERY**<sup>®</sup>

— WORKBOOK FOR —

*Divorce*

A Bible-Centered  
Approach for Taking  
Your Life Back

STEPHEN ARTERBURN  
& DAVID STOOP

# THE LIFE RECOVERY<sup>®</sup>

— WORKBOOK FOR —

## *Divorce*

A Bible-Centered  
Approach for Taking  
Your Life Back

STEPHEN ARTERBURN  
& DAVID STOOP



Tyndale House Publishers  
Carol Stream, Illinois

Visit Tyndale online at [www.tyndale.com](http://www.tyndale.com).

*TYNDALE*, Tyndale's quill logo, and *Life Recovery* are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers.

*The Big Book* is a registered trademark of A.A. World Services, Inc.

*The Life Recovery Workbook for Divorce: A Bible-Centered Approach for Taking Your Life Back*

Copyright © 2020 by Stephen Arterburn and David Stoop. All rights reserved.

Cover photograph of yellow abstract copyright © javarman/Depositphotos.com. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Dan Farrell

Edited by Ellen Richard Vosburg

The author is represented by the literary agency of Alive Literary Agency, 7680 Goddard Street, Suite 200, Colorado Springs, CO 80920, [www.aliveliterary.com](http://www.aliveliterary.com).

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the *Holy Bible*, King James Version.

The brief excerpts from Alcoholics Anonymous and the Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that AAWS has reviewed or approved the contents of this publication, or that AAWS necessarily agrees with the views expressed herein. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only—use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, or in any other non-A.A. context, does not imply otherwise. Additionally, while A.A. is a spiritual program, A.A. is not a religious program. Thus, A.A. is not affiliated or allied with any sect, denomination, or specific religious belief.

The profiles in this workbook are composite characteristics of persons who have had the courage to work the steps on various issues in their lives and on their own addictive behaviors. Names, ages, and situations have been modified to protect their anonymity.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at [csresponse@tyndale.com](mailto:csresponse@tyndale.com), or call 1-800-323-9400.

ISBN 978-1-4964-4214-7

Printed in the United States of America

26 25 24 23 22 21 20  
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*This workbook is dedicated to every fellow struggler who has had the courage to face the truth about themselves, the humility to abandon their flawed attempts at living, and the willingness to find God's truth and live accordingly.*



# CONTENTS

The Twelve Steps	vi
Introduction	vii

STEP ONE	1
STEP TWO	10
STEP THREE	18
STEP FOUR	27
STEP FIVE	38
STEP SIX	47
STEP SEVEN	56
STEP EIGHT	65
STEP NINE	74
STEP TEN	83
STEP ELEVEN	93
STEP TWELVE	101

Concluding Thoughts	113
Scripture Index	115

## The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our problems and that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry it 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 our affairs.

The Twelve Steps used in *The Life Recovery Workbook* have been adapted with permission from the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

# INTRODUCTION

*He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds. . . .  
The LORD's delight is in those who fear him, those who put  
their hope in his unfailing love. (Psalm 147:3, 11)*

This workbook is about transformation from the pain and betrayal of divorce to the restoration of life. It's about walking humbly, righteously, and mercifully with God while accepting his will. Often amid our pain, we oppose God, argue with him, plead with him for healing, and methodically cut other people out of our lives. We end up separated from God and from the people who care for us. We feel abandoned by all. The Twelve Steps are a path of finding that humble walk that leads us out of the self-centered living that led to our divorce to acceptance and a closer relationship with God.

We will be examining the Twelve Steps individually to consider the challenging spiritual lessons that allow us to move beyond our compulsions, addictions, and pains. Each step has a new task for us in our recovery, but none of the steps stand alone. To effectively move through our bondage to acceptance, we will work the steps in order. Each step prepares us for the next one, as we develop a greater sense of openness to God's plan and purpose in our lives.

The path of recovery involves hard and sometimes painful work. But it is worth the effort. We see the Twelve Steps as a path and a process that make us better disciples and more committed followers of Jesus Christ. Honesty, humility, and courage



## LIFE RECOVERY: DIVORCE

are vital components of faith that can move us back to a vibrant way of living as a follower of Jesus. Welcome to the journey.

### STARTING AND LEADING A GROUP

Recovery is best experienced in the context of a group. Two or more willing people can form a powerful bond as they study and work these steps together. With little effort on your part, your struggles, problems, and hang-ups become a blessing to the group. As you open up, everyone else will feel more free to share from their own lives.

Being the leader of a group is actually quite simple. You can find many books on how to lead a small group, but here's a simple and effective way to do it:

1. Find a location in your home, a church, a workplace, or a school, and obtain permission (if necessary) to form the group.
2. Put up a few flyers announcing the time and place, calling it a divorce support group, recovery group, or Twelve Step group.
3. Show up early, arrange the chairs, make some coffee, and welcome people as they arrive.
4. Start when you say you will start by opening in prayer and by reading the Twelve Steps and the correlating Scriptures.
5. Ask if anyone would like to share for three or four minutes. Don't allow others to "fix" the speaker, and if he or she goes on too long, be sure to enforce the time limit.
6. Make sure everyone has a copy of the workbook. Ask them to study Step One for discussion at the next meeting.
7. End when you say you will end by reading the Lord's Prayer.

## INTRODUCTION

8. Be sure that everyone knows where to get a workbook and a *Life Recovery Bible*, if they don't already have one.
9. E-mail us—Stephen Arterburn at [sarterburn@newlife.com](mailto:sarterburn@newlife.com); David Stoop at [drstoop@cox.net](mailto:drstoop@cox.net)—and tell us how it's going.
10. Feel good that you are allowing God to use you.

Please remember that working the steps is an art, not a formula. Most often, it is an individualized process.

God be with you on this journey. We pray that you will find healing, serenity, and peace of mind.





# STEP 1

## PROFILE

Jim thought he had marriage figured out. He would love his wife, Linda; she would respect him; and they would live happily ever after. Jim struggled to respect women because his mother had cruelly abused him throughout his childhood, hurting him one day but treating him like a prince the next. So in his marriage, Jim just kept on showing love by taking care of everything and controlling everything. Thus, he pushed Linda away, and she resisted his control at every level. But he just kept on “loving” her as he had always done, believing that one day she would come around.

Nothing Linda said or did could alter Jim’s course of action. He felt a shift in their marriage, but it was not a good shift. It entered into a new level of separation. Still nothing caused him to rethink what he was doing and how he was treating her.

One day reality showed up at the front door in the form of a process server giving him the notice that Linda was divorcing him. The divorce papers were just the beginning of the nightmare he never imagined. Linda was not just divorcing him; she also informed him that she was leaving him for a mutual acquaintance. Later, he would discover that they had been having an affair for a while.

The final blow was when he discovered that Linda was trying to turn their two daughters against him. Thankfully, her

## LIFE RECOVERY: DIVORCE

efforts did not work. Jim and Linda's daughters knew their mother had done something wrong. They hated their dad's simplistic love/respect world, and they also knew it had driven a wedge between him and their mother. But none of what he did or who he was justified what their mother had done. They accepted and loved their mother in her brokenness, but they were still closely connected with their father. So they set up a meeting to help him.

At their meeting, Jim's daughters told him that his relationships had been failing for decades because he was stuck in a destructive pattern. His harping on the division between love and respect alienated others. His whole life had been destroyed, but he was still talking and lecturing, rather than feeling and grieving and working through his emotions. He was stuck and had no idea he was emotionally dead.

Jim's arrogance led him to believe that he was still in control and that he could figure out whatever he needed to do to "keep moving forward." Without his daughters, he would have probably stayed on that same track and either lived a lonely, isolated life or broken down emotionally and spiritually one day. Fortunately, Jim did not waste another year of his life.

His daughters shared what they saw in him: narcissism, stubborn resistance, arrogance, and emotional detachment. They convinced him that he needed to surrender all that he had been focused on. They showed him that he had never allowed God to take control of his life. Finally, they convinced him that for anything good or great to happen in his life, he had to admit that he did not have the ability within himself alone to recover from this horrible divorce. He finally admitted that he was powerless and that relying on his own power had been the foundation of his unmanageable life. It was the end of Jim's old way of living and the beginning of his Life Recovery journey.

**STEP ONE**

*We admitted that we were powerless over our problems and that our lives had become unmanageable.*

Many people think that the Twelve Steps are only good for those who have an addiction. But they are for anybody who realizes that their life is unmanageable. Divorce is evidence of an unmanageable life. If our lives were totally manageable, we would not be engaging in behaviors and attitudes that prevent us from having a healthy and sustainable relationship with our spouse. Habits and behaviors that destroy our relationships with others are signs of “life unmanageability.” When we finally realize we are powerless to solve our own problems, we can begin to move toward healing.

Admitting we are powerless means that we honestly acknowledge that we need someone other than ourselves to be in control and empower us to alter our course. In the process, we discover that we are powerless but not helpless. We have the ability to ask for help. We have the ability to stop doing what has caused us misery. We have the power to see the reality of our lives. We have the power to come out of hiding. Even though we are powerless over our problems, we can understand the results of our choices and actions that led to our problems. At this point, we know that we have to change something.

Our lives can get better, but it will require us to stop what we are currently doing and make changes. This is a sign of strength and experience, not weakness. A football team that is losing at halftime has the option to try to win with a different strategy in the second half. Or they could just continue with the same losing strategy, hoping to wear down the other team. We have choices, and most of us who go through a divorce have made many poor choices because we are powerless to make good choices on our own.

## LIFE RECOVERY: DIVORCE

Realizing our powerlessness begins our journey to recovery and finding restoration for our broken lives. We no longer have to use self-effort as the means for our change. We admit that we cannot become good enough, strong enough, or wise enough to lead ourselves to a better life. Self-effort and self-will are not God's will. God wants us to rely on him and his will, and we cannot do that until we give up on ourselves as the source of all good things to come. God is the true source. We will not make room for God until we do what we have done in Step One, but it is not easy.

The Bible gives us this perspective on our own efforts: "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't" (Romans 7:18). This is a tough word to hear, but this was written by the apostle Paul, who lived for Christ, was tortured for Christ, and died for Christ. If Paul was able to say that he did not have what it takes in him to do the right thing, it should not be so difficult for us to admit that limitation also. He had seen the light and talked to Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19), and he still did not have the power to do what he knew was right. Paul knew he needed the power of God to live for God. But before he got to that knowledge, he had to admit to an astounding limitation. He was powerless on his own.

For recovery to begin, we must admit we do not have power over ourselves or others. We need help. We must start at "I can't do this on my own" to begin the journey through the Twelve Steps. When we admit we are powerless, we come alongside many others who have admitted the same thing before us. Now our lives can open up before us with new possibilities.

# QUESTIONS FOR STEP ONE

## **Trapped** *Genesis 16:1-15*

1. How is my experience of powerlessness similar to Hagar's? How is it different? How have I tried to escape from the pain related to my divorce?

---

---

---

---

2. What has been my experience of anger in my struggle? What scares me about my anger?

---

---

---

---

3. How have I experienced sadness related to my divorce? What scares me about my sadness?

---

---

---

---

4. What are some of my fears about facing my issues?

---

---

---

---



**LIFE RECOVERY: DIVORCE**

5. Where can I see God in this process right now?

---

---

---

**All Is Darkness** *Job 6:2-13*

1. Job is very clear about the pain he is feeling. Describe the pain you're experiencing because of your divorce.

---

---

---

2. In what ways have I felt totally powerless in the divorce?

---

---

---

3. How have I tried to be faithful to God in the midst of the divorce?

---

---

---

4. How can Job's experience help me understand my experience of powerlessness?

---

---

---

**Worn Out from Sobbing** *Psalms 6:1-10*

1. How does my sadness affect my relationships?

---

---

---

2. In what ways have others misunderstood my feelings?

---

---

---

3. David seems to project his anger onto God. That's why we need to get comfortable expressing our anger in relationships, especially our relationship with God. Anger can be a protest. How have I brought my protest into a relationship?

---

---

---

4. Who in my circle of friends, pastors, or family members would be able to help me restore my confidence in God?

---

---

---

**Breaking the Cycle** *Ecclesiastes 1:1-18*

1. How have I tried to break the cycle of my pain?

---

---

---

**LIFE RECOVERY: DIVORCE**

2. What strategies have I relied on when I've tried to break the old patterns of behavior?

---

---

---

3. What prevents me from letting go of my own control and declaring that I am powerless?

---

---

---

**Like Little Children** *Mark 10:13-16*

1. When I feel powerless, do I feel like a little child? How does that feel?

---

---

---

2. When do I feel most cared for?

---

---

---

3. How does being childlike help me depend on God?

---

---

---

**The Paradox of Powerlessness** 2 Corinthians 4:7-10

1. Recall some examples of when you have accepted your own powerlessness and embraced God's powerfulness. Describe them here.

---

---

---

2. How do I respond to trouble?

---

---

---

3. How do I respond to being perplexed?

---

---

---

4. What do I do when it feels like God has abandoned me?

---

---

---

*There is great power in realizing  
that we are powerless.*