

Journey To



# LIFE

"You have shown me the path of life."  
Psalms 16:11



12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600  
www.adventistrecovery.org  
Email: nadhm@nadadventist.org

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## Editorial Perspective

The recent mass shooting (June 12, 2016), that left 49 dead and 53 wounded in Orlando at a "gay" night club in Orlando, Florida, is apparently the work of a single gunman with a high-powered assault rifle and a pistol. The shooter, Omar Mateen, pledged allegiance to ISIS, the so-called Islamic State. ISIS is a fundamentalist, ultraconservative terrorist group of Muslims. William McCants, director of the Project on US Relations With the Islamic World at the Brookings Institution, informs us that ISIS "sees itself as more faithful to scripture than other Muslims, and they've got religious scholars in their ranks who are able to make finely crafted arguments to that end." This all means that the terrorist leaders of ISIS are religiously motivated. They and their followers believe they are justified in killing people who represent the Western world's lifestyle. In addition to Mateen's religious and political beliefs, he often expressed hostility toward LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered) people and other minorities. Therefore this horrific shooting is an act of terrorism and a hate crime.

Addiction to power and control, which impacts the thinking and behavior of terrorists,

can also affect the thoughts and actions of many sincere, ultraconservative Christians. One example is the belief and teaching that victims of mass shootings, due to their culture and lifestyle, are condemned by God and receive God's judgment on them as terrible "sinners." However, Jesus clearly tells us that the Galileans who were murdered in the temple by Pilate, and the 18 people who died in Siloam when a tower fell on them, were no worse sinners than other people living in Galilee and Jerusalem (see Luke 13:1-5).

In this issue of the Journey to Life, you will find a feature article, written by Dr. David Sedlacek, Andrews University Seminary professor, which confronts "toxic faith" and "religious addiction." The explanation, reality, and methods for dealing with these problems, you will find informative and helpful.

As I conclude this editorial, I want you to know that my desire is that you have a life free from religious addiction. Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, can and will make this possible.

Ray Nelson, MDiv, MSPH  
adventistrecovery@gmail.com

### ARMin Mission and Vision

#### Our Mission:

Promote healing and freedom from harmful practices by providing resources and training to facilitate recovery.

#### Our Vision:

Healthy people growing in a relationship with Christ by using principles of God's Word and choosing healthful practices aimed at finding freedom from harmful habits and addictive behaviors.

#### Potential Objectives/Goals:

- Promote healing (individually and corporately) utilizing the healthy, balanced principles of God's Word
- Provide resources to churches and individuals in order to raise awareness and educate regarding the root of dysfunctions that create disunity within individuals, families, churches and communities through unresolved trials, troubles and tragedies
- Train individuals to facilitate ongoing support groups and mentoring in a safe, nurturing environment

We believe that as we heal from life's trials, troubles and tragedies, we become inspired and committed to reach out to others as a result of gratitude for our personal healing; to care for others because our lives are so enriched by Christ's forgiveness; and the blessing of the freedom we have experienced due to His unending grace and mercy.

# The Healing Value of the 12 STEPS

## Step 3—

“Made a decision to our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.”

### Biblical Comparison

“O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will but as You will.”

—Matthew 26:39

Steps to Christ Chapter  
The Sinner’s Need for Christ

## Upcoming Events

Recovery Ministry Training at Health Summit

September 28 – October 2, 2016  
Camp Hope, British Columbia, Canada  
<http://www.nadhealthsummit.com/>



## 12 STEPS to Recovery STEP #3 Testimony

Step 3 is an action step in which the addicted person decides to turn their will and their life over to the care of God. There is no need to be afraid or discouraged, because God promises to provide strength and help as He holds them with His victorious right hand (see Isaiah 41:10).

The first three steps are recognized as the spiritual foundation of the 12 Steps to recovery. This recovery model was put into successfully put into practice by Bill W, and Dr. Bob beginning in 1935. This became the message they carried to other alcoholics in the hospital and group meetings. Within the next two years, forty alcoholics like themselves “recovered from this seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.”

The 12 Steps are a logical sequence of fundamentals inspired by the Holy Scriptures and cross referenced with spiritual principles.

The visual image of the 12 Steps is portrayed in the Alcoholics Anonymous’ Big Book as an ‘archway to freedom’ which we travel from bondage to recovery. The 12 Steps follow a reasonable progression for spiritual growth, mental and emotional healing.

By God’s grace we can become willing and surrender our lives to His care. As freedom is gained, we will be better able to do His will.

*Raye Scott, 12-Step Recovery Coach*

### The Third Step Prayer

*from page 63 of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*

God, I offer myself to Thee-  
To build with me  
and to do with me as Thou wilt.  
Relieve me of the bondage of self,  
that I may better do Thy will.  
Take away my difficulties,  
that victory over them may bear witness  
to those I would help of Thy Power,  
Thy Love, and Thy Way of life.  
May I do Thy will always!

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I was the “good son.” I did what I was told to the best of my ability. Needless to say, I was angry when my little brother asked and received his share of the inheritance. Soon he was gone – apparently to explore the wild side of life. As the older brother, I was now unable to control (at least attempt to control) him. No longer could I tell him what to do, when and how to do it.

Several years later my younger brother returns, my father throws a big party and invites family, friends and neighbors to come and celebrate his return. I discover what’s going on when I ask one of the help, “what’s up with all the music and dancing?” He tells me that our father is celebrating the safe return of my brother. I have faithfully worked with and for the benefit of the estate and have never received a party in recognition of my service. It is true I am jealous, angry and feel unfairly treated. In frustration, I tell my father that it is not right that his son, who has wasted his money on prostitutes, should receive such a welcome. I am not in any mood to listen to my father’s explanation and reasons for rejoicing.

My father points out that as a faithful son, all he has is mine. He then tries to tell me something of my brother’s life away from home. He explains that as one who is dead, he is now come back to life. He was lost and is now found.

Somehow, I allowed myself to be consumed with self-righteous indignation. My attitude meant that I no longer loved my brother as I once did. What I needed was to accept him the same way my father loved and accepted me.

*An Older Brother*





### Religious Addiction: One of the Byproducts of Shame

Since the early 1990's, authors such as Leo Booth (When God Becomes a Drug: Breaking the Chains of Religious Addiction & Abuse) and Stephen Arterburn & Jack Felton (Toxic Faith: Understanding and Overcoming Religious Addiction), have articulated that addiction can rear its ugly head even in the midst of the most conservative of religious people. More recently, Elizabeth Esther has introduced the concept of spiritual codependency in her book Spiritual Sobriety: Stumbling Back to Faith When Good Religion Goes Bad. Unfortunately, addiction infiltrates much of what we do, even our religious practices. Arterburn and Felton explain: "When an individual is excessively devoted to something or surrenders compulsively and habitually to something, that pathological devotion becomes an addiction" (p. 83). They go on to explain that the precursors of religious addiction are often rooted in beliefs that we have about our faith. If Satan has deceived us into believing lies about the intersection of our lives and faith, or even about the nature and character of God, then it is likely that elements of our faith might be toxic. Toxic faith leads to toxic behavior. Below are listed 21 toxic beliefs as identified by Arterburn and Felton. Please prayerfully examine each of these toxic beliefs and ask the Lord to show you which of these might be distorted beliefs that you might hold.

1. God's love and favor depends on my behavior.
2. When tragedy strikes, true believers should have a peace about it.
3. If I have real faith, God will heal me or someone I am praying for.
4. All ministers are men and women of God who can be trusted.
5. Material blessings are a sign of spiritual strength.
6. The more money I give to God, the more money he will give to me.
7. I can work my way to heaven.
8. Problems in my life result from some particular sin.
9. I must not stop meeting others' needs.
10. I must always submit to authority.
11. God uses only spiritual giants.
12. Having true faith means waiting for God to help me and doing nothing until he does.
13. If it's not in the Bible, it isn't relevant.

14. God will find me a perfect mate.
15. Everything that happens to me is good.
16. A strong faith will protect me from problems and pain.
17. God hates sinners, is angry with me, and wants to punish me.
18. Christ was merely a great teacher.
19. God is too big to care about me.
20. More than anything else, God wants me to be happy.
21. I can become God.

As you may have noted from examining the above list, toxic faith takes several forms: compulsive religious activity, spiritual laziness, extreme intolerance, giving to get, self-obsession, and/or addiction to a religious high. Toxic faith is strongly associated with religious addiction. People who are religious addicts often have the following characteristics. First, they come from a family system where the parents were very rigid in their approach to parenting and life. Some individuals rather than running from rigidity are drawn to it in their own lives. They are comfortable with what they have learned as children and are uncomfortable when faced with flexibility that is too frightening for them. A second common characteristic of religious addicts is the experience of disappointment. This disappointment is typically a major one such as loss of a parent through death or divorce. A divorce in their own life is sufficient to contribute to a religious addiction. A third characteristic of persons with a tendency toward religious addiction is low self-worth. These individuals often feel alienated and isolated. They have a longing to belong in order to increase their sense of value and worth. They are often susceptible to strong persons or leaders who make their decisions for them, and are therefore prime candidates for cult membership or victims of religious scam artists. They are loyal to these to these religious leaders to a fault. Finally, they are often victims of abuse themselves. A history of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse in childhood often sets the stage for further victimization in adulthood. Compulsive religious behavior is often a way of filling the void left by parents. Some forsake God altogether since God is often represented by

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### Resources

#### Journey to Wholeness:



A series that can be used in support groups or small groups as a resource to facilitate recovery

of breaking away from harmful practices and strengthening an intimate relationship with God in the Journey to an abundant life. Facilitator guides and participant guides can be purchased in our online store at [www.AdventistRecovery.org](http://www.AdventistRecovery.org)

#### Journey to Life Newsletter:



This bi-monthly newsletter is available in English, Spanish, and soon in French as well. Print a free pdf copy, download, or register to subscribe and receive it via email at [www.AdventistRecovery.org](http://www.AdventistRecovery.org)

#### Choose Full Life Resources:



These are posters, calendars/bookmarks, booklets that can be used to share with others 10

Ways to Choose a Full Life embarking on a Journey to Recovery. For more information and to place an order please go to [www.NADHealthMinistry.org](http://www.NADHealthMinistry.org) and check out the online store. The Choose Full Life theme song is also available for download.

#### Unhooked:



This is a 28 part series produced by ARMin and Hope Channel,

highlighting different type of addictive behaviors, real stories, and experts comments on effective treatment. The ultimate goal is to bring hope for recovery in Christ. You can watch the series weekly Hope Channel or direct TV channel 368. The complete DVD with all episodes will be available for purchase in October. For previous episodes and more information go to: [www.hopetv.org/unhooked](http://www.hopetv.org/unhooked) or [www.adventistrecovery.org](http://www.adventistrecovery.org)



NEWS

Recovery Ministry Training at Health Summit Registration is now open for the NAD Regional Health Summit at Camp Hope, British Columbia, Canada, September 28 – October 2, 2016.



Southern Union

The Killen, Texas Seventh-day Adventist Church appreciates our prayers as Warren Voegele and son, Michael Voegele begin their Recovery Ministry.



SEND US YOUR NEWS

Recovery related news, pictures (protect anonymity of individuals in meetings) and upcoming recovery and awareness events can be sent for future newsletters.

Featured Article continued from page 3

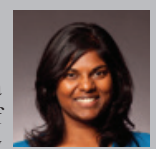
parent figures, for better or for worse. However, there are those who go to the opposite extreme who become bonded to God in a relational way that is dysfunctional.

As with any addiction, religious addiction has perpetrators and victims, users and the used. Religious leaders who are also religious addicts can do an inordinate amount of damage because of their trusted positions.

It is important not only to describe the problem of religious addiction, but also to suggest principles for recovery. Since religious addiction is difficult to identify in oneself because of its cloak of spirituality, an intervention can be helpful to begin the road to recovery.

David Sedlacek, PhD. Andrews University Theological Seminary Discipleship and Religious Education Department

Director's Message



In the book "Healing a Hungry Heart: A Journey of Freedom from Anorexia," my friend Tiffany Bartell shares her story of how eating became a way of dealing with her pain.

Two statements particularly caught my attention. Speaking of her relationship with her sister at the time, Tiffany says "neither of us leaned on the other; we went through our roughest times of life only barely aware that the other was struggling so badly"

I wonder how many people who walk through the doors of our churches are struggling with similar thoughts. How many are in our own homes, members of our families? And why do they feel so afraid and disconnected in the very places ordained by God for bringing and keeping people together?

Tiffany was able to recover from her addiction and find a new life in Jesus. But it wasn't easy. It took several years. Desperate situations came about. And she was finally rescued by the perseverance of those who loved her.

Our understanding of God is often colored by our own experiences or by the portrait painted by other people. But God desires to reveal Himself to us as He truly is.

Handwritten signature of David.

Angeline B. David, DrPH, MHS, RDN nadhm@nadadventist.org Health Ministries / ARMin Director North American Division