

## PRINCIPLE SEVEN

*As we live in sexual integrity, we carry the message of Christ's healing to those who still struggle, and we pursue a vision of God's purpose for our lives.*

### *Finding a Purpose: I Have a Vision*

When Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Life* was first published in 2002, it quickly became a best seller. In its first two years almost 19 million copies were sold. People hunger for the answer to the book's sub-title, "*What On Earth Am I Here For?*" We are likely to ask, "Why on earth did I do everything I did?" "What was God's purpose for my life?" or "How did I get so off track from God's purpose?" There are no easy answers to these questions, but understand this:

**You cannot undo what is done.**

**And**

**You must go forward from here.**

As you work through our last principle, you will learn how to go forward and use what you are doing now to carry the message of Christ's healing to those who still suffer.

In the first assignment you will prepare your story, which will become your testimony. You will begin sharing your testimony in the second assignment, first with your trusted L.I.F.E. Recovery Group; then, as you become stronger, with others. When you work on the third assignment, you will be developing your vision, your "mission statement" for how you want to conduct your life.

## Assignment One - Telling Your Story

The first time you attempt this assignment, you should have at least six weeks of sobriety. If you haven't been able to manage this length of time without acting out, go back to Principle One and Principle Four and work on them again. Here's a review of several things you need to think about if you're struggling to maintain solid sobriety:

1. Are you willing? Do you really want to get well? Is there still a part of you that's resisting the hard work that you need to do?
2. Have you really surrendered your life to Christ? If you haven't, get with a pastor or some other spiritual figure and talk about what's holding you back.
3. Have you confessed your sins totally? Have you really made a complete list of all your sinful sexual behaviors?
4. Have you truly put into place a comprehensive accountability group? Are you connecting with someone in the group on a daily basis?

*Go over your answers with your L.I.F.E. Recovery Group or with several men who have long-term sobriety. Get some advice as to what AA calls the "next right thing."*

This assignment is straightforward, but it will take some time. To tell your story may sound like a simple assignment, but it's far from easy. Assignment One prepares you to tell your story in the most effective way. You've probably heard a variety of testimonies in your life, like at church or at a meeting. Have you realized the best ones are relatively short? It's a greater skill to be succinct, which requires really thinking about what you're trying to say. You've also surely read a number of articles throughout your life. Are you aware the typical magazine article is in the neighborhood of only 500-1000 words? It also takes great skill to write briefly and to summarize your themes clearly and concisely.

For your work here, decide how you feel most comfortable relating your story to others. There are two ways to share your story, and the one you pick depends on your gifts and abilities. Do you like talking or speaking, or do you like writing? Which method is most comfortable for you?

More important than the method you use is what you include in telling your story. The tradition in AA is to share your "experience, strength, and hope" by sharing three things: ***"what it was like; what happened; and what it's like now."*** This simple outline is a great way to organize your story. Following are some suggestions about how to flesh out your account. You should include several aspects in each main division.

1) **WHAT IT WAS LIKE**

- a. **Your sexual history.** You can include any elements of trauma that you experienced, but try to keep this portion brief and generally descriptive, not detailed. You're trying to take responsibility for your own actions and not to blame others for the sexual sins you've done. Be specific about your acting out history, but don't be detailed or graphic. You obviously can summarize some behaviors by describing categories of acting out, like using pornography or masturbating compulsively or having affairs. (Don't mention the names of any affair partners.) Be specific about things like how much time and money you spent on your behaviors.
- b. **Your efforts to stop.** Describe your various attempts to stop acting out and make an assessment of why these efforts didn't work. Relate your emotional state during the frustrating times of not being able to find sobriety. Be honest about any level of spiritual or emotional immaturity that played a part in your failure to achieve sobriety.
- c. **Your consequences.** Outline the major consequences you experienced due to your addiction.

2) **WHAT HAPPENED**

- a. **Your "bottom."** When did you hit what AA calls your "bottom"? What happened that finally got your attention?
- b. **Your surrender.** Detail the day you really made a decision to surrender your life of sin and addiction. Go over any emotions and actions that were a part of this decision.
- c. **Your journey.** What has the journey of healing been like? What have been some of the significant moments?

3) **WHAT IT'S LIKE NOW**

- a. **Your current life.** Describe how your life is different today than when you were acting out. What's changed? What improvements do you see? What have you learned about God, yourself, and the fellowship of Christ and others?
- b. **Your gratitude.** Share your gratitude for God's grace, His transforming power, and what He's done and is doing in your life. Mention specifically the gifts you've found in recovery.

### **Journaling Exercise: Telling Your Story**

*Prepare either a ten-minute talk or a 500-1000 word article relating the story of your sexual sin/addiction and journey of recovery. You can use any form of writing (long hand or computer) to write your story. You can prepare notes or an outline as if you were giving a talk, or you can actually record your story on audio or videotape as a way of practicing. You can also ask a safe friend to listen as you go over it.*

*When you've finished this preparation, report to your L.I.F.E. Recovery Group that you're ready to share your story.*