

“We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.”

We have admitted our powerlessness and inability to manage our own lives. We have recognised the insanity of our old ideas and behaviour. We have come to believe that **God can heal us in ways that we are unable to achieve on our own**. In Step 3, we **hand over the care of our lives to this God**, who knows what we need and has our best interests at heart.

Step 3 is a practical, **action step** that requires us to make a **critical choice and firm commitment**. At this point, we **either decide to continue living as we have been** on our own self-will, **or we choose to surrender**, i.e., step aside and **let God take charge** instead.

In addition, our decisions were driven by our drug or process of choice and because of our entrenched patterns of thinking and behaviour. Now, in recovery, we have the **freedom to change direction, to decide differently** and to make **positive, rational, sensical choices** that serve us and others well.

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE: SURRENDER

The **concept of surrender is pivotal** to Step 3. Synonyms for surrender include **concede, acquiesce, yield, relent and defer**. Surrender does not mean that our lives become rigidly controlled or conducted for us. We still need to take responsibility for ourselves. What surrender does mean is that **we let go of self-sufficiency**.

For too long **we have been battling** to stay in control, **struggling to cope** with life on our own terms, and **doing things our own way** regardless of the consequences.

Surrendering to God means **accepting that God can do a better job of looking after us than we ever could**. It means that we **stop rebelling** against His natural order and become **willing to follow a new guided path**.

Rather than us deciding what is in our best interests, **we let God determine this and follow His lead**. We **lay down our armour** and let God become our **ruler and defender**.

- What about your life shows you that you need **new management**?



Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6

- How has acting on self-will affected your life?

- How has your self-will affected others?

- How do you feel about setting aside your self-will and trying another approach to life?

We can imagine surrender using analogies, e.g., handing over our car keys to a friend to drive us home safely or asking someone more capable to complete a task that we have no experience with. In these surrender moments, we acknowledge that there is someone better equipped to manage the situation and we allow them to take charge.

Whichever imagery you choose to better conceptualise surrender, let the meaning be the same – the **handing over of control**.

- Which imagery will you use to visualise the concept of surrender?

TURN OUR WILL AND LIVES OVER

Making **the decision** to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God **requires faith** in His **supernatural presence and power**.

For this, **we do not need to necessarily have a clear cognitive grasp of God yet**, nor should we rely on our limited understanding of the spiritual world. **We need only to want to understand Him more and be willing to open our hearts and minds to Him**. The process is one that goes beyond an intellectual understanding and is best worked with the spirit.


When we do turn our lives over, **God provides us with all the proof of His existence and authority** that we could ever need. He begins to change us, from the inside out, transforming us in ways we never thought possible and opening our blinded eyes to truths that we could not see before. As we draw near to Him, we are **provided with personal experiences** of Him at work in our lives and in the lives of others.

As the Bible promises, **when we earnestly seek God, we will find Him**.

- What does handing **your will and your life over** mean to you?

- What does surrender require from you?

- Is there anything standing in the way of you being able to surrender your will and your life over to God?



Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.
Matthew 7:7-8

- Are you willing to give surrender a chance, despite these reservations?

If you are willing to surrender, it is useful to make a **formal declaration** in the form of a prayer. For example,

“God, I am ready to hand my will and my life over to Your care. I want You to be my helper and guide every minute of every day. I surrender to You now and ask You to show me how to live according to Your plans and purpose for me. Amen.”

- What is your personal prayer at this stage?

STEP 3 PRAYER

- Is this the first time that you have made this commitment? _____
- If not, what makes this time different?

Surrendering our self-will means that we **begin to free ourselves** of many of our negative coping mechanisms. Our **self-destructive tendencies become less** and we **become open** to dealing with daily situations in more effective ways.

Handing over our lives means that we **no longer have to carry alone** our heavy burdens from **the past**, our anxieties in **the present**, or our fears of **the future**. We can breathe again, knowing that God has it under control. We don't have to work everything out ourselves and we **no longer need to use to escape our pain**. Life becomes full of **new possibilities**. We start to experience positive feelings of **freedom, peace, trust, faith and hope**. Maybe there is a way to turn it all around after all . . . ?

- Which burdens, anxieties, and fears weigh heaviest on you?

- How can trusting in God relieve these burdens?

- How might your life be changed by handing it over to the care of God?

- What does **to the care of** mean to you?

TO THE CARE OF

Because we are human and inclined to take back our will often, we may have to **practice Step 3 on a regular basis**, perhaps even several times a day, until it becomes our new norm.

This is especially pertinent when things are not working out the way we would like them to. Practicing surrender is easier when life is going well. When circumstances become difficult, **it can be challenging to remain steadfast in our decision to trust**. We can **stay committed** to the process by **reaffirming our decision frequently** and by **putting in the action that makes our decision meaningful**.

In moments of doubt and disbelief, we can remind ourselves that **God's ways are higher than we are even able to imagine**. He sees the whole picture, where we see only one small puzzle piece at a time.

If we stay committed to His care, we will be able to look back over time and **see how each experience has fitted together for our ultimate good**.



For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:11

God always knows what is best for us. Even when things don't seem to be making sense or going the way that we would like them to, **we can depend on God's faithfulness to be working all things out for our benefit.**

- How can you practice Step 3 in your daily routine?

- Are there any words that you will say regularly? What are they?

- How else can you hand over your will and your life on a daily basis?

- How will you recognise God's care in your life?

- How has God already shown His care for you?

In the beginning, **we may only want to hand over certain aspects** of our lives to God's care and to **hold onto those that we believe we can still manage**. We might have no trouble turning over our addiction but may still want to remain in control of our finances, for example.

Eventually we will realise that, to fully recover, we **must commit all parts of ourselves and our lives to God**.

- Are there any aspects of your life that you are not willing to surrender?

- Explain your reservations.

- Why is it important that you turn these aspects over anyway?

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Once we have handed our will and our lives over to the care of God - then we are ready to move on to Step 4.

- Do you have any reservations about Step 3?

- How might you overcome these reservations?

- Do you trust in God to care for you?

- What have been your most significant realisations in Step 3?

- How could you apply the principles of Step 3 to help you **throughout** your recovery journey?

- Are you ready to move on to Step 4?

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