

# What are Some Distortions and Biblical Inaccuracies in the Celebrate Recovery (CR) 12 Steps Program?

**Step 1** We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.

**Romans 7:18** *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*

**Step 1** = Step 1 claims people who come to CR are powerless over "addictions" and "compulsive behaviors". As a Biblical comparison, Romans 7:18 is then cited which uses the adjective "sinful". There is a contradiction here. The terms "addictions" and "compulsive behaviors" are psychological terms used by the secular world to be inoffensive to people who are not living right with God. Instead of directing calling it for what it should be "sin", the step waters it down so that people who come to Celebrate Recovery are not offended by the message of the 12 steps. Obviously, CR figures if they told newcomers they were living in sin, that their sins deserved to send them to eternal hell (the punishment fits the crime so to speak), and that they needed a Savior Jesus to save them from their sins, newcomers would be offended and not stay because "it makes me feel uncomfortable" that you are telling me the truth of God's word. Additionally, the term "addiction" carries a synonymous term called "disease" in secular 12 step groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous. The apparent motive is two-fold. First, as stated already, the term "addiction" avoids offense to people who are uncomfortable with "sin". People who desire to come to Christianized "recovery" 12 step groups such as Celebrate Recovery and have a Christian background won't have to be offended by the term "sin" which they may have heard repeatedly in a traditional church setting. Second, the term "addiction" is also meant to appeal to people who desire to attend CR and who also have a background in being active members of traditionally secular 12 step groups. Since traditional secular 12 step groups use the term "addiction" it also makes them feel comfortable that the term "addiction" has been selected instead of "sin" - AA, NA, SAA, and OA members will believe that they are having "religion" crammed down their throats if step 1 made it clear that they are habitually sinning against a holy God.

**Step 2** = We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

**Philippians 2:13** *For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.*

**Step 2** = Step 2 says, "We came to believe that a 'power' greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity". Celebrate Recovery claims that "Jesus is the only one and true 'Higher Power'." Jesus is not a power, but a person, and he is ALL powerful! There are legions of demons that are "higher powers". In Islam they constantly repeat the prayer: "Allahu Akbar" which literally means, "Allah is Greater". So, based on the logic of CR Step 1, Allah qualifies as a power 'greater'! But if he is greater, then Christ is lesser than Allah. New Agers and Christ Consciousness adherents taking CR would make themselves the god or the higher power would

be 'higher self' or "true self." To call Jesus Christ, God's Son, a "Higher Power" is a total misrepresentation of the identity of Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Me." Jesus is THE WAY to eternal life, not A WAY. There is absolutely no Biblical evidence that supports a claim that Jesus Christ ever had an identity as a "Higher Power". Furthermore, the mark of many cults is that they will identify Jesus Christ the way they want to perceive Him inaccurately against God's word and not how He should be accurately identified by the true standard, the Bible. To proclaim that Jesus Christ is a "Higher Power" says that other false gods/prophets are valid ways to receive salvation - that is "there are many roads to heaven, not one." For instance, person A at a CR meeting states, "My 'Higher Power' is Jesus Christ", but person B objects, "Your 'Higher Power' may be Jesus Christ, but I believe \_\_\_\_\_ (put in name of false god/prophet/idol: Buddha, Mohammed, Allah, my sponsor, my accountability partners, the group, etc.) is the Highest Power above Jesus." Does someone now see the lack of credibility in identifying Jesus Christ as a "Higher Power"? Has anyone noticed how CR groups worship and falsely idolize Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback church in California where CR first started? Many pastors of churches that started CR programs idolize and place Rick Warren on a "pedestal" instead of giving true worship to the one most deserving of it, that is Jesus Christ, God's Son.

**Step 3** We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God.

**Romans 12:1** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

**Step 4** We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

**Lamentations 3:40** *Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.*

The Scripture in and of itself is certainly true, but it can only apply to Christians today because non-Christians were NEVER in the Lord in the first place to return to. And if they are Christians there is no reason this would not be the first Step...along with all of the other steps simultaneously. By this I do not mean the CR steps themselves are valid Scripturally, but the Scriptures employed in each step should all be employed simultaneously and are NEVER finished until the Christian is glorified.

**Step 5** We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

**James 5:16** *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*

**Step 7** Humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings.

**1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

**Steps 3, 5, and 7** = Step 3 states, "Made a decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God." It sounds valid at the onset, but then becomes problematic when one carefully examines steps 5 and 7 and their Biblical comparisons. The Biblical comparison for step 3 is Romans 12:1. The Biblical comparison for step 5 is James 5:16 and for step 7 is 1 John 1:9. James 5:16 and 1 John 1:9 are both verses dealing with the issue of confession. When one looks at step 3, to turn

one's will and life over to the care of God appears to directly correlate to receiving eternal life through Jesus Christ. Isn't confession a requisite to receiving eternal life in Jesus Christ (read Romans 10: 9-10)? Since that is true and Biblical that one must confess his or her sins as part of receiving salvation, then why are verses James 5:16 and 1 John 1:9 appearing several steps below step 3? You cannot have one without the other to receive salvation. For example, if a motorist wants to operate and drive a motor vehicle, he or she must have a valid driver's license. If that motorist drives with a suspended or invalid driver's license, he or she can be arrested or fined. If that is so much true in the natural realm, how much more in the spiritual realm one must openly confess sin to receive salvation. Furthermore, is not repentance required to receive eternal life in Jesus Christ (read Luke 13: 1-5; Acts 26:20; 2 Corinthians 7: 9-10)? Since repentance is a requirement for salvation, why are there no verses stated in step 3 that directly correlates and points to repentance?

There is also a further problem with step 3. Members are asked to turn their wills and lives over to the care of God, not Jesus Christ. Here is the issue at hand. Many people state, "Well, I believe in God, but I will not accept Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation." That won't work on God's terms according to His word. Let us return to step 2 and show the faulty logic behind this statement. Step 2 declares we "came to believe a power". Doesn't James 2:20 tell us "even the [higher power] demons believe and shudder"? CR can proclaim Jesus Christ is the one and only "Higher Power". However, we have some dynamics here which reveals faulty logic. As mentioned in step 2, Jesus Christ is not a "Higher Power". To identify Him as such says that there are other ways to receive eternal life, not one way. Also, many of the steps are stated in vague terms to appeal to people in secular 12 step groups (AA, NA, etc.) as inoffensive. Therefore, one should safely conclude "God" in step 3 refers to a generic "god" (notice god is spelled with lower case "g" to support theory of any "god", not just the God of the Bible) **in addition** to the one true living God of the Bible.

Step 5 has the clause "the exact nature of our wrongs". Since we have already established that confession is a necessity for eternal life, how come a member must wait until step 5 to confess the "exact nature of our wrongs"? Would it not have been more logical that one would have already confessed the exact nature of wrongs at the point of receiving salvation? Is Celebrate Recovery and other "Christianized" 12 step groups making an impression one must repeatedly confess sin to be forgiven completely? As Christians we confess our sins, but a non-Christian must confess that they are sinners. Do we need to place Jesus Christ back on the cross a second, third, and fourth time because His one time sacrifice on the cross was not enough to forgive sins of those who repent of their sins and trust in Him as Lord and Savior? Listen carefully to Hebrews 10:14, "For by a **single offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.**"

Additionally, there is a problem with step 7 and its Biblical comparison. Step 7 states, "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings." According to Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, the word remove in the verb tense is defined as, "to get rid of; to eliminate". According to the definition of remove and the statement of step 7, 1 John 1:9 should not be placed as a Biblical comparison. The first part of 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins"..... Since the author(s) placed 1 John 1:9 as the Biblical comparison and the word "sins" is used in the context, then it is safe to assume the term "shortcomings" could be replaced with the term "sins". If that is true as it

appears, then step 7 could be restated as, "Humbly asked Him to remove our sins." If someone asks the Lord to remove his or her sins, then isn't that removal actually repentance? 1 John 1:9 merely points to confession, and we should keep one fact in mind. God will only completely forgive a person's sins provided not only did that person confess those sins, but he or she also choose to entirely repent of his or her sins. People will be misled into thinking that all they have to do is merely confess by the standard of the Biblical comparison in this step but there is no need for honest, Biblical repentance. We know this has to be true and misleading because no verses directly correlating and relating to Biblical repentance appear in any of the 12 steps (that is verses such as Luke 13: 1-5, 2 Corinthians 7: 9-10, etc. etc.).

**Step 6** We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

**James 4:10** *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

**Step 6** = Step 6 states, "We were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character." Step 7 also uses the term "shortcomings". The terminology makes it apparent that sin is not taken seriously against God's holiness. To replace the word "sin" with "defects of character" and "shortcomings" makes it obvious CR does not want to offend members with the truth of God's word. Listen to the following statement on steps 6 and 7 taken from <http://www.gotquestions.org> which exposes the heresy of replacing "sin" with other softened, inoffensive terminology, "The Bible is clear that sin is not simply a shortcoming or character defect, but a fatal wound which is only cured by the blood of Christ on the cross on our behalf ([Ephesians 2:1-5](#))." And even were one to believe it is biblically proper to invoke the term "shortcomings" and succeed in removing their shortcomings, this implies that man is basically and is already close to perfection, i.e., "I am almost there...but just came up a little short in a few areas of my life...say for example I am 90% there and just need to close the short gap of 10%." But this premise is fatally flawed because it presumes the other 90% is not also comprised of shortcomings. So the term is completely wrong. The 10% and the 90% are totally depraved and by nature objects of God's wrath, and NOT good. Jesus Christ said to call no man good, as there are NONE good. So what does CR do introduced a scoring system (see: <http://jubileecelibraterrecovery.com/category/small-groups/>). So you want to keep score? All questions should add up to an infinite score that infinitely separates us from God without Christ crucified. Man-made scoring system leaves even those who gave themselves subjectively a perfect score, fall infinitely short of the Glory of God and are no better off or more equipped whatever score they give themselves! A better term would be all my "long-comings" better yet infinitely long-comings, for all have sin and coming infinitely short of the Glory of God. So they fix their shortcomings? When in fact all they have done is pruned a dead tree...all that is left is a dead stump. In either case they are still dead in their trespasses. God will not lift you up by simply removing some defects in character, he will lift you up when you realize your total character is defective and depraved! And this all assumes that man on his own can get himself "ready", for the Bible says NONE seek after good. It is God who does the seeking! And why would CR teach participants that they is anything to recover? Even if we are Christians we don't want to recover ANYTHING of the old man. A New Creation does not want to simply be restored to the point we were before we had a drink of alcohol any more than we could be returned to the state of Adam and Eve before the FALL. Yes cessation of sin will help restore the physical and emotional state...but you will be just as lost and not sanctified. Plus you are in perpetually recovery...you are never DELIVERED in CR.

**Step 8** We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

**Luke 6:31** *Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

This step has the same problems as Step four with one more problem. Luke 6:31 emphasizes the good you should do but makes no mention of harm having been done to anyone. There are other Scriptures that govern how to compensate an offended party, such as paying three times the amount defrauded. Has CR EVER taught that they should pay back three times the amount defrauded? And if a non-Christian does this they are still not reconciled to God.

**Step 9** We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

**Matthew 5:23-24** *Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*

**Step 9** = Step 9 states, "We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others." The Biblical comparison for step 9 is Matthew 5: 23-24, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." It is very obvious using Matthew 5: 23-24 on step 9 is a complete distortion of obeying the words of Jesus here. Let me explain. The issue of promptness and immediate obedience is emphasized throughout scripture. For example, has anyone noticed the clause "if you remember" is mentioned in verse 23 of Matthew 5? The word "remember" is in the present tense. If that is the case, it appears that Jesus expects us to make proper amends and restitution at the point of a person's harmful words or actions. Did anyone notice the beginning phrase of verse 25 of Matthew 5? Notice Jesus says, "Come to terms quickly with your accuser....." When should a person come to terms quickly with his or her accuser? Quickly, not procrastinated or delayed action according to Jesus. Also, let us consider the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19: 1-10. If one carefully studies and considers verses 8-9 of this account, it appears Zacchaeus took immediate action to bring appropriate restitution to those he had harmed in the past. Looking at verse 9, it becomes readily apparent his desire to bring restitution was at the initial point of his salvation. **If we are seeing a pattern of immediate action in scripture, then how come members must wait until step 9 to make amends/restitution for the harm they have done to others?**

Here is the loophole in step 9 and why using Matthew 5: 23-24 is taken out of context. Provided a member is genuinely saved through the blood of Jesus Christ earlier in the program, most people who are unsaved do not understand what it means to honestly respect other people. The problem arises because by step 9, many members have been in the program months and for many others years have passed. Looking back at how the Lord expects us to take immediate action to amend and retribute harm done, is it really Biblical to expect a member to make amends for hurtful actions committed several years beforehand? Additionally, since delayed action is being taken in most every case involving members in 12 step programs, isn't asking them to make amends at this point in the program making them feel as if they are still not forgiven of their sins against the Lord? Such a step, its placement in the 12 steps, and its Biblical comparison all go

back to the issue of the term "recovery". The word "recovery" constantly points to things done in the past. It sends the message to members they are always going to be responsible for past actions, even those done before entering recovery rooms for meetings. Additionally, if someone came to you several years after harming you and requested to make amends or restitution, would you not have a valid reason to question the honesty and sincerity of the person offering the amends/restitution? While I would have no problem offering forgiveness and pardoning the harm done, I definitely would then proceed to question why the amend/restitution is being offered several years after the fact and was failed to have been offered at the direct timing of the harm initiated. The truth you may ask if someone is genuinely saved by the blood of Jesus Christ? Here it is - read the following scriptures and decide for yourself:

**2 Corinthians 5:17**, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; **EVERYTHING** old has passed away; see **everything** has become new!"

**Philippians 3:13**, "Beloved, I do not consider I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: **forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.**"

If someone is genuinely a new creation in Jesus Christ, is God still going to hold a person's unsaved past actions against them? Should that person still be required to make amends/restitution, years after the harm was done not to mention, to other people? Likewise, if we are to forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead as new creations in Jesus Christ, how then can the Lord hold our past against us? Again, I ask, do we need to place Jesus on the cross a second, third, or fourth time because his one time sacrifice for our sins was not enough?!

**Finally, where in Scripture is there an exception in repenting or making amends that would injure themselves or others? And even if such an example could be found elsewhere in Scripture it is found NOWHERE in Matthew 5:23-24 that Step 9 sites. The author of CR insert exemptions and exclusions found nowhere in Scripture, so has gone beyond what is written in Scripture. It is true that years can go by without repentance, particularly when the person is not even a Christian yet, so it is a natural response to then want to go back and repent to or make amends to the offended party (parties)...and where possible this would be good to do. The offended might not receive your repentance, but you would not have caused harm to him by doing so.**

**Step 11** We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and power to carry that out.

**Colossians 3:16** *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*

Again, which God? What kind of meditation? Biblical or Eastern mystical meditation?

**Step 12** Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**Galatians 6:1** *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*

**Two major problems here. 1. The Scriptures listed were NEVER intended to be sequential steps, so by practicing and requiring the participant to follow them as steps will result in a spiritual experience all right, but which spirit? 2. Practicing these steps as principles is a works religion, pyramid scheme and it is not the principles that Christ taught that ultimately matter but rather the Person that we follow and obey...otherwise it is simply the law that Paul twice condemned in Galatians.**

**Steps 11 and 12** = Celebrate Recovery, just like any other Christianized 12 step group relies heavily on the founding principalities of Alcoholics Anonymous. While Christianized 12 step groups may use scripture to support their position, the fact they rely so heavily on the 12 steps from Alcoholics Anonymous reveals the distortion and corruption of their practices in meetings and individual lives. AA needs to be marked for what is, a false religion based on the occult and works. In fact, this point has already been established earlier in this critique of the 12 steps. It is important to reemphasize this point as it distorts and harms the purpose of steps 11 and 12 to truly have a Biblical purpose. Step 11 states, "We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and power to carry that out." Step 12 states, "Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs." Read what the feedback from <http://www.gotquestions.org> says about steps 11 and 12, "Step 11 encourages alcoholics to seek "through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him." Praying to, or meditating on, any god other than the true God of the Bible through Christ, the Mediator, is of no spiritual value. **The "spiritual awakening" referred to in Step 12 does not lead to true spiritual life, except for those who have come to Christ by faith.** Even if the alcoholic sobers up and remains so throughout his/her lifetime, only faith in Christ for salvation from sin will ensure an eternity of peace and glory in heaven."

While it is understood there are people who profess to be Christians in Celebrate Recovery, if they are false converts, any prayers offered to the Lord will only be in vain and "hit the ceilings". Listen to what we are told in John 9:31, "We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships Him and obeys His will." God may hear the prayers of unsaved people, but He will not answer those prayers. Sadly, many people in CR groups are false converts. They may profess to be Christians when in actuality, they were never saved in the first place. Jesus made it clear we would know them by their fruit (Matthew 7:20). My point with steps 11 and 12. Even if someone's motive in CR is to pray to the God of the Bible, if that person is a false convert and has not been genuinely saved by Christ's blood, any effort to pray or to "evangelize" the 12 steps to those caught in addictive behaviors will be of no value.

A point on step 12 - the Biblical comparison for step 12 is Galatians 6:1, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." If step 12 has to do with the issue of evangelism and carrying the message to those still lost in sin, why is Galatians 6:1 the only verse that is used as a Biblical comparison? I will tell you the reason why. This passage in Galatians screams of both the teller and the hearer being Christians. You can't restore a non-Christian. What would you restore them to? Celebrate Recovery, just like any other 12 step group regardless of whether it is secular or "Christianized", places such a heavy emphasis on accountability to other people that accountability to the Lord is basically non-existent. People in CR and other 12 step groups are so focused on holding each

other accountable, that there is literally no fear of God available in 12 step meetings and individual lives outside of meetings. So my point - since that is the case, it is only natural and understanding that Galatians 6:1 has been selected as the distorted Biblical comparison to make it clear and re-emphasize their belief system, "You answer to us, not ultimately answer to the God of the Bible." If CR truly believed in the Biblical concept of evangelism, other verses would have been cited related to Biblical evangelism such as Matthew 10: 32-33, Matthew 28: 18-20, Mark 16: 15-20, and Romans 1:16. Here is the issue at hand. People need to understand that God simply is using people as instruments of His love to restore people, not the people themselves. If the people themselves could restore those lost and dying in sin, then Jesus Christ would not have needed to die on the cross for all sins of humanity. The initial as well as ultimate goal is not be restored, but reconciled to God through the Blood of Jesus Christ our Savior, the only means of salvation and sanctification. Note too in the CR citation of Galatians 6:1...they omit the rest of Paul's point of Galatians which was to condemn Judaizers for trying to put Christians back under the law, so he twice condemned (cursed) them for doing exactly what CR teaches in their works religion of steps and principles you must follow, and in order! So Paul is effectively condemning CR for the same reasons he condemned the Judaizers.

Some closing statements on the 12 steps and their Biblical comparisons - If using 12 step recovery programs and the 12 steps are "Biblical", then explain to me how the first Christians in the book of Acts survived without 12 step programs and without the use of human psychology? Also, if "working" the 12 steps are truly Biblical, then how come there are repeated contradictions in taking verses out of context in the Biblical comparisons for many of the steps? It would be wise for us to heed the warning from the Lord about promoting any false gospel movement that does not align itself with God's word. We are warned in Galatians 1: 8-9, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!" (some translations have the terms "eternally condemned" instead of accursed)

Final question, is there a Celebrate Recovery Program for victims and people recovering from Celebrate Recovery?