

Recovery Ministries



CONGREGATION & VISITORS



Recovery Ministries

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Leader's Guide

How to use "Recovery Ministries" by BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS in your regularly scheduled meetings.

Welcome to BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS: Your Complete Guide to Leadership Training. You've purchased an innovative resource that will help you develop leaders who can think strategically and biblically about the church. Selected by the editors of Leadership Resources at Christianity Today, the material comes from respected thinkers and church leaders.

BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS is not just another program. Each theme contains materials on the topic you choose—no tedious program to follow. The materials work when you want, where you want and the way you want them to. They're completely flexible and easy to use.

You probably already have regularly scheduled meetings with board members or with other committees or groups of leaders. BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS fits easily into what you're already doing. Here's how to use BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS at the beginning of a board meeting or committee meeting:

1. Select a learning tool. In this theme of "Recovery Ministries," you'll find multiple types of handouts from which to choose:

- ◆ Bible study
- ◆ case study
- ◆ activity
- ◆ interview
- ◆ devotionals
- ◆ resources
- ◆ assessment tools
- ◆ how-to articles
- ◆ retreat plan

2. Select a handout. Suppose, for example, you want your board to determine whether your congregation is ready to launch support groups. You could select one of two assessments in this theme: "Getting Started" (pp. 7–8) or "Group Behavior" (p. 9). From these options, select the one that best fits what you want to accomplish.

3. Photocopy the handout. Let's say you selected "Getting Started." Photocopy as many copies as you need—you do *not* need to ask for permission to photocopy any material from BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS (as long as you are using the material in a church or educational setting and are not charging for it).

4. Prepare for the discussion. We recommend you read the Scripture passages and identify key discussion questions. How will you apply the principles to specific decisions your church is making?

5. Lead the discussion. Most handouts can be read within five minutes. After you have allowed time for reading, begin the discussion by asking one of the provided questions. Be ready to move the discussion to specific issues your church is facing.

Most BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS handouts can be discussed in 15 or 20 minutes (except the Bible study, which may take longer). Your board, committee, or team will still have plenty of time to discuss its agenda.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

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RECOVERY MINISTRIES

A Theology of Christian Recovery

17 teachings that distinguish the gospel from mere recovery.

Mark 1:15

The primary factors that distinguish Christian recovery from other approaches to life change concern our approach to spirituality. Here are some of the major theological tenets of the Christian approach to recovery.

1. **Recovery is truly Christian only if God is part of it.** God is not just a nebulous higher power, but rather is the Creator of the universe who sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into this fallen world to save us (John 3:16).
 - *To what extent is true recovery possible apart from the Cross?*
2. **The Word of God is our authoritative rule and guide.** We believe there is objective truth in this world and that it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures (Heb. 4:12).
 - *What are some of the truths we learn in Scripture that are less clear in recovery literature?*
3. **The Devil is real.** Through the power of deception, the Devil is fighting for our minds. Truth is the ultimate weapon in the spiritual warfare of Christian recovery (John 8:31–32).
 - *How do we decrease our chances of recovery by not recognizing the Devil as our enemy?*
4. **Sin is deceptive, powerful, and addictive.** As Christian author Keith Miller states, sin (or the “control disease”) is the root of all addictions and compulsive disorders (Rom. 7:15–25).
 - *In what ways does the language of sin strengthen our ability to resist evil?*
5. **There is a Redeemer.** Jesus Christ has won the victory over sin, death, and the Devil by his death on the cross (1 John 3:8).
 - *How do you meditate on what Jesus achieved for us on the Cross?*
6. **This is a fallen world.** Christians in recovery groups must still contend with their own fallen natures (Rom. 7:21).
 - *What are some of the beliefs of our time that deny the fallen nature of our world?*
7. **All people need spiritual rebirth.** Because spiritual death is a reality, we must assume that everyone needs to experience new life from God (John 3:3).
 - *What sorts of language do people use that equates recovery with spiritual rebirth? In what ways may the two experiences differ?*
8. **There is a difference between guilt and toxic shame.** Guilt is a response of the conscience to specific sins. Destructive (or toxic) shame is an inner sense of being unlovable, unredeemable, and hopeless. Confession and forgiveness are God’s way to overcome guilt. Growing in relationship with God and other healthy people enables us to accept ourselves as loved and lovable (1 John 4:9).
 - *How often do you feel toxic shame, if at all? What triggers it for you?*
9. **There is a difference between drunkards and alcoholics.** Drunkenness is a moral condition (Eph. 5:18). Alcoholism is a therapeutic condition. What separates addicts from non-addicts is what happens when they drink: loss of control, or powerlessness.
 - *What might be gained by recapturing the concept of drunkenness as a moral condition?*

A Theology of Christian Recovery *continued*

- 10. God works in processes.** Recovery is not a one-time thing, but a process (Rom. 12:2). Recovery is not just “fixing” ourselves, but rather gaining the tools for working out our sanctification (Phil. 2:12–13).
- *How do we raise false expectations by expecting recovery to happen in one moment?*
- 11. God works through the Holy Spirit.** To succeed in recovery, believers must learn to respond to God’s Spirit and walk in his will for their lives (John 16:13–15).
- *How often do you experience the Holy Spirit’s presence as comforter, encourager, or conscience?*
- 12. God works through people.** The message of Christian recovery is that God’s grace involves intensely honest and nurturing relationships with other people (Heb. 10:23–25).
- *What factors would lead us to neglect the importance of other people in our recovery?*
- 13. Christian recovery is intensive discipleship.** Avoiding alcohol and other drugs is no guarantee of lasting change in life. What addicts need is a steady commitment to personal growth (2 Pet. 1:5–11).
- *How can the church help all Christians know it is ready to help with their discipleship?*
- 14. Repentance is more than confessing our sins to God.** The Greek word for repentance, *metanoia*, implies a complete change of mind (Acts 3:19).
- *What increases the odds that we will remain trapped in a cycle of conscious sin and confession without metanoia?*
- 15. Rigorous honesty is essential for true spirituality.** Jesus declares that the truth will set us free (John 8:32), so we must make a commitment to walk in the light (1 John 1:5–9).
- *What are some of the phrases we sometimes use as Christians to avoid rigorous honesty?*
- 16. Talk has a therapeutic value.** Self-revelation in a safe environment is a tremendously healing experience, and support groups provide that environment (James 5:16).
- *What are some biblical models of God bringing healing to people through conversation?*
- 17. Grace flows freely through unclogged conduits.** Christian workers cannot take people to a place they have not reached themselves. If we want to reach out to hurting people, we must begin dealing with our own issues first (1 Cor. 11:31; 2 Cor. 4:1–2).
- *What are some of the issues, other than the explicit issues of addiction, that Christians can confront in themselves?*

—MICHAEL LIIMATTA. Adapted from “A Guide to Effective Rescue Mission Recovery Programs” (www.agrm.org/michael/guide.html). Used with permission.

Discuss

1. How has the recovery movement touched the people you love?
2. What non-Christian recovery programs are you aware of?
3. Compare the lives of people you know who have gone through Christian and non-Christian recovery programs.

RECOVERY MINISTRIES

Why Recovery Matters

Making churches safer places for fallen people.

Matthew 9:12

Patti Cappa is executive director of Marble Retreat in Marble, Colorado, and her husband, Steve, is its clinical director. For more than 30 years, Marble Retreat has offered counseling and recovery to clergy families in crisis. The Cappas spoke to BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS about church leadership and recovery.

BUILDING CHRISTIAN LEADERS: In a fallen world, are all Christians recovering from something, regardless of whether we realize it?

Yes! However, this affirmation comes with a significant caution: While “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), not all people are disabled by their particular sin at any given time. The effects of sin ebb and flow in our lives, and this is certainly true for Christian leaders as well.

At Marble Retreat, we rarely have clergy come who are simply seeking personal growth. Rather, they come in severe crisis, at the 11th hour of their lives, broken, desperate and exhausted from their struggles or from the effects of the sin of others on their lives.



Patti and Steve Cappa

“We must model a greater honesty in our churches.”

What are the most common hesitations about recovery ministries that you’ve encountered among Christians?

Christians are hesitant about recovery ministries because those ministries may lack a sound biblically based foundation for their approach. A given recovery ministry may be too worldly or have a minimalist view of the truths of Scripture, excessively relying on pop psychology for solutions to people’s problems.

A second hesitation about recovery ministries might simply be that recovery is very hard work. Unhealthy thoughts and behavioral habits are never easy to reverse or abandon, and most recovery ministries specifically target such things. Paul stated this most eloquently in Romans 7:15: “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.”

What keeps Christians from realizing that their pastors are at risk of burnout?

Expectations and demands. Burnout is a common factor in many clergy couples, even whole clergy families, not just the pastor. This seems to most often occur when the pressures and stresses of ministry and/or family become too much for the leaders of our church. They become overworked and underappreciated.

Why does this happen? Part of the problem comes from the actual members of a church. It is our opinion that church attendees place excessive expectations and demands on their leaders, their pastors, and their families, setting up these dear servants of God for burnout. We seem to have drifted from our personal responsibilities before God, placing an excessive burden of a right relationship with him on our leaders.

One of the common concepts of Protestantism is “the priesthood of all believers,” implying that we all share a common status as followers of Christ. This does not seem to be the case in many of our contemporary churches, especially many of the smaller churches in our country.

We have a natural (fallen) tendency to ask of our leaders things that would historically be placed on a priest. There are great pressures on the pastors in the church to do it all, to act as intermediaries before God on behalf of a congregation, to conduct visitations, to run all the church programs, to be a model believer with a model marriage, to be an upstanding citizen in the community and conduct weddings and funerals. These demands are too great for any one person or any one family.



Why Recovery Matters *continued*

Clergy and their families often blissfully participate in this sure formula for disaster. It feels very good to be elevated to such a high status, to be seen as a leader of people, to have power. There are inherent seductions in all leadership, and this is certainly true for the vocation of Christian leadership.

What are some basic steps that Christian lay leaders can take to make the church a safe and nurturing place?

A healthy church is a biblically sound and biblically based church. This, of course, may include the celebration of the sacraments (such as baptism and communion), rich worship, outreach to the unbelieving, and a healthy approach to confession. It is this latter category that we feel the church is most lacking.

There seems to be much emphasis on the joy of walking and living in Christ but a lack of acceptance or tolerance for the very real and common struggles that accompany the Christian life. Often a community of believers does not know how to deal with the inevitable emergence of personal brokenness, grief, losses, severed or strained relationships, including that with God, and very real temptations of all sorts.

We must model a greater honesty in our churches. To be confessional also demands that a church be able to avoid gossip, speaking negatively of someone, or disclosing a private conversation to a larger group with gross insensitivity to the vulnerabilities of the confessor(s).

Discuss

1. Would you share the Cappas' sense that everyone is recovering from something, albeit in various degrees?
2. How does your congregation compare with what the Cappas have to say about churches' perspectives on recovery?
3. What do you think about the Cappas' emphasis on the importance of confession in the life of the church?

RECOVERY MINISTRIES**Getting Started**

Is your church ready to launch support groups?

Luke 14:28–30

Other pastors frequently ask whether I believe they should start this or that support group. I have two responses: First, I know of no more effective ministry than support groups. Second, before starting one, a church should count the cost. To estimate the cost of a group, I ask the following questions.

Check Your Resources

When we considered offering a group for male sexual abuse victims, we projected an increased demand for counseling services, as well as a need for airtight security around the children’s ministries. In our case, we weren’t administratively prepared to deal with these costs.

How will this group affect other church ministries?

- I can envision our church rising to the challenge of launching a support group: (circle one)

Definitely

Somewhat

Not at all

Anticipate Tensions

Our congregation offers three different support groups for sexual abuse victims. As a result, such people perceive us as “safe,” meaning they think we’ll be sensitive to their traumas and needs. Consequently, we have more abuse victims as a percentage of our congregation than do most churches. The presence of such victims in our church, however, puts other members on edge. Each support group attracts a unique population, and each population causes the congregation unique anxiety.

What church tensions might emerge?

- I expect a support group would cause this degree of growing pains for our congregation:

Much

Some

None

Call Worthy Workers

Hurting people often avoid their pain by trying to heal the pain of others. Such people need the church’s help but too often reject it when they’re not allowed to become leaders. Well-meaning church leaders looking for willing volunteers often fail to see the dangers such people represent to the church and to themselves.

Can we recognize well intentioned but troubled volunteers?

- Our church interviews potential volunteers to determine if they are competent and will not harm other members:

Always

Often

Never

Getting Started *continued*

Get Equipped for Ministry

Will your support group require trained leadership by trained therapists? Will the group's leaders need administrative oversight from either a staff person or important lay leader? Will the group need curriculum? How about childcare? Will your group's discussions require only one room in your church facilities, or additional rooms for private conversations?

What church resources will the group require?

➤ When groups meet in our church, we determine their needs in advance (whether through a standard request form or a verbal interview):

Always

Often

Never

Prepare for Unsolicited Attention

One church formed a support group for parents of troubled youth. As a result, that problem received some attention in the congregation. Whether you call it concern or gossip, it brought out the problems of one leader's family, who were not attending the group and whose teenage son was involved with drugs. Many considered this a good thing; a problem was finally out in the open and could be handled. However, some people didn't like the way the problem was brought out, nor did they think it right that it was not dealt with until some group members began talking.

What problems might be exposed in the group?

➤ I know that our church has pastoral systems to handle gossip and breaches of confidentiality.

Absolutely

Probably

Not yet

Consider the Great Expectations

When I first came to my current ministry, the idea of any group excited the congregation. Four years and numerous groups later, people ask me almost weekly to start new groups or provide new services. When I cannot begin a new group, or when counseling requests are referred or put on a waiting list, people are offended. The more we offer, the more congregants expect, and the more upset members get when something cannot be provided.

What expectations might be raised?

➤ I am confident our church can help people cope with their disappointments if their expectations are not met.

Strongly

Somewhat

Not at all

—RANDY CHRISTIAN

Discuss

1. What needs do you see within our church or in the surrounding neighborhood?
2. Could we reasonably offer a support group in our church to meet those needs? Why or why not?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of adding a support group to our church?

RECOVERY MINISTRIES

Group Behavior

Determine if you know how members of a support group should relate to each other.

Galatians 6:1–3

Biblical support groups gather together because they believe the 12 Steps are biblical principles that have great value in recovery and spiritual growth. People who regularly gather together in the name of Christ and sincerely work the steps do recover and experience spiritual progress and emotional healing. Groups work best, however, when their members agree to certain norms. To gauge your grasp of those norms, respond to these statements:

| | True of Me | Somewhat True of Me | Not True of Me |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I observe a covenant of confidentiality. Whatever is said in the group stays in the group. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I let others know who I am by being transparent. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I use “I” messages instead of “You” messages. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I do not counsel or give advice to other group members, but share from my experience, strength, and hope. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I remember that the Holy Spirit, not our group’s facilitator, has the answers to our problems. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I do not try to fix, control, argue with, or criticize other group members. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I confront group members only when necessary and in a loving way, as the Lord leads. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I do not fight other people’s battles by taking up their defense or offense. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

—*Christian Recovery Group Guide*, Gateway Community Church, Austin, Texas. Used with permission.

Discuss

1. What have small groups provided for your Christian walk over the years?
2. In what ways would these norms help a support group be effective?
3. How would our church change if we observed these norms in all our relationships?

Finding Your Niche After Recovery

How one Christian launched a ministry shaped by his struggles.

1 Corinthians 12:27–30

The Case Gerald Dunaway used to sit in his darkened office every night, drinking and weeping. He had a drinking problem but did not know where to go for help. At his lowest point, he slept in his office every night and consumed a fifth of Scotch each day.

He would not ask his church in Georgia for help because all he heard Christian leaders tell people struggling with alcoholism was that they needed to be saved. “For me, that was not true,” Dunaway says. “I had Jesus.”

In time Dunaway got sober through the well-known 12-step program that originated with Alcoholics Anonymous. Dunaway decided to take seriously the program’s third step of turning his life and will over to the care of God. He aspired to work for the church in an overseas mission, but one organization after another turned him down.

What Would You Do?

- ◆ Where would you encourage Gerald Dunaway to direct his desire to serve God?
- ◆ Must Dunaway’s previous struggle with alcoholism limit his ability to serve God?

What Happened Finally, an organization suggested Dunaway get a one-year Bible certificate, so he enrolled at Columbia International University in South Carolina. But he soon realized the overseas mission field was not for him.

Not knowing where God wanted him to minister, he continued his seminary training. During Dunaway’s time at Columbia, a professor told him that pastors should minister among people for whom they feel intense care, even being willing to give up life itself to care for them.

Those challenging comments prompted Dunaway to recall the members of his home group.

“I remembered all the faces of those people I had gotten sober with,” he says. “It was as though God put his hand on my shoulder and said, ‘Gerald, this is what it’s all about. This is why I let you go through all of that. It’s because I need somebody to go to the recovery community.’”

Following up on that conviction, Dunaway and his wife, Delores, planted a recovery church near Atlanta about a year ago. Every Sunday, the Dunaways set up two rows of folding chairs, a podium, and a cross, transforming the gymnasium of Snellville United Methodist Church into New Freedom Fellowship.

Except for Delores Dunaway, everyone in the tiny congregation is a recovering alcoholic or drug addict.

—SUZANNE LEWIS-JOHNSON

Discuss

1. Who are people for whom you feel intense care?
2. What insight into ministry did Dunaway’s professor show by his advice?
3. How can our church recognize and help people who are eager to serve God but may not know what next steps to take?

Humility Before the Lord

Sometimes our lowest moments draw us closest to God.

Psalm 111:10

Read *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.” (Psalm 111:10).*

Comprehend The historian of Alcoholics Anonymous titled his work *Not-God* because, he said, that stands as the most important hurdle an addicted person must surmount: to acknowledge, deep in the soul, not being God. No mastery of manipulation and control, at which alcoholics excel, can overcome the root problem; rather, the alcoholic must recognize individual helplessness and fall back in the arms of the Higher Power. “First of all, we had to quit playing God,” concluded the founders of AA; and then allow God himself to “play God” in the addict’s life, which involves daily, even moment-by-moment, surrender.

Bill Wilson, the cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous, reached the unshakable conviction, now a canon of 12-step groups, that an alcoholic must “hit bottom” in order to climb upward. Wilson wrote his fellow strugglers, “How privileged we are to understand so well the divine paradox that strength rises from weakness, that humiliation goes before resurrection, that pain is not only the price but the very touchstone of spiritual rebirth.” The apostle Paul could not have phrased it better.

The need for humble dependence continues throughout recovery. Although an alcoholic may pray desperately for the condition to go away, few addicts report sudden, miraculous healing. Most battle temptation every day of their lives, experiencing grace not as a magic potion but rather as a balm whose strength is activated daily by conscious dependence on God.

We in the church have as much to learn from people in the recovery movement as we have to offer them. I was struck by one observation from an alcoholic friend of mine. “When I’m late to church, people turn around and stare at me with frowns of disapproval. I get the clear message that I’m not as *responsible* as they are. When I’m late to AA, the meeting comes to a halt and everyone jumps up to hug and welcome me. They realize that my lateness may be a sign that I almost didn’t make it. When I show up, it proves that my desperate need for them won out over my desperate need for alcohol.”

—PHILIP YANCEY

- Discuss**
1. How has God used trials in your life to draw you closer to him?
 2. In what ways can the church never be like a 12-step program? In what ways should it be more similar?
 3. Why do Christians often grow better in adversity than in tranquility?

Pray Thank God for his great faithfulness to you.

What Jesus Had to Say on Recovery

Eight principles based on the Beatitudes.

Matthew 5:1–11

Read *“Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying . . .” (Matt. 5:1–2).*

- Comprehend**
1. **R = Realize** I’m not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and my life is unmanageable (“Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor”).
 2. **E = Earnestly** believe that God exists, that I matter to him, and that he has the power to help me recover (“Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”).
 3. **C = Consciously** choose to commit all my life and will to Christ’s care and control (“Happy are the meek”).
 4. **O = Openly** examine and confess my faults to God, to myself, and to someone I trust (“Happy are the pure in heart”).
 5. **V = Voluntarily** submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask him to remove my character defects (“Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires”).
 6. **E = Evaluate** all my relationships, offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me, and make amends for harm I’ve done to others, except when doing so would harm them or others (“Happy are the merciful and the peacemakers”).
 7. **R = Reserve** a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading, and prayer to know God and his will for my life and to gain the power to follow his will.
 8. **Y = Yield** myself to God to be used to bring this Good News to others, both by my example and by my words (“Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires”).

—RICK WARREN. Adapted from *The Road to Recovery* (Zondervan audio CD, 1998). Used with permission.

- Discuss**
1. How can your church become a better place to pursue recovery?
 2. What are the character defects you would ask God to remove first?
 3. How does going through recovery affect your relationships with other people?

Pray Thank God for Jesus’ concise and soul-searching wisdom, especially as expressed in the Beatitudes.

RECOVERY MINISTRIES

Helping Grieving People

Two strategies to help people who are stuck in their grief.

2 Corinthians 1:2–4

One familiar progression of grief is the five-stage process outlined by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross: denial, anger, bargaining, guilt or depression, and acceptance, in that order.

You can recognize people who are stuck in one of these stages when their attitude, behaviors, relationships, or even theology become defined by one of the stages of grief for a prolonged time.

You can help people get unstuck using either of these two methods:

1. Draw the line. Wayne Hunsucker, our church’s minister to single adults, draws a bold white line across a chalkboard in front of the grieving person. “That line,” he says, “separates where you were from where you are now, between what was and what is.” In grieving, many people react to their emotions as if those emotions are all that matter. Drawing a practical line removes some of the focus on feelings and helps people imagine for the first time that life can exist after grief.

2. Reframe. Reframing is a counseling technique that invites a person to focus on loss from a different perspective. The loss doesn’t change, but the way one looks at the loss, understands the loss, and responds to the loss does. Just as a painting takes on new dimensions when given a new frame, people who reframe their grief can discover new strength. The author of Hebrews gives an example: “If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desired a better country” (11:15–17).

—RODGER MURCHISON

Discuss

1. How has your family been touched by grief?
2. How can we as church leaders equip our church to help people who are grieving?
3. How does unresolved grief begin to affect both a grieving person and the church members closest to that person?

RECOVERY MINISTRIES

Linking Recovery and the Word

Four ways church leaders can help lead their people to restoration.

1 Timothy 3:1–3

Today's church culture puts a premium on leaders who are warm, relational, and vulnerable. This is especially true of those leading recovery ministries. Many churches want those leaders to be empathetic support group leaders: healers who listen first, then make poignant insights into people's lives, nurturing them down the road to emotional health.

These are vital skills, but they should not stand apart from the central mission of the church. Leaders must make sure that what happens in counseling and support groups is linked with Christ and God's Word. Here are several ways to make that happen.

1. **Encourage people to outgrow their status as victims of others.** This is where leaders, in their speaking, counseling, and leadership, play an important role. They must lead their people to where they can say, "What happened to me was awful. I wasn't responsible for it, so I don't have to assume guilt or shame over it. But neither do I have to be stuck there. The people in my life were fallen creatures just like me. They sinned and as children were probably sinned against."
2. **Link the recovered self with the serving Christ.** One of the most important but gritty tasks of Christian discipleship is moving people from being takers to being givers. Simply put, who we are in Christ is this: redeemed sinners. When we absorb this truth, it leads to sacrificial giving. When we truly see who we are in Christ, we are freed from the pride of thinking we've done great things and from the despair of feeling worthless. That change in focus reflects what Christ was modeling when he donned a towel and washed the disciples' feet.
3. **Name sin.** Not long ago, a pastor and I were talking about Jesus' response to the woman caught in adultery: "Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin." I had to confess to him that saying, "Neither do I condemn you," was much easier for me than saying, "Go and leave your life of sin." To link the healing process with genuine biblical discipleship, we must name sin. We cannot be complicit in one of the glaring errors of secular psychology.
4. **Ask the right questions.** I ask people questions like "What's the payoff for how you are acting?" or "What's in this for you?" I want to help people discover their underlying motivations. Then I try to help them see the real payoff of their behavior. When they do, they sometimes discover the payoff is decidedly negative.

—LOUIS MCBURNEY. From *Standing Fast* (Multnomah, 1994). Used with permission.

Discuss

1. Why isn't empathy alone sufficient to accomplish restoration of a person?
2. What skills are most valued among leaders of recovery ministries in your church?
3. What additional training may be needed to help your leaders apply Scripture to the recovery process?

RECOVERY MINISTRIES

Restoring Your Ministry*Four ways to recover from serious error.*

Galatians 6:1–3

Animals have a marvelous instinct: after a major trauma, they nest for a while, allowing life to return to normal. For days after our cat had such an experience, she hung out in the bushes. Katie not only lay low, she walked low, slinking around like a tango dancer. It took about a week for her to become her old self again. But Katie's tactic for recovery made good sense.

Errors inflict grievous wounds—in a leader's confidence, in a congregation's regard for the leader, in a church's progress, in interpersonal relationships, in a leader's family. A kind of depression can set in (sometimes actual clinical depression), making recovery appear only a fleeting hope. *I've blown it; I'm a failure! No one will want me now.*

Leaders who have reflected on their successful recoveries offer several steps toward mending:

1. **Step back.** When mistakes hit, most leaders need a little space to think straight—a 24-hour retreat, a weekend away to think and pray, a long drive with one's spouse, a day with close friends to sort out options. By finding time for contemplation, the quality of their decisions rises dramatically. Like counting to ten when you're angry, stepping away can eliminate the emotion-laden snap decisions that many live to regret.
2. **Scale down.** After an inglorious belly flop, the next dive is not the time to introduce a new twist or an extra flip. The diver needs to reconfirm her ability to enter the water safely and gracefully with a well-executed, familiar dive. It's time to regroup around the basics. Attention to the congregation is also wise, because following many ministerial mistakes, the people especially need to know they are loved. The mistake may well have angered, disappointed, or stung them. The personal touch from a leader soothes sore feelings.
3. **Change patterns.** Sinful mistakes cry for new patterns to head off temptation. A Sunday school superintendent who was caught embezzling church funds was removed from office. As the church stuck with him and helped him mend his life, they also knew enough to remove him from the temptation of church funds.
4. **Rebuild credibility.** The recovery period is a time of re-establishing credibility. The fallen one is being watched. It's definitely a time to mind the store. A negative credibility quotient bankrupts a leader. When mistakes drain the account, the ministry goes into a kind of Chapter 11 status until the reserves again accumulate. This time of rebuilding allows little margin for error, and several suspicions demand attention (including suspect intentions, suspect morality, and suspect ability).

—JAMES D. BERKLEY

Discuss

1. Have you ever witnessed the fallout from a church leader's stumbling? What happened?
2. How can church leaders help someone return to effective ministry?
3. If a leader in our church makes a serious error, how should we respond?

RECOVERY MINISTRIES

Local Church Models

Discovering your church's role in recovery.

1 John 3:16–20

If you told me a few years ago that recovery ministry would make as much progress in the Christian community as it has, I would have said you were crazy. There is still a long way to go, of course, but significant progress has been made. There are several distinct ways in which local churches invest in recovery ministry, and there's some value to distinguishing between these different approaches.

1. AA in the Basement

Historically the most common way for local churches to be involved in recovery ministry is for the church to allow AA or some other organization to meet in church facilities. It is difficult to imagine where AA would be today if it were not for this kind of participation by local churches over the years. Even though most of us are very supportive of AA and other secular programs, something makes us anxious about congregations whose commitment to recovery is limited to this strategy. Why is it that the power for personal transformation is facilitated by an organization external to the local church, while the local church contributes only space?

2. Bridge

One way local congregations have attempted to integrate recovery more fully into the life of the congregation is to develop “bridge” strategies. Most Christians in recovery want a way to bridge the recovery world with the Christian world. Typically, local congregations have responded to this need by developing distinctively Christian support groups. These groups are not usually intended to replace secular resources but rather to “bridge” to them. Thousands of congregations have established such bridge groups in the last few years.

3. Alternative to AA

A third approach is rather like bridge strategies in practice but includes an intention to replace secular programs rather than bridging to them. There are several networks of Christian 12-step groups with this intention. Although the intention is different, in practice these groups often serve many of the same functions as bridge groups. In congregations that are overtly hostile to secular resources, this may be the only possible kind of recovery ministry.

4. Recovery Department

A fourth approach to recovery ministry is for a local congregation to develop a recovery ministry in parallel with its other ministry departments such as music ministry or children's ministry. In this model, recovery ministry becomes one of the mainstream elements of congregational life. Recovery would not be the central feature of the congregation, but it would be fully integrated into the life of the congregation.

5. Treatment-related

A less common approach to recovery ministry is for a local congregation to operate or identify with a long-term residential treatment program. The Salvation Army has a number of congregations that are connected with a halfway house or other facility for long-term care. Many rescue missions have developed special relationships with local congregations that also serve this function. A lot of good work remains to be done to adapt this kind of strategy to congregations in a variety of social and cultural settings, but it can be a particularly effective way for a local church to invest in recovery.

Local Church Models *continued*

6. The Church in Recovery

There are not yet many examples of congregations who have taken an approach I call “the church in recovery.” In this model, recovery becomes the central paradigm of the congregation. Participation in recovery becomes as much a part of church as participation in worship services—in some cases participation in recovery groups may be a prerequisite for participation in large group meetings. It is still too early to know how effective this approach to recovery ministry will be.

7. The Recovery-Friendly Church

It is important to emphasize that congregations need not have recovery programs to support recovery. A congregation that stresses grace instead of shame in all of its affairs will be profoundly helpful to people in recovery.

Evaluate

Divide into four groups to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the models presented here. When the entire group comes back together, have each small group advocate for one of the models, based on what group members sense is the best match for your congregation.

—DALE S. RYAN. Adapted from “Recovery Ministry and the Local Church” (www.nacronline.com/dox/library/tools/local.shtml). Used with permission.

Discuss

1. What surprised you about the group’s readiness to handle certain models?
2. What obstacles would have to be overcome for our church to move to a different model?
3. What blessings could result from adopting that different model?

RECOVERY MINISTRIES

Further Exploration

Resources for strengthening your church's recovery ministry.

Building Your Church Through Counsel and Care *Marshall Shelley, general editor.* This book offers 30 strategies for transforming your church's ministry of care. Contributors include James Dobson, Richard Halverson, Eugene Peterson, and Randy Christian (Bethany, 1997; ISBN 1556619669).

Comfort and Hope Ministries of Grace Community Church, Austin, Texas (www.gatewaychurch.com/site/serving/comfortHope.asp). A model for how churches can incorporate support groups into their daily ministry.

Guide to Effective Rescue Mission Recovery Programs *by Michael Liimatta.* A 12-tape staff training resource (www.agrm.org/michael/guide.html). Liimatta is director of education for the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions.

Making the Most of Mistakes *by James D. Berkley* (Word, 1987; ISBN 0917463153).

"Recovery Ministry and the Local Church" *by Dale S. Ryan* (www.nacronline.com/dox/library/tools/local.shtml).

The Road to Recovery: Where to Get Help When You Hurt *by Rick Warren* (Zondervan Audio CD, 1998; ISBN 0310221188).

Standing Fast *Ed Dobson, Wayne Gordon, and Louis McBurney.* Experienced pastors offer crucial advice for ministry in an unfriendly world (Multnomah, 1994; ISBN 0880706465).

"When the Grief-Stricken Get Grief-Stuck" *by Rodger Murchsion* (LEADERSHIP, Spring 2003; www.ctlibrary.com/le/2003/spring/24.92.html). A moving study of why people sometimes do not progress in their grief, and what Christians can do about it.

RECOVERY MINISTRIES

Retreat Plan

How to create a weekend retreat on the theme of “Recovery Ministries”

BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS expands easily into a retreat format. Here is a sample retreat schedule you may follow for the “Recovery Ministries” theme. The purpose of this retreat is to help leaders better understand recovery ministries and administer them in their local churches.

Friday Evening

- ◆ 8–8:45 P.M. **Opening Session:** Hand out copies of “Why Recovery Matters,” the interview with Steve and Patti Cappa on pages 5–6, and allow time for each person to read it. Then form groups of three or four. Have each group discuss the questions at the end of the interview. Reconvene for the last 20 minutes and have the groups share their comments and consider what that may mean for the church.
- ◆ 9–9:45 P.M. **Bible Study:** Close the evening with “A Theology of Christian Recovery,” the Bible study on pages 3–4. Photocopy and pass out the study, or use the handout as your notes.

Saturday Morning

- ◆ 9–9:45 A.M. **Devotional:** Set the tone for the day by handing out (or presenting) “Humility Before the Lord” (p. 11). Discuss the questions at the bottom of the page, and have a time of thanksgiving to God for the church’s ministry among emotionally battered people.
- ◆ 10–11:00 A.M. **Activity.** Use the activity “Local Church Models” on pages 16–17 to evaluate what recovery models may best fit your church.
- ◆ 11:15–Noon. **Assessment:** Hand out “Getting Started,” the assessment on pages 7–8, to each participant. After all participants have read and completed the assessment, have them discuss what challenges the congregation will face in establishing or expanding a recovery ministry.
- ◆ Noon. **Lunch**

Saturday Afternoon

- ◆ 1–2 P.M. **Final Group Session:** Close the retreat with the case study “Finding Your Niche After Recovery” on page 10. Have each person spend some time alone to quietly read and respond to the questions on the handout. Have the group come together to share what God has taught them. Then pray together, asking God for guidance and wisdom as you take new steps together.

You can create similar retreat plans for any of the other BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS themes. Simply determine what you want to accomplish and select the handouts that support your objectives.