

Celebrate Recovery

A Christ-Centered Approach to Conquering Addictions

If you have ever attended a meeting of a secular 12-step program, you're acquainted with two commonalities: people identifying with their addictions to alcohol, drugs, sex, or gambling, and steps which point to a vague Higher Power available to help the addicted overcome their dependency. This format never struck a chord with me; the focus on a nebulous Higher Power made me dizzy, as did identifying with the unhealthy habits and patterns of thinking that had held me in bondage for years. I wanted to renew my mind, claim my identity in Christ and be transformed from the inside. Scouting the circuit for help and support, I found Celebrate Recovery: freedom, friendship, healing and so much more.

An Impressive Connection

Celebrate Recovery is a Christ-centered 12 step recovery program developed by John Baker, whose own struggle with alcohol led him to Saddleback Church and a relationship with pastor Rick Warren, author of best-sellers, *The Purpose Driven Church* and *The Purpose Driven Life*.

After completing the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and being mocked over his Higher Power – the only true Higher Power - Jesus Christ, John Baker found a void at Saddleback Church for openly sharing his struggles with alcoholism. Sensing other church members were secretly wrestling with hurts, habits, and hang-ups of all kinds, John approached Pastor Rick in 1991 with his vision for Celebrate Recovery (CR) and the ministry was founded. Today, there are CR ministries in more than 4500 churches across the United States and six countries outside.

I wanted to renew my mind, claim my identity in **Christ** and be transformed from the inside. Scouting the circuit for help and support, I found **Celebrate Recovery: freedom, friendship, healing and so much more.**

After completing the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and being mocked over his Higher Power – the only true Higher Power - Jesus Christ, John Baker found a void



at Saddleback Church for openly sharing his struggles with alcoholism. Sensing other church members were secretly wrestling with hurts, habits, and hang-ups of all kinds, John approached Pastor Rick in 1991 with his vision for Celebrate

Recovery (CR) and the ministry was founded. Today, there are CR ministries in more than 4500 churches

across the United States and six countries outside. Conducted by Christians who have been through recovery, the 12 steps of Celebrate Recovery follow eight principles based on the Beatitudes, taught by Jesus in His Sermon

on the Mount. Drawing on Christ's message of the way to true happiness, CR taps the power of Jesus to change people at their deepest need. Celebrate Recovery follows the Biblical truth that we need each other to grow spiritually and emotionally. Emphasizing a spiritual commitment to Christ and taking personal responsibility for

Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted; I earnestly believe that God exists, I matter to Him and that He has the power to help me recover.

the painful consequences of secretly held hurts, habits and hang-ups concealed in darkness, participants in CR are led forward through the steps and into the light of receiving forgiveness and emotional healing. Attend any CR meeting and you will hear proclamations such as, "Hello, I'm a grateful believer in Jesus Christ who struggles with fear, anger, and low self-esteem. I celebrate recovery from an addiction to pornography which almost destroyed my marriage."

The format for CR programs is consistent wherever you go; the Celebrate Recovery name is a registered trademark and set parameters are to be held when the name is used. Specifically, the guidelines include a curriculum of group-based teaching and study exclusively from the CR Leader's and Participant Guides, and the Bible. Large group meetings are devoted to praise, teaching and testimony, and gender-specific small groups meet for open sharing on recovery-ripe issues extending beyond the expected: chemical dependence, eating disorders, and pornography addictions, to victims of sexual or physical abuse, anger, control, codependency, rejection, loneliness, over spending, and depression among others.

Many churches offer a weekly Celebrate Recovery program format that begins with a meal and opportunity for fellowship, then large group gathering, small group sharing, and an evening conclusion of gathering for coffee and dessert. Gender-specific step study groups meet separately throughout the week and are closed to "newcomers" after the initial steps are covered.

This practice helps assure anonymity and promotes trust among the participating stepbrothers or stepsisters. Some churches also offer Life Hurts, God Heals, the CR curriculum for youth in junior and senior high school who

are experiencing pain or addiction and find themselves involved in sex, drugs, eating disorders, pornography, or troubled family lives.

Taking CR Inside

The attraction of changed lives is too strong to hold on to. Celebrate Recovery is reaching prisoners incarcerated by the law behind correctional walls, by taking CR programs inside of jails, minimum and medium security facilities. The Oklahoma Department of Corrections recognizes the ministry as a vital component to community re-entry programs and to date, 103 Celebrate



Recovery volunteers have received their DOC badges and privileges to work with prisoners in CR ministry programs. Oklahoma CR-Inside State Representative Mike McKenrick is working toward gaining the award of certification hours for prisoners who complete a Celebrate Recovery 12 step program as part of the education requirements mandated by DOC for reintegration. Another powerful statement of the involvement of Celebrate Recovery in the lives of inmates is the exciting collaboration between CR-Inside, Prison Fellowship Ministry, community churches, and numerous volunteers for

the 2007 Angel Tree campaign. The goal for McKenrick and Oklahoma's CR-Inside Team is to reach 1000 children of incarcerated offenders in DOC custody with gift bags and parties this Christmas season.

Bring it Home

There is an important message to convey given by Norma Murphy, East Oklahoma CR Representative, "Celebrate Recovery is for everyone. Churches and people need to understand that we all have something we put between God and ourselves. CR helps you identify areas you need to work on." After attending several Celebrate Recovery meetings at different churches over a 6-month period, I did a typical thing – left the program before finishing and stayed away for two years. Amazingly, when I returned, the greeting was warm – as though I'd been there all along, which was especially comforting to me. As a chronic non-committal person, drawing negative attention after a cut and run episode is unpleasant and usually a deterrent to receiving an invitation to get involved... but get involved, I did. "Hello, my name is Blythe and I'm a believer in Jesus Christ who struggles with self-reliance and selfishness, rebellion, a defensiveness nature and magical thinking. Gratefully, I celebrate recovery from a dependence on alcohol, many of my insecurities, shyness and people-pleasing." Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; I admit my powerlessness to control my tendency to do the wrong thing. Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted; I earnestly believe that God exists, I matter to Him and that He has the power to help me recover.

Happy are the meek; I choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control.

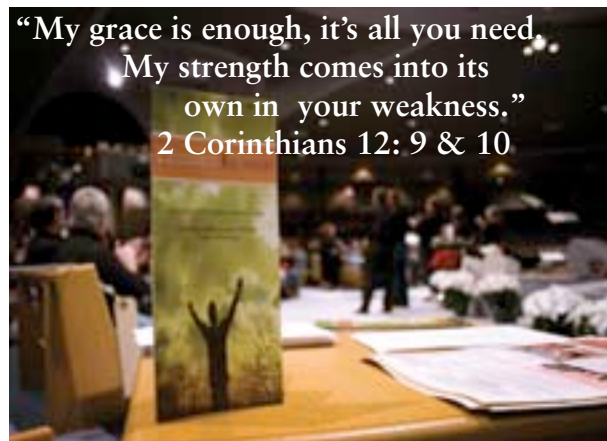
These are the first three principles taught in Celebrate Recovery programs. If you want to learn more, attend any CR meeting. You can find one nearest you by visiting www.celebraterecovery-sw.org. ☺

Celebrate Recovery's Road to Recovery Purpose Statement:

The purpose of the Celebrate Recovery ministry is to fellowship and celebrate God's healing power in our lives through the "12 Recovery Principles." This experience allows us to "be changed." By working and applying these Biblical principles, we begin to grow spiritually. We become free from our addictive, compulsive and dysfunctional behaviors. This freedom creates peace, serenity, joy and most importantly, a stronger personal relationship with God and others. As we progress through the program we discover our personal, loving and forgiving Higher Power - Jesus Christ, the one and only true Higher Power.

Pastor John Baker, founder

"My grace is enough, it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness." 2 Corinthians 12: 9 & 10



Celebrate Recovery Ministry Locations in the Tulsa Area

Southern Hills Baptist Church was the first church in the state to provide this ministry and has now helped start approximately 26 CR ministries in the area and state. Recently celebrating their 5th Anniversary of the ministry, the church has seen the life-changing benefits of the program. Not only has it brought additional people into the church, it has helped the entire congregation to learn to compassionately reach out to their friends. Southern Hills holds their CR night every Friday. The evening begins with dinner at 6:00PM in the Family Life Center, a Large Group/Worship Meeting at 7:00PM in the Worship Center, Small Groups at 8:00PM and Cafe Recovery at 9:00PM. The photos within this article were taken during one of these evenings and of various members of the church who devote so much effort to the ministry. Southern Hills Baptist is located at 5590 S. Lewis. Dr. William L. Hester Jr. "Hess" is the Senior Minister.

CR is held in other churches all over town as well. Here is list of CR ministries and meeting times.

Monday

Asbury United Methodist Church
6767 S. Mingo, Tulsa / 694.5277

Grace Community Church
1500 Kings Dr., Bartlesville, Tulsa / 333.2030

Tuesday

Believer's Church
4705 S. Memorial, Tulsa / 252.2690

First United Methodist Church
1115 S. Boulder, Tulsa / 592.3862

First Baptist Church,
107 E. Will Rogers Blvd., Claremore / 694.8355

Thursday

Faith Fellowship Church
13502 N 119 E Ave, Collinsville / 371.2996

Highland Park Christian
5708 E. 31st, Tulsa / 627.0783

Friday

Southern Hills Baptist Church
5590 S. Lewis Ave., Tulsa / 743.8897

Olivet Baptist Church
155 N. 65th W. Ave., Tulsa / 245.2261

Saturday

Family Church
NW Corner @ I-244 & Sheridan, Tulsa / 369.4250

Sunday

Eagle Heights Baptist
2617 N. Jardo, Stillwater / 405.624.3422