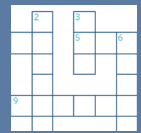


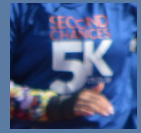
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How to Calm a Raging Ocean

by E.G. Andrews

Although Ocean Lehaul's towering stature and strong build might seem intimidating, one look at his warm smile will put you right at ease. But he hasn't always been so approachable.

Growing up in a broken family around Valentine, Nebraska, Ocean often slept in alleyways and behind dollar stores. His mother, who Ocean says was unable to free herself from alcoholism, gave up him and his sister to the foster care system. The transition from the independence of the streets to a foster house full of rules was difficult for him.

"You ain't my mom," Ocean would say to his foster mother.

Over time, his rebellious spirit only grew worse. He often fought with his foster parents, and one of those fights landed him in juvenile hall.



Photo by P&W Photography

After years of anger, crime, and pain, Ocean began plotting his own death, until an injured caterpillar changed everything.

Angry, aggressive, and out of control, Ocean soon had a problem with drugs and alcohol—and with people besides just his foster parents. On Halloween 2012, he was

arrested for assault on his girlfriend and young son. He went to prison in 2013.

Desperate for an end
In a Nebraska prison,

Ocean came face-to-face with the pain of his past and the consequences of letting his emotions control him. "I was angry, punching walls, banging my head," he recalls.

"I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat, I couldn't function. I was messed up." He didn't know how to calm the storm in his

"I was angry, punching walls, banging my head. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat, I couldn't function. I was messed up."

soul, and it eventually led him to solitary confinement. He started looking for a sign—anything that might

Continued on page 2

What to Do When Relapse Threatens

by Stacia Ray

You're in addiction recovery, when suddenly, something goes wrong. You've got a foot on the slippery slope, and you're close to backsliding. *What do you do now?*

Can you stop yourself from slipping? What even

counts as a relapse? It can depend on your addiction. Jeannine Hale, a group leader in the Celebrate Recovery program for people with "hurts, habits, and hang-ups," says, "Determine whether your addiction requires total avoidance or healthy moderation."

For things like drugs and self-harm, the goal is to cut

them out completely. "But," she adds, "an addiction to something like food or exercise isn't resolved by vowing to never eat again or never work out." Understanding your addiction will help you know what your recovery plan should look like and how to avoid relapse.

Are relapses avoidable?

Most people relapse at some point during recovery. But generally, the longer you go without relapses, the less likely they become. Dr. Timothy B. Walsh, vice president of Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge, says people with addictions are most vulnerable to withdrawal and relapse during the first few months of recovery, but at 18 months without a relapse, two-thirds of people will stay clean. At three years, 86 percent will stay clean.

Think of addiction as a fire, and recovery as water. "Even if you think you've extinguished a fire, there are still a few embers, or triggers,

TIPS FOR REGAINING YOUR FOOTING

- Determine what recovery and relapse look like for you.
- Keep a recovery inventory, writing down what did or didn't work each day.
- Identify your triggers and make a positive plan to avoid or deal with them.
- Learn from your backslides, and avoid all-or-nothing thinking.
- Surrender control (to God/a higher power) to help heal from addiction.
- When in doubt, ask for help and remember the importance of forgiveness.

that have the potential to reignite the fire," Walsh says.

Look at your pattern of use closely and see what prompted you to turn toward your addiction. Your trigger might be boredom, loneliness, conflict, or something else. Stay away from triggering situations when possible, and develop a plan for a healthy way to deal with the trigger if you run into it.

And if your triggers include certain people, like drug dealers or enabling family members, says Walsh, "you should cut off communications

from those unhealthy connections." Hale agrees, adding, "A clear no-visit boundary should be set in place if the family member is actively abusing drugs." And before entering potentially triggering situations, set a time limit on how long you'll stay, adds Walsh.

Since you can't always just walk away from certain triggers and temptations while behind bars, you need a plan for handling them. Hale recommends, "Ask yourself,

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SanneBerg/Stock

Relapses are often part of recovery. If you're starting to slip, walk away from triggers, and don't be afraid to ask for help.

A Mess Becomes a Mission

by Craig DeRoche

At 34 years old, I became the youngest person ever to hold the position of speaker in the Michigan House of Representatives. I had a wife I loved and three beautiful daughters.

I also had a secret: I was an alcoholic.

I was “highly functional,” meaning I had become skilled at hiding my alcohol dependence from others. But when I got arrested, my secret was suddenly on the front page of the newspaper.

My arrest turned out to be a blessing in disguise. With supportive friends and family, I got into recovery. I got a second chance—and with it, a new career. Eventually I joined Prison Fellowship to advocate for a more restorative criminal justice system for everyone. I’m

Photo by Prison Fellowship



grateful for how God has been working in my life, even when I didn’t know where He would eventually take me.

We all need second chances—and sometimes third and fourth. I went to rehab three times, was arrested twice, and violated probation before my recovery stuck. Even people who have never been arrested still have plenty they wish they could do over.

In this issue of Inside Journal, we’ve decided to focus on second chances. You’ll meet Ocean Lehaul (page 1), a man from Nebraska with a troubled childhood and some serious anger issues. He was ready to take his own life until some friends showed him he could start over. We also talked to experts about the best ways to handle a relapse when it happens (page 1).

We’ll invite you to explore how God specializes in second chances—for you and for others (page 3). We’ll sit down with former prisoner Robbie Robinson, who has made the most of his own second chances (page 4). Finally, we’ll share exciting news about Prison Fellowship’s efforts to declare April Second Chance Month, celebrating the worth and potential of people with a criminal history (also on page 4).

We hope you enjoy this edition! To share your thoughts on the content, write to: Editor, Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790.

Craig DeRoche is the senior vice president of advocacy and public policy at Prison Fellowship and the author of Highly Functional: A Collision of Addiction, Justice and Grace (2015). ■

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Raging Ocean

Continued from page 1

finally make his pain go away. Sitting in solitary, Ocean came up with a plan to end it all.

His plan was simple: when the COs let him out for his daily yard time, he would walk out, climb the fence, and hope the officer would shoot him. He didn’t want to escape the prison—he just wanted to escape his pain.

On the day of his “suicide mission,” something caught his eye—a small green caterpillar that appeared to be injured. Its pain reminded Ocean of his own, even though Ocean’s pain was emotional.

For a moment, Ocean wondered if God had put the caterpillar there for him to find. He prayed, “[God], You wanted me to find this? I already understand suffering. Why would You show me this?”

He started cussing God out. Then, with tears of desperation, he sat on the ground and prayed, “Let there be a purpose for suffering.”

Ocean began to realize that he couldn’t control the circumstances that caused his pain, but he could control how he reacted. He’d never understood that before.

If I’m wrong about that, what else am I wrong about? he thought.

Finding a second sign

Ocean knew he would need a safe place to ask hard questions. While in restrictive housing, he received visits every week from Prison Fellowship volunteers. His mentors, Jeff and Steve, met with him to discuss many difficult topics, like faith and doubt, pain and healing. Slowly, Ocean’s stone heart began to soften.

Still, he wanted a sign to show him that God really loved him.

“Ocean, let me ask you something,” said Jeff, who is a pastor. “I have 1,800 people at my church on a Sunday morning. Do you know which of those I spend the most time with?”

Ocean’s face went blank. He didn’t know.

“You,” said Jeff. “You are the one I’ve spent an hour and a half with every week for the past year. How’s that for a sign?”

Ocean said he felt like he was on a cliff. Then Jeff asked Ocean if he wanted Jesus Christ to be the one to catch him. Ocean did. He broke down sobbing.

“They prayed over me,” Ocean remembers, “and I felt everything just release from my shoulders. All the weight, the pain, the anger, the resentment ... God had to take it from me.”

When Ocean entered general population, he didn’t know how to socialize. He just knew he wanted to get involved in a Christian community. “[God] helped me get back into reality. For the first time, I trusted Him,” he says. “I didn’t care what people thought about me, because I knew what God thought about me.”

In June 2015, Ocean was released. Today he lives in the same area where he grew up, but he’s a different man now. He has forgiven his biological mother, who he says still struggles with addiction. He also has a job, a home, and a family.

“When I got out, I wanted to change the world,” says Ocean. “I realized I can’t change everybody, but I can make some difference. Right now, I’m honored being a father. And I have a desire to be much more.”

“If the old Ocean could see me now,” he adds, “I think he’d say, ‘I’m proud of you.’” ■

When Relapse Threatens

Continued from page 1

“What do I do, not if the temptation comes, but when? What tools do I have to handle the temptation?”

Hale also suggests keeping a daily inventory journal. First, she says, list “What has been done to me? What have I done to myself and others? And what are some of the good things I’ve done?” Then write in it every day, tracking what helped and what was a relapse risk, and looking for the actual reasons you are self-medicating in the first place.

‘Success is asking for help’

Relapses are about finding the things you missed last time so you can address them next time. Multiple relapses are common. Before they reach sobriety, “addicts have an average of six treatment episodes in their background,” says Walsh. “Recovery is an ongoing process, and every single time you relapse, you learn something, your motivation gets greater, and your emotions get stronger.”

A relapse doesn’t mean all the progress you’ve made is suddenly gone.

A relapse doesn’t mean all the progress you’ve made is suddenly gone. Walsh says, “Don’t say, ‘Since I slipped, I might as well go all the way now.’ All-

or-nothing thinking is dangerous. ‘Abstinence equals success, and relapse equals failure’ is not true. Success is asking for help.”

Faith is also an important part of avoiding and getting past a relapse. Walsh explains that research shows many spiritual practices help minds and bodies to heal. “Prayer and meditation, mindfulness, Scripture reading, and other spiritual practices are highly effective at transforming our bodies and brains,” he says.

Dr. David Larson of the National Institute for Healthcare Research and Dr. Dale Matthews of Georgetown University found higher religious commitment had a beneficial effect in 16 of 18 studies on alcoholism recovery and 12 of 12 studies on drug addiction recovery. Even programs without a specific faith foundation, such as 12-step programs, emphasize the importance of surrendering yourself to a higher power and admitting you are powerless.

In the end, it’s about forgiveness. “We all make mistakes, but we need to let go of the unforgiveness and the offense,” says Hale. “If you don’t give yourself over to God’s grace and forgiveness, you will sit in your guilt and self-loathing for a long time.”

Relapses are like any slip-up in life—you need to learn from your mistakes and move forward. Before you can be truly free, you might just need to give yourself a second (or third, or even thirtieth) chance. ■



Photo by P&W Photography

Two faithful friends showed Ocean that his life was one worth saving. Now he has a family, peace, and true purpose.

The Dangers of the Blame Game

by Stan Guthrie

My birth on August 1, 1961, was touch-and-go. Though I weighed only three pounds and 11 ounces, I beat the odds and survived. But my brain had been damaged during the delivery, and I was destined to go through life with cerebral palsy.

While an operation at age 6 allowed me to walk (pretty unsteadily) on my own, I would never be able to play competitive sports or do other activities that most people took for granted. My romantic prospects would be, I thought, severely limited. And while I did well in school and was raised in a loving family, my disappointment never quite left me. I often felt like an outsider who made others uncomfortable.

Most people around me probably didn't feel that way, but I did. And this made me embarrassed, angry, and sad. I often asked God—if He existed—"Why me?" In my most jealous moments, as I watched others do things I never could, the question became "Why me and not them?"

Whose fault is it?

Many of us blame ourselves or others for what happens to us. Many a mother will blame herself for a handicapped child. Maybe, she thinks, she did something wrong during the pregnancy. Many a disabled person will question whether he somehow deserves it. Perhaps the condition is proof that God does not love or accept him. *Maybe I sinned.*

In chapter 9 of the New Testament book of John, we see something similar

happening. Jesus saw a blind man, and not just any blind man. The story says that the man was "blind from birth." This would have been a terrifying way to live, particularly in that time and place. Unable to work and earn a living, the blind had to beg.

And while giving to the poor was common among the Jewish people, it probably did little for the self-esteem of those who relied on charity. Beggars probably felt humiliation, frustration, and envy instead of gratitude. The Bible says that Jesus' disciples went right along in seeking to assign blame. "Who sinned," they asked their teacher, "this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus, however, didn't join them in this blame game. "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus said. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him." Then Jesus did three strange things: (1) He made some mud, mixing His own saliva with the dust of the ground; (2) He rubbed the mixture on the man's eyes; and (3) He told the man to wash it off in a nearby pool.

After the man followed Jesus' instructions, the story says he came back able to see. Soon, his spiritual vision would also be clear. The formerly blind man would put his faith in Jesus as his Lord and Savior and have a second chance at life.

A good look in the mirror

I was a lot like that blind man. Though many people thought I was a "good guy" or

FIND YOUR FRESH START

When life goes wrong, who's to blame? We live in a broken world, and in addition to our own wrongdoings, bad things happen we have no control over. The most important question is not who's at fault, but what we should do next. Jesus said that an incredibly difficult situation was an opportunity for God to show His power. All the blind man had to do was trust Jesus, and his sight—physical and spiritual—was restored.

That invitation is open to you today. Putting your trust in Jesus doesn't mean your problems will instantly disappear, but it does mean your sins are forgiven, you are accepted, and God will give you a fresh vision for life. You can start with a prayer like this one:

God, I've been walking around in the dark, blaming others and holding on to shame. Come into my life and take over. Wash my eyes so I can see You, myself, and the world clearly. Help me start afresh. Amen.

If you'd like to learn more about having a relationship with God, Inside Journal wants to connect you with a partner organization that offers a free correspondence Bible study and Bible. Write to "Fresh Start," c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box. 1790, Ashburn, VA 20146-1790.



Sebastianoscondi/iStock

Who's fault is it when life goes wrong? We all mistakes, and sometimes bad things happen to us. The bigger question is: What do we do now?

even "an inspiration" for the way I made it through life with cerebral palsy, I was becoming more and more aware of my ugly self-pity and bitterness. I figured that if God were real, He was either too busy to care or too weak to help.

Then I started to read the Bible and see who He really was—someone who understands, who opens the eyes of the blind, and who is "full of unfailing love and faithfulness" (John 1:18). Not only that, I saw that Jesus chose to be crucified on a cross to die for my sins. But I also learned that three days later, He rose again, fully alive, proving that my sins were completely paid for.

As with the blind man, Jesus opened my eyes, and I believed. Though all my hateful attitudes didn't disappear right away—and I

am still sometimes extremely hard on myself and others—slowly the scales are falling from my spiritual eyes. Since Jesus, by His death and resurrection, has forgiven and accepted me, I am learning to forgive and accept myself. Little by little, the darkness in my soul is being replaced with His light. Day by day, whatever happens, I am experiencing a peace I never knew before. My eyes have been opened.

But what do you believe about Jesus? Are you ready to really see and receive the second chance He offers?

Stan Guthrie is the author of "God's Story in 66 Verses: Understand the Entire Bible by Focusing on Just One Verse in Each Book." He and Christine, his wife of 30 years, have three children. ■

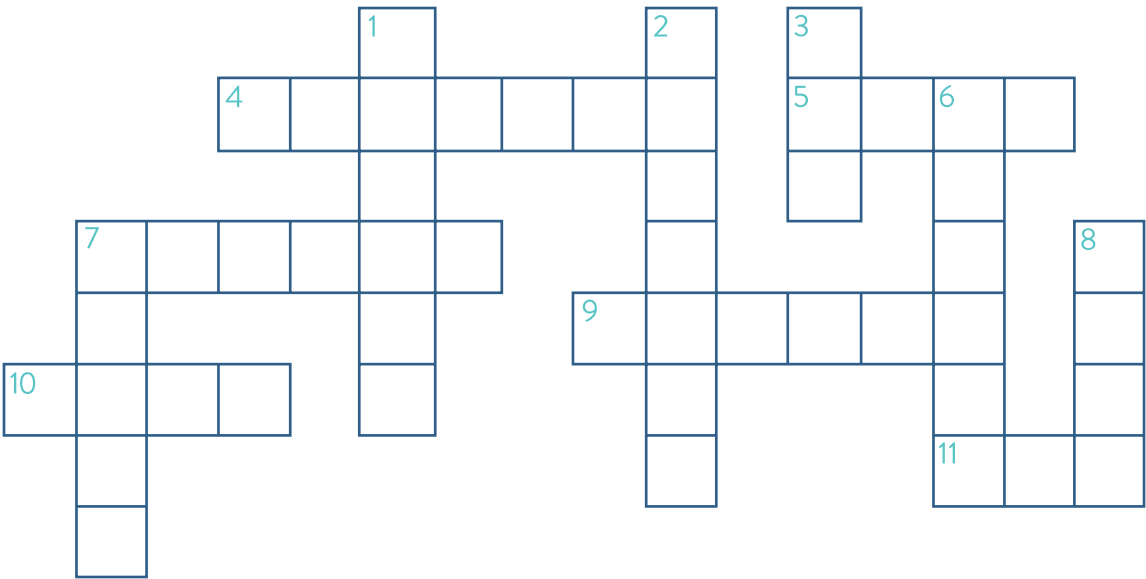
Can You Find a Second Chance?

ACROSS:

- To pardon an offense, flaw, or mistake
- Girl who pulls the football away from Charlie Brown
- Runner up; _____ place
- "I beg your _____!"
- Released from captivity; costing nothing
- Adam's female partner in the Bible

DOWN:

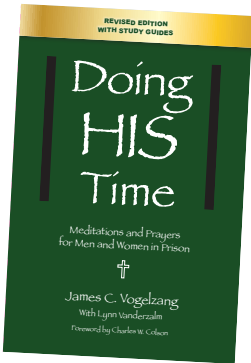
- Two _____ don't make a right
- To begin again
- "_____ for one and one for all"
- Opportunity
- Word used in an apology
- Opposite of hate



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One Man's Search for a New Start

by Stephen N. Reed

When you first meet Robbie Robinson, a man with a keen mind and an engaging personality, you would never guess that he came from a low-income, dysfunctional family. He started his life of crime at 14. During his second prison sentence, he found God and entered the Prison Fellowship Academy™, an intensive program that helped him learn how to start over.

Now, out of prison, he is the director of Discover Hope 5:17, an addiction counseling center in his hometown of Newton, Iowa. He and his wife Emily have four children and one on the way. Inside Journal talked with him about his transformation and how he now helps others get their own second chance in life.

IJ: When did you first know you wanted real change in your life?

RR: My father died on June 5, 2002. Then, the following year, my oldest son, 5-year-old Robquez, died in a house fire. It was too hard to handle alone. I couldn't bear the pain by myself.

IJ: This all happened while you were incarcerated, so what did you do to cope?

RR: I kept going to the Prison Fellowship Academy.



Photo by Prison Fellowship

Their volunteers gave me the idea that my life was worth more. They got me to wrestle with a new sense of self. I wanted to be a good father and husband. I could beat myself up forever for not being there for my son—or choose to do something. I received Jesus during the time I was in the Academy. Now when I see my oldest son's picture, he seems to be smiling at me, saying, "You've got it."

IJ: When you got out of prison the second time, how was it different than the first time?

RR: It wasn't peaches and cream, trying to get the world to believe in me. Employers saw a repeat felon, an African-American man. I knew I was going to have to work my butt off to get a job.

IJ: Who helped you face your reentry challenges?

RR: John was a 60-year-old white guy. I met him right after I got out of prison and went to church. He arrived in a Chevy S-10 pickup truck. It was the first time I felt someone believed in me. He loved me when I needed love. He pushed when I needed a push. I had never had that kind of encouragement. So, I believed enough to develop strength to fight for my new life.

IJ: How did you have to fight for it?

RR: There was this Christmas party at my younger son's school, and parents were invited [to volunteer]. The school wanted to keep me away [because of my record].

I had a job now and paid taxes. And I went back every day to get an answer as to why I shouldn't be involved with this part of my son's life. They finally let me in. I realized from this that, if you've made a change, sometimes to receive a second chance, you have to fight for it.

IJ: How did you get the idea to help others with addiction problems?

RR: We started with a support group at my church in 2014 that met on Tuesday nights. A little later, we created a place for people to come in daily for help. It's named Discover Hope 5:17 for my foundation Scripture verse, 2 Corinthians 5:17: "This means that anyone who

belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"

IJ: What insights might help people with addictions find a second chance?

RR: Addiction results from pain. It can be painful to get out of it, too, but *that* pain is worth it. It's a process. You know, I could wake up tomorrow and say, "I'm done. I love Jesus, but this is too much." I've got to make up my mind every day to live my new life. That's free will. And that's what I share with others who are addicted.

IJ: Do you ever feel like you're a walking picture of second chances?

RR: Yes! Each time I come to my kids' school now, it tickles me. Before they didn't want me to show up. Now they email me and ask me to speak to the students at the school. The chief of police calls me to talk before the local D.A.R.E. group! I speak at the local jail and prison, too. I tell them that they can have a second chance, too—Christ in us. Second chances mean giving people the opportunity to live a life they never lived before.

Stephen N. Reed is a freelance writer. He and his wife Leni live in South Carolina with their young son. ■

Second Chance Month Celebrates Dignity

by A.R. Quinn

When does a prison sentence end? Are you ever really "square" with society again after a criminal conviction?

These questions are at the heart of Second Chance Month, a nationwide campaign to celebrate the dignity and potential of those with a criminal record during April. While people like you on the inside are doing the work to be ready

for a second chance, people on the outside are advocating for second chances, and raising awareness of some of the obstacles people face when trying to rebuild their lives after a prison sentence. The coalition supporting Second Chance Month includes Prison Fellowship, the NAACP, the ACLU, and dozens of other groups.

"This is an issue that doesn't just impact conservatives or liberals," said Ngozi Ndulue of the NAACP at an event kicking off Second Chance Month. "It impacts all of us."



Photo by Prison Fellowship

Last year, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution declaring April 2017 the first nationwide Second Chance Month. It was introduced by Sen. Robert Portman, a Republican from Ohio. It was co-sponsored by Sens. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.; James Lankford, R-Okla.; and Richard Durbin, D-Ill. Second Chance Month was also declared by the Colorado state legislature, the Maine state legislature, the governor of Michigan, and the mayor of St. Paul, Minnesota.

In 2018, efforts are underway to get even more states and cities to declare Second Chance Month.

Churches, organizations, and individuals are also getting involved, spreading a movement to enable citizens to succeed after they have paid their debt to society.

Some churches are hosting Second Chance Sundays during April, educating their members about returning citizens, and celebrating that the offer of restoration and redemption talked about in the Bible is for everyone—no matter what's in their past. There are also Second Chance Month job fairs, film screenings, and Second Chance 5K run/walk events that bring together people with a criminal history and other members of the community. There's even a virtual 5K that people can join from anywhere in the world, whether they are running on a treadmill or walking around their neighborhood.

You can let your loved ones know that April is Second Chance Month. They can find ideas and resources for

creating a culture of second chances at prisonfellowship.org/secondchances. ■

PAGE 3 CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWER KEY:

ACROSS:

4. Forgive; 5. Lucy; 7. Second; 9. Pardon; 10. Free; 11. Eve

DOWN:

1. Wrongs; 2. Restart; 3. All; 6. Chance; 7. Sorry; 8. Love



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"[The U.S. Senate] Designates April 2017 as Second Chance Month ... Honors the work of communities, governmental entities, nonprofit organizations, congregations, employers, and individuals to remove unnecessary legal and societal barriers that prevent an individual with a criminal record from becoming a productive member of society. ... Calls on the people of the United States to observe Second Chance Month through actions and programs that promote awareness of collateral consequences and provide closure for individuals who have paid their debts." – Senate Resolution Declaring April Second Chance Month