Is God an Essential Part of Recovery?

There’s a lot of controversy over believing in a Higher Power in recovery. On one hand, some believe that God is *not* essential to recovery; while on the other hand, others believe God is an essential part of recovery.

Whether you’re in a Christian recovery group or a secular recovery group, those who take God more seriously and develop a conscious awareness of Him in their lives are more successful in recovery than those who don’t.

Spirituality and Sobriety

Evidence shows that those who believe in a Higher Power are more successful in recovery. Someone once asked Dr. Dave Stoop, coeditor of *The*[*Life Recovery Bible*](https://store.newlife.com/search?searchText=life%20recovery%20bible&id=q78965), “*Is God an essential part of recovery?*”

“*Yes*,” said Dr. Stoop. “*Success in maintaining sobriety in recovery is directly related to the development of a personal relationship with God*.”

He went on to point out a case study published in *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly* where 195 juvenile offenders were included in the research. The authors of the study reported that the problems of addiction were directly related to a lack of purpose and a sense of not fitting in.

The study found that the top two factors contributing to an addict becoming sober were (1): caring about other people, and (2): believing in a Higher Power.

“*Those who took the time to share with another addict, or even just helping set up for meetings, or cleaning up after a meeting–those who participated were more likely to maintain sobriety six months after discharge from the program*,” explained Dr. Stoop.

Nearly half of the group identified themselves as agnostic, atheist, or nonreligious when they entered the program. Developing a connection with God gave these young people a sense of purpose, which reduced their self-absorbed thinking. The individuals in the study who participated in daily spiritual experiences such as prayer, Bible study, or worship were more likely to remain sober.

This shouldn’t be a surprise to those who know the spiritual roots of Alcoholics Anonymous. Its founders were devout believers—the more they included God in their meetings, the higher the success rate for recovery and sobriety. And as this report suggests, that is still true today.

Faith and the Brain

What happens in our brains when we develop our faith in God?

It appears that when a person is involved in self-absorbed thinking, they are prisoners of their left brain hemisphere. Left to itself, this side of the brain will tend to ruminate on problems which lead to increased social anxiety. But when we have an intense spiritual experience, the right hemisphere of our brain is awakened and balances out the tendencies of the left hemisphere.

In the study that Dr. Stoop pointed out, one of the subjects in the study who overcame addiction said, “*I need a power greater than myself to enter my life!*”  
How true that statement is!

It’s not easy humbling ourselves to believe in a power greater than ourselves—but, it is worth it! By believing in a power greater than ourselves and relinquishing our power over to Him, we will experience God’s power in our life.