

## Lesson 7

# SPONSOR

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**Principle 4:** Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

*“Happy are the pure in heart.” (Matthew 5:8)*

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

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

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### Introduction

Last month, we talked about the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which you found when you made the decision to turn your life and your will over to the care of God.

Now you will see that the road to recovery is not meant to be traveled alone. You will find that you actually need three relationships. Most important is a relationship with Jesus Christ. In addition, you need the relationship of your recovery group or a church family. Last, you need the relationship of a sponsor and/or accountability partner. Identifying a sponsor and/or accountability partner is especially important before you begin Principles 4 through 6, in which you work on getting right with God, yourself, and others.

Principle 4 is all about getting rid of our “truth decay,” about coming clean! Proverbs 15:14 tells us, “A wise person is hungry for the truth, while a fool feeds on trash.” Are you ready to feed on the truth about your life? Well then, it’s time to take out the trash!

That trash can get pretty heavy at times, so I don’t want you to handle it alone. You need a genuine mentor, coach, or, in recovery terms, a sponsor and/or accountability partner. Some of you may still be unconvinced that you really need another person to walk alongside of you on your road to recovery, so tonight we are going to answer the five following questions:

1. Why do I need a sponsor and/or accountability partner?
2. What are the qualities of a sponsor?
3. What does a sponsor do?
4. How do I find a sponsor?
5. What is the difference between a sponsor and an accountability partner?

## **Why Do I Need a Sponsor and/or an Accountability Partner?**

There are three reasons why you need a sponsor and/or accountability partner.

### ***Having a Sponsor or Accountability Partner Is Biblical***

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 (GNT) tells us, “Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone ..., there is no one to help him.... Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone.”

Proverbs 27:17 tells us, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” The phrase “one another” is used in the New Testament over fifty times!

### ***Having a Sponsor or Accountability Partner Is a Key Part of Your Recovery Program***

Do you know that your recovery program has four key elements to success? If your program includes each of these areas, you are well on your way to the solution, to wholeness.

The first key is maintaining your honest view of reality as you work each step. I have yet to see this program fail for someone who could be completely honest with himself or herself. I have, however, seen some give up on their recoveries because they could not step out of their denial into God’s truth. Having someone help to keep you honest is a real plus in successfully working the steps.

The second key element is making your attendance at your recovery group meetings a priority in your schedule. This doesn’t include taking the summer off or not going to a meeting because it’s raining outside. Don’t get me wrong, it’s great to take a vacation, but after the two weeks are up, come back to your meetings. Remember, your hurts, hang-ups, and habits don’t take vacations. You need to make Friday nights here at Celebrate Recovery and other meeting nights that you attend, a priority. A sponsor and/or accountability partner can encourage you to attend your meetings.

The third element is maintaining your spiritual program with Jesus Christ through prayer, meditation, and study of His Word. We are going to focus more on

this in Principle 7, but you don't have to wait until you get there to develop your relationship with Christ. Your sponsor can pray for you and help to keep you centered on God's Word.

The last key element to a successful program is getting involved in service. Once you have completed Principle 8, you will be able to serve as a sponsor. Until that time, however, there are plenty of other service opportunities to get you started.

You know, service is nothing but love in work clothes, and there are plenty of opportunities to "suit up" for at Celebrate Recovery. We need help with the Bar-B-Que, with Solid Rock Cafe, passing out bulletins, and much more. If you want to get involved, see me, give me a call, or speak to your small group leader. Your sponsor can also suggest ways for you to serve.

Without exception, everyone here needs a sponsor and/or an accountability partner.

### ***Having a Sponsor and/or an Accountability Partner Is the Best Guard Against Relapse***

By providing feedback to keep you on track, a sponsor and/or accountability partner can see your old dysfunctional, self-defeating patterns beginning to surface and point them out to you quickly. He or she can confront you with truth and love without placing shame or guilt.

Ecclesiastes 7:5 (TLB) tells us that "It is better to be criticized by a wise man than to be praised by a fool!" The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism.

### **What Are the Qualities of a Sponsor?**

"Though good advice lies deep within a counselor's heart, the wise man will draw it out" (Proverbs 20:5 TLB).

When you are selecting a sponsor look for the following qualities:

- 1. Does his walk match his talk? Is he living the eight principles?** I have known many people that have the 12-Step "lingo" down pat. They can quote the Big Book of AA and even give page number references. But their lifestyle doesn't match their talk. Be certain that the person that you choose as a sponsor is someone whose life example is worthy of imitation.
- 2. Does she have a growing relationship with Jesus Christ?** Do you see the character of Christ developing in her?

3. **Does he express the desire to help others on the road to recovery?** There is a difference between helping others and trying to fix others. We all need to be careful to guard the sponsorship relationship from becoming unhealthy and codependent.
4. **Does she show compassion, care, and hope but not pity?** You don't need someone to feel sorry for you, but you do need someone to be sensitive to your pain. As Pastor Rick (Warren) says, "People don't care about how much you know until they know about how much you care!"
5. **Is he a good listener?** Do you sense that he honestly cares about what you have to say?
6. **Is she strong enough to confront your denial or procrastination?** Does she care enough about you and your recovery to challenge you?
7. **Does he offer suggestions?** Sometimes we need help in seeing options or alternatives that we are unable to find on our own. A good sponsor can take an objective view and offer suggestions. He should not give orders!
8. **Can she share her own current struggles with others?** Is she willing to open up and be vulnerable and transparent? I don't know about you, but I don't want a sponsor who says that he has worked the principles. I want a sponsor who is living and working the principles every day!

### **What Is the Role of a Sponsor?**

Let me give you six things that your sponsor can do:

1. **She can be there to discuss issues in detail that are too personal or would take too much time in a meeting.** This is especially true with Principle 4. You don't share your complete inventory in a group setting. "I'm the lowest form of life on the earth" is a phrase often repeated by those doing their inventory. Others deny, rationalize, and blame: "Okay, I admit I did such and such, but it's not as if I killed anybody"; "Sure, I did a, b, and c, but my spouse did d through z; compared to my spouse, I'm a saint"; "All right, I admit it, but I never would have done it if my boss wasn't such a jerk."
 

The sponsor can be there to share his or her own experiences and to offer strength and hope: "You think you feel like a bum! Let me tell you how I felt when I did my inventory!" The sponsor's role is to model Christ's grace, forgiveness, and to give a sense of perspective.
2. **He is available in times of crisis or potential relapse.** I have always told the newcomers that I have sponsored, "Call me before you take that first drink. You can still take it after we talk, if you decide to. But please call

first!” Remember Ecclesiastes 4:12 (GNT): “Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone.”

3. **She serves as a sounding board by providing an objective point of view.** This is especially true in Principle 6. When you are dealing with the sensitive area of making amends and offering forgiveness, you need a good sounding board.
4. **He is there to encourage you to work the principles at your own speed.** It is not his job to work the principles for you! He can coach your progress, confront you when you’re stuck, and slow you down when you’re working too fast.
5. **Most important, she attempts to model the lifestyle that results from working the eight principles.** It’s difficult to inspire others to accomplish what you haven’t been willing to try yourself. A good sponsor lives the principles.
6. **A sponsor can resign or be fired.** Sponsorship is not a lifetime position.

### **How Do I Find a Sponsor and/or an Accountability Partner?**

The responsibility of finding a sponsor is yours, but let me give you a few final guidelines to help you in your search.

1. **First and foremost, the person MUST be of the same sex as you. NO EXCEPTIONS.** I don’t think I need to expand this one.
2. **Can you relate to this person’s story?** If you are choosing someone to be your sponsor, does he or she meet the qualities of a good sponsor that we just covered?
3. **Come to the Bar-B-Que and the Solid Rock Cafe.** Invest some time in fellowship and get to know others in your group. That’s the main reason we have these fellowship events.
4. **If you ask someone to sponsor you, and that person says no, do not take it as a personal rejection.** Remember that their own recovery has to come first. Besides, they may already be sponsoring other people. I know a lot of you have asked your small group leader to be your sponsor. They all sponsor others, and the responsibility of leadership is great. If they turn you down, it’s not personal. Their plate is simply too full! If someone turns you down, ask someone else! You can even ask for a “temporary” sponsor and/or accountability partner. Remember, these are not a lifetime commitments.
5. **Most important, ask God to lead you to the sponsor and/or an accountability partner of His choosing.** He knows you and everyone in

this room. He has someone in mind already for you. All you need to do is ask!

### **What Is the Difference between a Sponsor and an Accountability Partner?**

A sponsor is someone who has completed the four Celebrate Recovery participant's guides and has worked through the eight principles and the 12 Steps. He or she meets the six requirements that we talked about in the "Role of a Sponsor." The main goal of this relationship is to choose someone to guide you through the program.

An accountability partner is someone you ask to hold you accountable for certain areas of your recovery or issues, such as meeting attendance, journaling, and so forth. This person can be at the same level of recovery as you are, unlike a sponsor, who should have completed the eight principles or 12 Steps. The main goal of this relationship is to encourage one another. You can even form an accountability team of three or four.

The accountability partner or group acts as the "team" whereas the sponsor's role is that of a "coach."

You can start forming accountability teams in your small groups tonight. When you share, just ask if anyone is interested. Let God work and see what happens. I can guarantee this, though: nothing will happen if you don't ask.

Start looking for and building your support team tonight!

Let's close in prayer.

*Dear God, thank You for this group of people who are here to break out of the hurts, habits, and hang-ups that have kept them bound. Thank You for the leaders You have provided. Thank You that You love us all, no matter where we are in our recoveries. Show me the person You have prepared to be my sponsor. Help us to establish an honest and loving relationship that honors You and helps both me and my sponsor grow stronger in You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.*