

FAITH

SERVING IN ADDICTION RECOVERY MINISTRY

Greg Schmalhofer has been involved in recovery ministry for over 15 years. He previously served as Director of the Discovery Recovery ministry, located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Schmalhofer is a certified family recovery specialist and has earned graduate degrees in Theological Studies and Christian Ministry (2022) from Liberty University. He sat down with *The Lancaster Patriot* to discuss drug and alcohol addiction recovery ministry. Here is a condensed and edited version of our Q&A.

What is recovery ministry?

For me recovery ministry is first about caring for people that are in the midst of a very difficult time of early recovery and coming alongside them with the message that there is a loving, caring, and compassionate God who wants to forgive them and help them be successful in recovery and in a brand-new life as well.

What got you involved in recovery ministry?

I attended Grace Baptist Church for many years, and they have a recovery ministry there called Discovery Recovery. One day I visited a Discovery Recovery Sunday School class. And from that point—that was over 15 years ago—I’ve just loved recovery ministry. I came to love the people there. Getting involved opened my eyes to the need.

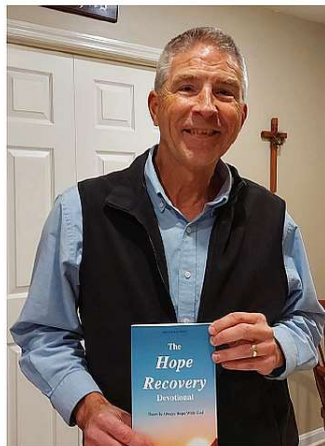
I’ve been involved in recovery ministry ever since that first visit. I just tried to help people in whatever way I could. Eventually, my involvement led me into the role of Director of Discovery Recovery. I served in that role for about five years. It was a wonderful time. I loved the ministry and I loved caring for people. My wife, Brenda, and I made so many very dear friends through the ministry.

Despite not having an addiction history, God was willing to use me to minister to people in recovery. Since resigning in 2019, I still try to attend two or three recovery meetings a week. I still love to minister to and care for others.

What are the spiritual components to drug or alcohol addiction?

Often the spiritual components involve making the drug or the alcohol an idol. The addict will become a slave to the drug or alcohol, and in so doing they largely reject God or at the least do not trust God for help and so they look to drugs and alcohol.

But it is also important to note that anybody without God is lost,



Greg Schmalhofer, author of The Hope Recovery Devotional.

and addicts are lost no worse than somebody not in addiction. But the message that I want to spread is that there is hope. You can have success in recovery and can have peace and joy with God—that is a message appropriate for those in addiction, but it is also appropriate for everyone. People are lost in sins of so many kinds. If you have not brought God into your life, then you are still lost in your sin—whatever that sin might be. Without God, you need to come to know the God of the Bible, whether you are an addict or not.

What distinguishes Christian recovery ministry from other types?

When someone becomes addicted to drugs or alcohol, it becomes very difficult to stop. Even though people can realize their addiction is killing them, they still cannot stop. They need a lot of help—and the spiritual side of that need is huge.

Oftentimes in traditional rehab, the spiritual component is either minimized or not included. But the spiritual component is a critical part of the solution. Both Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) speak about a spiritual experience with God. They will typically stop there and refer to God as your “higher power.” But I believe there’s only one God to find. And if you genuinely seek to find God, you will find the loving God of the Bible, revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ. We take the “secular” approach a step further and tell them who the true higher power really is. And a lot of people are very receptive to that.

During your experience with recovery ministry in Lancaster County, what has been the response of participants to the

faith-based approach?

Most of the individuals that we work with come from an addiction recovery facility or a recovery house. They come looking for help and most of them are open to the idea of God, or, as the AA and NA book refers to it, “a higher power.” Once they come to Discovery Recovery, we can freely share with them the truth of who the higher power really is. And most of them are eager to hear about God; they are eager to hear there is hope. We have had some amazing success stories of what God can do to dramatically change lives.

Do you think government programs or policies are sufficient to solve the problem of drug and alcohol addiction in Lancaster County?

Simply put, no. To be successful in recovery takes much more than criminal consequences or government programs. Success in recovery requires a “power greater than ourselves” and ultimately it requires having a spiritual experience with the true God. As the books of AA and NA say, it is “God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.” I would love to see more local churches get involved in a recovery ministry—I think that will go a long way to solving this problem in our county.

diction to drugs or alcohol in Lancaster County, how can they find a Christ-centered addiction recovery group?

Several steps can be taken. First, if they are connected to a church, it would be wise to contact their pastor and ask for information about a faith-based recovery group. Also, the most common faith-based recovery group nation-wide is Celebrate Recovery and there are several of these recovery groups in Lancaster County. In addition, the Discovery Recovery faith-based support group is a wonderful support group meeting right here in Lancaster at Grace Baptist Church.

How can individuals and churches in Lancaster County get involved with addiction recovery ministries?

Individuals can attend a faith-based recovery meeting and come alongside others in a loving and caring way. For churches, I encourage church leaders to be open to the idea of a recovery ministry in some way, even if it is only by providing recovery resource materials, or schedules of local recovery meetings and local faith-based meetings to church members. Churches can

consider having faith-based books and resources available in the lobby, welcome center, or library. I would be happy to get together with any church leaders to discuss ways to start a recovery ministry.

You recently wrote a book entitled “The Hope Recovery Devotional: There is Always Hope with God.” Tell us about that book.

It is a 100-day recovery devotional. Each day there is a recovery principle, a Bible passage, a message connecting the passage to recovery, and a brief prayer. There is also space for journaling. The main message of the devotional is that despite your circumstances and your past, there is always hope with God. It is a book intended for individuals in recovery, but it is also appropriate for individuals with any struggle and even anyone seeking to refresh their faith. I am so grateful and humbled by the dear comments and feedback about the book from many in recovery. I look at this book as just another way to minister to people in recovery.

Where can people get the book?

It is available for purchase online from Amazon, Barnes and Noble and many other online retailers. It is available in three formats: paperback, hardcover, and eBook. The website www.HopeRecovery.us has more information.

For more information about addiction recovery ministry, contact Greg Schmalhofer at HopeRecoveryUs@gmail.com.

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