



Alton's Celebrate Recovery Chapter Offers Faith-Based Healing

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - For people who are looking for a faith-based, confidential support system, Celebrate Recovery might be for you.

This nationwide program is modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous but targets a wide variety of “hurts, hang-ups and habits.” Not only do participants address the behavior — the habit — but they also look at why they’re drawn to the behavior and what purpose it serves in their lives, all through a Christian lens.

“There’s a difference between sobriety and recovery. Sobriety is to stop that habit, externally at least. Recovery is when you no longer do it inside you,” Chaplain Marc Lane, who leads the group, said “Sobriety is stopping drinking, but recovery is when you no longer have that desire or need to do that. You’re free from that. And so we’re really after recovery.”

Lane explained that Celebrate Recovery has chapters throughout the U.S. and serves as an offshoot of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Originally, AA literature included scripture and relied heavily on Biblical teachings, but it eventually transitioned to a more secular model. Celebrate Recovery is a Christian program that uses both the 12 steps and other principles similar to the Beatitudes of Jesus Christ.

While AA is focused on alcohol use, the target group for Celebrate Recovery is vague. The program’s [official website](#) describes them as a “community of strugglers,” but the steps have proven effective for people who deal with different traumas and a variety of addictive behaviors, including alcohol and drug dependency, sexual abuse trauma, gambling addiction, sex addiction, financial difficulties, anxiety and eating disorders, among others.

Celebrate Recovery supports abstinence from these behaviors, just like AA. But Lane said they also try to understand the reason behind the behavior. He likens it to weeding a garden; a weed will grow back unless you remove it at the roots.

“the 12 steps that you saw with AA. The only difference is instead of having a couple of words that were kind of unclear on who this God was, they made it clear in the steps,” Lane said. “AA is a good tool. It works. It just doesn’t deal with why we do what we do, which is the real thing that Celebrate Recovery keys in on.”

And for a lot of people, it seems to work. Just this past week, two people took home two-year coins, which signifies that they have avoided their behavior for two full years. Another celebrated with an 18-month coin, and two more received one-year coins. Many of those who received coins or monthly chips were so proud that they posed for a photo. (Lane took the photo but stresses that the program is confidential, so no identities are revealed and photos are rare and completely optional.)

“Chips and coins is the way that we encourage individuals to celebrate with them their accomplishments, their milestones,” Lane said. He added that learning to manage pain and overcome hurt are powerful lessons and certainly worth recognizing. “We’re good people. We just make poor decisions...We’re to live here in the present and do that in a way that allows us to grow and become strong. So we do celebrate.”

There are Celebrate Recovery groups that meet almost every night throughout Madison County. In Alton, the group meets on Wednesdays at Calvary Baptist Church. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and a large group program starts at 7 with either testimonies or a lesson from the 12 steps. People can then break into smaller groups that are gender-specific and either generalized or focused on specific issues; for example, there's a group for women with chemical dependencies, one for men with anger issues, another for sexual purity.

To those who are curious but unsure if Celebrate Recovery is right for them, Lane encourages you to simply come and check it out. A lot of people sit through the large group portion of the meeting, and then you can decide whether you want to stay for one of the smaller groups.

“The Bible teaches us that sin — addiction — is pleasurable for a season,” Lane added. “You get some enjoyment out of a lot of these things for a few seconds, a few moments, right? But every time you go back to it, you need more. And it's got side effects. It's got baggage that goes with it. But now you're hooked, physically or emotionally or psychologically. You begin to lose hope in the fact that you can break free from that. And the reality is, it's not that that's got its talons in you. It's the hurts and the hang-ups, and you just don't see it.”

The goal of Celebrate Recovery, then, is to understand and overcome those hurts, hang-ups and habits. You can check out the [Alton chapter's official webpage](#) or [Facebook page](#) for more information about local meetings. Visit [Celebrate Recovery's official site](#) to learn about the program.