

ADDICTION AND GRACE: STEP SIX

“Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”

From the Big Book, p. 76 “ We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things we have admitted are objectionable? Can He take them all – every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.

When ready, we say something like this: “My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray you now removes from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength as I go out from here , to do your bidding. Amen.” We have then completed Step Six.”

From the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous:

“This is the Step that separates the men from the boys.” (Women from the girls!) ...any person capable of enough willingness and honesty to try repeatedly Step Six on all his/her faults – without any reservation whatsoever – has indeed come a long way spiritually, and is therefore entitled to be called a person who is sincerely trying to grow in the image and likeness of his/her own Creator.”

‘The oft disputed question of whether God can – and will, under certain circumstances defects of character – will be answered with a prompt affirmative by almost any A.A. member. ‘

‘If we ask, God will certainly forgive our derelictions. But in no case does He render us white as snow and keep us that way without our cooperation. That is something we are supposed to be willing to

work towards ourselves. He asks only that we try as best we know how to make progress in the building of character.'

'So Step Six – 'were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character – is A.A.'s way of stating the best possible attitude one can take in order to make a beginning on this lifetime job. This does not mean that we expect all our defects of character to be lifted out of us as the drive to drink (addiction) was. A few of them maybe, but with most of them we shall have to be content with patient improvement. The key words 'entirely ready' underline the fact that we want to aim at the very best we know or can learn.'

How many of us have this degree of readiness? In an absolute sense, practically nobody has it. The best we can do, with all the honesty we can summon, is to try to have it.'

'There is always a sticking point, a point at which we say, "No, I can't give this up yet." ..I will never give this up!' No matter how far we have progressed , desires will always be found which oppose the grace of God' ...we must recognize now that we exult in some of our defects. We really love them.' 'If we would gain any real advantage of the use of this Step on problems other than alcohol, we shall need to make a brand new venture into openmindedness. We shall need to raise our eyes toward perfection. It will seldom matter how haltingly we walk. The only question will be 'Are we ready?'

SUNDAY CIRCLE: BREATHING UNDER WATER 4/21

“It was easy for me to find many biblical quotes validating Step 6, and I could have used many more, because this step, although not commonly followed, is thoroughly biblical. It struggles with – and resolves – the paradox of the chicken and the egg. It first recognizes that we have to work to see our many resistances, excuses and blockages, but then we have to fully acknowledge that God alone can do the ‘removing’.” 49

“Which should come first, the grace or responsibility? The answer is both come first. All we can do is get out of the way, and then the soul takes its natural course. Grace is inherent to creation from the beginning...but it is a lot of work to get out of the way and allow that grace to fully operate and liberate.”

Does God produce us or do we produce God?

Pope Leo X/Martin Luther:” The pope emphasized we had to run and work for our salvation in fear and trembling (Phil.2:12) while Luther held the more radical Gospel position of free grace, where no one really needs to run at all. God’s love is a totally free gift...Both the pope and Luther were right – and both misunderstood and marginalized each other”

The issue of the paradox – ‘that paradox is simply truth standing on its head to get our attention’ - paradox in Christianity – Jesus both human and divine, Mary both virgin and mother, God the Three in One, Eucharistic bread also Body of Christ etc.

Step 6 “manages to operate paradoxically. It states that we must first fully own and admit that we have ‘defects of character’, but then, equally, step back and do nothing about it, as it were, until we are ‘entirely ready’ to let God do the job.”

“I like to say we must ‘undergo God.’” 50 ‘Yes, God is pure and free gift, but there is a necessary undergoing to surrender to this Momentous Encounter...to fully understand is always to stand under and let things

have their own way with us...It is a giving up of control to receive a new gift and find a new kind of control.”

Louis Pasteur “Chance favors the prepared mind.”

“So the waiting , the preparing of the mind for ‘chance’, the softening of the heart, the deepening of expectation and desire, the gladness to really let go, the recognition that we really do not want to let go, the actual willingness to change, are all the work of weeks, months, and years of ‘fear and trembling.” 51

‘Let it be done unto me’ The recognition that it is finally done unto me is the supreme insight of the Gospels, which is here practically taught in Step 6. It is the prayer of Mary at the beginning of her journey and of Jesus at the end of his life.’

The problem is that this idea has become the idea of ‘faith becoming itself a good work’ that we could perform, and the ego was back in charge...Many Christians have remained thoroughly materialistic, warlike, selfish, racist, sexist, and greedy for power and money while relying on ‘amazing grace’ to snatch them into heaven at the end...they surely did not bring much heaven onto this earth.’ 52