

SUNDAY CIRCLE: ADDICTION AND GRACE

STEPS NINE TEN AND ELEVEN: A LIFE OF PROGRAM

Starting with Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so, would injure them and others.

Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

And Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for the knowledge of God's will and the power to carry that out.

Having completed Step Nine, the addict has cleansed the past. No longer are the burdens of guilt, shame and wrongful behavior always present in our conscious and unconscious decisions and actions. We have through working these Steps achieved, sometimes quickly and sometimes progressively over time, a place of peace, and a way of life that can become a daily habit, a kind of 'order' of life in the sense that the traditional religious orders offer – the Benedictines or the Franciscans to their followers. There are certain 12 Step actions and behaviours that form our daily lives.

Having made the amends we could, we can now move to Step 10: continuing to take personal inventory each day of how we have lived, behaved toward others and ourselves. This is a very normal Christian practice of examining our conscience at day's end to honestly admit to God and ourselves where we have lived a Christ like life, and where we have failed. What sustains us is the Baptismal covenant. Martin Luther said, "I wake up each morning and say, "I've been baptized", I lie in my bed at night

before sleep and say, "I've been baptized". God in God's mercy has forgiven our sins through Jesus Christ, and we are freshly made to start each day with the possibility of living into Christ more fully.

The Big Book says: "This thought brought us to Step Ten, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along. We have vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past. We have entered the world of the Spirit."

**The next Step, Step Eleven, follows: "Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We make amends if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code."
(84)**

A member of my fellowship coined it, 'watching for the three D's', Denial, Delusion and Defiance.

"It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol (addiction) is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism (addiction) . What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities."

"Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer...It works if we have the proper attitude and work at it...When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to

ourselves that should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? ...After making our review, we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken...On awakening we think about the 24 hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Our thought life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives."

"We ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised at how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while."

"We conclude a period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of problems. We are careful not to pray for our own selfish needs."

THE TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS

"A continuous look at our assets and liabilities and a real desire to learn and grow by this means are necessities for us. We alcoholics (addicts) have learned this the hard way... For the wise have always known that no one can make much of his life until self-searching becomes a regular habit, until he is able to admit and accept what he finds, until he patiently and persistently tries to correct what is wrong."

...Finally, we begin to see that all people, including ourselves, are to some extent emotionally ill as well as frequently wrong, and then we approach true tolerance and see what real love for our fellows actually means. It will become more and more evident as

we go forward that it is pointless to become angry, or to get hurt by people who, like us, are suffering from the pains of growing up”.

Step Eleven: “To certain newcomers and to those one-time agnostics who still cling to the AA groups as their higher power, claims for the power of prayer may, despite all the logic and experience in proof of it, still be unconvincing or quite objectionable...We well remember how something deep inside of us kept rebelling against the idea of bowing before any God.”

“But those of us who have come t make regular use of prayer would no more do without it than we would refuse air, food, or sunshine. And for the same reason. When we refuse air, light or food the body suffers. And when we turn away from meditation and prayer, we likewise deprive our minds, our emotions and our intuitions of vitally needed support. As the body can fail its purpose for lack of nourishment, so can the soul. We all need the light of God’s reality, the nourishment of His strength and the atmosphere of His grace.”

RICHARD ROHR: BREATHING UNDER WATER

Step Ten: “ I must admit: When I first read Step 10, I wanted to say, ‘Ok, come now, let get on to something a bit more positive and evolved. This is beginning to feel like an endless examination of conscience and will keep people navel-gazing forever.” “I still recognized this as a danger for some.” “I believe our religious history has been guilt-based and shame-based, and not including enough of what some would call vision logic, which a is broader, positive and out-in-front motivation. Jesus’s metaphor and draw were to a positive vision he called ‘the reign of God,’ about which he constantly was talking. For Bill W it was a vital spiritual

experience. Neither of these were a negative threat, but a positive allure, promise and invitation.”

Rohr recommends a examination of consciousness.

“Consciousness is the subtle and all embracing mystery whtine and between everything. It is like the air we breathe, take for granted and do not appreciate. Consciousness is not the seeing but that ‘which sees me seeing.’ It is not the knower, but that ‘which knows that I am knowing’. It is not the observer, but that ‘which underlies and observes me observing’. We must step back from our compulsiveness and our attachment to ourselves, to be truly conscious. Consciousness is ‘aware of my feelings’, so it cannot be purely ‘my’ feelings themselves...for properly detached persons, read non-addicted, deeper consciousness comes rather naturally. They discover their own soul – which is their deepest self- and yet have access to a larger knowing beyond themselves.”

“This witness is what Christians have called the Holy Spirit,” “so at one level, soul, consciousness, and the Holy Spirit can be thought of as the same thing, and it is always larger than me, shared and even eternal.” “Jesus calls this implanted Spirit the Advocate, who is with you and in you, who makes you live with the same life that he lives, and unites you to everything. He goes on to say that this ‘Spirit of truth’ will teach you everything.”

“a daily ‘examination’ of consciousness sounds like a very good thing indeed. Paul wisely describes an inner knower in several passages, ‘the mind of Christ’ the ‘inner law’ . Step Ten describes a ‘personal inventory’ . In other words, ‘just watch yourself objectively, calmly, and compassionately.”You will be able to do this from your new viewing platform and perspective as a grounded child of God”. From this most positive and dignified position we can let go of, and even easily admit our wrongs. We are being held so strongly and so deeply that we can stop holding

onto, or defending ourselves. God forever sees and loves Christ in us; it is only we who doubt our divine identity as children of God.”

Step Eleven: “ Let me tell you something very important and something that Step 11 was able to recognize as well. The word ‘prayer’ which Bill W rightly juxtaposed with the word ‘meditation’ is a code word for ‘an entirely different way of processing life.’”When we pray we are supposed to take off one ‘thinking cap’ and put on another ‘thinking cap’ that will move us away from an egocentric perspective to a soul-centered perspective -...thinking without thinking.”

“The first mind sees everything through the lens of its own private needs, hurts, angers, and memories. It is too small a lens to see truthfully, wisely or deeply. I am sure you know that most of us do not see things as they ‘are’ but see things as we ‘are’.”

In what is commonly called prayer, you and your hurts, needs and perspectives are still the central reference point, but now you have decided to invite a Major Power in to help you watch your already determined solution. You think God can help you get what you want, but that is still a self-centered desire, instead of God’s much better role, which is ‘to help us know what we really desire...It is work to learn to pray, largely the work of ‘emptying the mind and filling the heart’”.

“In short, prayer is not about changing God, but being willing to let God change us, or, as Step 11 says, ‘praying only for the knowledge of God’s will.’” “If we are able to switch minds t the mind of Christ, our prayer has already been answered. That new mind knows, understands , accepts, and sees correctly widely, and wisely. It’s prayers are always answered because they are, in fact, the prayers of God too.”