

SUNDAY CIRCLE: ADDICTION AND GRACE, 4/28

Steps 8 and 9:

“Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”

“ Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

From the Big Book of A.A.:

“ We have completed Step Seven. Now we need more action, without which we find that ‘faith without works is dead.’ Let’s look at Step 8 and Step 9. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to who we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember, it was agreed at the beginning we would go to any lengths for victory over alcoholism(addiction).

“Probably there are still some misgivings..We may feel diffident about going to some people (acquaintances) on a spiritual basis. Let us be assured, to some people we need not, and probably should not emphasize the spiritual feature on our first approach.

“At the moment we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose us to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.”

“It may be that he has done use more harm than we have done him, and though we may have acquired a better attitude towards him, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults. It is harder to go to an enemy than a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go out in a helpful and forgiving spirit...Under

no condition do we criticize..or argue...His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own.”

“We ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing.”

“The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.”

The Promises: “If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut a door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down we have gone, we will see how our experiences can benefit others. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change...We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.”

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of A.A.:

“ Steps Eight and Nine are concerned with personal relationships. This is a large order. It is a task which we must perform in increasing skill but never really finish.”

“We backtrack to see the human wreckage we have left behind. The first and most difficult task is to do with forgiveness, and the shock of making our admission of our wretched conduct face to face to those we had hurt. Actually risking even writing to these people is overwhelming, and there is a need for a “calm reflective thoughtful approach.”

“In many cases we shall find that the harm the behavior of others did to us is not so great, but the emotional harm we did to ourselves – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual damage.”

“For the readiness to take the full consequences of our acts, and to take responsibility for the well-being of others is the very spirit of Step Nine.”

RICHARD ROHR: BREATHING UNDER WATER

Chapter 8:

“Payback Time”

“Despite the higher economy of grace and mercy lived and taught by Jesus, he did not entirely throw out the lower economy of merit or ‘satisfaction’. They build on one another, and the lower by itself is inadequate to the truly great tasks of life – love, forgiveness, endurance of suffering, and death itself. The principle is called ‘transcend and include’. When we move to higher states of love and transformation, we do not jump through the earlier stages. We must go back and rectify the earlier wrongs. Otherwise there will be no healing or open future for us or for those we have hurt.” 65

“God forgives us, but the ‘karma’ of our mistakes remains, and we must go back and repair the bonds we have broken. Otherwise, others will not be able to forgive us and remain stuck, and both we and they remain a wounded whole. We usually need to make amends to even forgive ourselves.”

“Amazing grace is not a way to avoid honest human relationships. Rather it’s a way to re-do them – but now gracefully – for the liberation of both sides. Nothing goes away in the spiritual world; all must be reconciled and accounted for.”

“We learn to salve the wounds of others by knowing and remembering how much it hurt to hurt.”

“Our family, friends, and enemies, however are not as kind or patient as God. They need a clear accounting to be free and go ahead with their lives. Often, they need to talk it through and hear our understanding, and maybe our sincere apology.”

“So, Step Eight is quite programmed, concrete and specific. ‘Make a list of all those we have harmed’.”

“The second bit of spiritual genius in Step 8 is that it recognizes how long it might take to be truly ‘willing. It even uses the active verb phrase, ‘became willing’ to make amends to them all. To help us see that it is always a process and must finally include all. To offer an apology in a way that can actually heal others takes wisdom and respect for the other.”

“At any rate, we all need to do some internal cleanup work. For humans, there is only a slow softening of the heart, a gradual lessening of our attachments to our hurts or our victimhood as a past identity, or any need to punish or humiliate others.”

“Instead of making lists of who hurt us, we now make lists of people we have perhaps hurt, failed, or mistreated, and then do something about it...God will show us the best way, the best place, the best time and the best words. Wait and pray for them all.”

Chapter Nine: ‘Skillful Means’

“Jesus was a master at teaching skillful means, especially in his Sermon on the Mount and in many of his parables and one-liners”...he was ‘a sage, a wise teacher of commonsense spiritual wisdom.”

“So, we might say that Step 9 is telling us how to use skillful means to both protect our own humanity and to liberate the humanity of others. It states that our amends to others should be ‘direct’ that is specific, personal and concrete; in other words,

probably not an email or a tweet. It is face to face encounters, that work the best in the long run, even if the other party rebuffs us at the first attempt.”

“But the most skillful insight is the cleverly added ‘except when to do so would injure them or others’. We often need time, discernment, and good advice from others before we know the when, how, who, and where to apologise or make amends.”

“the myth of total disclosure” We need to pray and discern what the other needs to hear and also had the right to hear.”

“Truth is not just what happened, but also what we or any party has a right to know and can handle responsibly.”

“Finally, skillful means is not just to make amends, but to make amends in ways that do not injure others. Truth is not just the factual truth..but a combination of both text and context, style and intent. “76