

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

PRESENTATION ONE
A SPIRITUALITY OF IMPERFECTION

SPIRITUALITY OF THE 12 STEPS FOR EVERYONE

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality is one of those realities that you have only so long as you seek it; as soon as you think you have it, you've lost it.

- Letting go of rigidities and certainty
- Oxford Group: “Absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love
- A spirituality of not having all the answers and openness to change

The spirituality of the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous transcends multiple religious and secular traditions. The freedom and new life that this spirituality offers touches into the most basic of human desires, i.e., the desire for happiness, peace and inner freedom. In this context, addiction is defined as anything that stands in the way of the fulfillment of these desires. In some way, every human being is addicted to control, wanting to play God, by orchestrating our lives and the lives of others according to our plans

A SPIRITUALITY OF IMPERFECTION

- God comes through the wound
- The descent to the depths brings the realization that without help one is lost
- “Alcohol” in Latin is “spiritus” and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula is: spiritus contra spiritum

THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction and that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings
8. Made a list of all persons we have harmed and became willing to make amends to them all
9. Made direct amend to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it
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 for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to those addicted and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

THE SERENITY PRAYER

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference---
living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time,
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace,
taking as he did, this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it,
trusting that he will make all things right
If I surrender to his will---
that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with him forever.

DESIRE: ADDICTION AND HUMAN FREEDOM (Gerald May)

- Dis-Ease=Spirituality
- Desire and addiction
- Attachment (a-tache=nailed to)
- Detachment
- Grace and Hope

RESISTANCE

- “We have a right to be sick; one does not have to get well.” (Bernard Lonergan)
- There is something within us that resists change and development. (Barry and Connolly)
- The Emmaus journey

CHOOSING LIFE

- “Admitting” (Step One)
- “Believing” (Step Two)
- “Deciding” (Step Three)

Step Prayers

Step One: You are my strength, O God. You are my inward source of love, gracing my life. You give me the spiritual energy I need to overcome all that keeps me from being more fully yours.

Step Two: On those days when I think I can go it alone and when I want to rely on only myself, draw me to you, Spirit of Life. Remind me of this basic essential truth: you are the way to my inner serenity and peace.

Step Three: I desire to surrender my whole and entire self to you, my God. Take the fear and shame in me and help me to entrust myself to you.

EMBRACING THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

WHEN DARKNESS COMES

- “And now all of a sudden, the mists around me have become denser than ever. They sink deep into my soul ...I get tired of darkness all around me” (Terese of Lisieux)
- “The place of God in soul is blank. There is no God in me. He is not there.” (Mother Teresa)
- “Where have you hidden, Beloved, and left me moaning. I went out calling you and you were gone.” (St. John of the Cross)
- “My spirit is broken, my lamp of life is extinguished” (Job 17:1)

ITZHAK PERLMAN

THE BROKEN STRING



PRAYER OF ABANDONMENT

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands;
Do with me as you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you;
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me
and in all your creatures.
I desire this and nothing more.

Into your hands I commend my soul;
I offer it to you
with all the love of my heart,
For I love you , Lord,
and so no to give myself,
To surrender myself into your hands,
without reserve,
and with boundless confidence
For you are my Father

(Charles de Foucauld)

FORGIVENESS

- A Fearless Inventory (Step 4)
- Admitting the exact nature of our wrongs (Step 5)
- Making a List (Step 8)
- Making Amends (Step 9)

STEP PRAYERS

STEP FOUR: As I continue to look into my life, grant me honesty so that I can see myself as I truly am: to claim my goodness and my greatness, to recognize my compulsions and my weakness.

STEP FIVE: Surround me with your love, O God, as I tell you and others the truth of my addictive behavior and the reality of my failures. May your gift of courage lead me to the freeing of my heart and a greater openness to receive your love.

STEP EIGHT: I remember all those I have harmed by my failures, faults and unhealthy behavior. I bring them to you asking that you extend your blessings of love upon them.

STEP NINE: Grant me the courage to reach out to those in my life who have been affected by lack of spiritual freedom. Lead me to ways that will promote goodness and well-being for them.

RISK THE TRUTH OF GRACE

Steps 6 and 7

“Entirely Ready And Humbly Asked”

- The myth of Sisyphus
- Faith and Addiction
- The Qualities of Mercy

STEP PRAYERS

STEP SIX: Keep me open and ready to let go of whatever it is that needs to be given up, given over and given away. Give me strength to not cling, hoard, or hide what keeps me wounded and fettered in my addictions.

STEP SEVEN: I stand ready to be transformed in and through your love. Deepen my awareness of your healing forgiveness and grant me the gift of forgiving myself.

FALLING IN LOVE, STAYING IN LOVE

STEP TEN

- “Continued”
- Deep Listening
- Weeds in the Garden

STEP PRAYER

STEP TEN: Loving God, help me to be aware of my compulsions and unhealthy actions when they push forth and would harm others or myself. Remind me often that I am always unfinished, that I will constantly need you by my side in order to make good choices for my life.

- The Sacrament of the Present Moment
(Step 11)
- The Universe is charged with the grandeur of
God
(Step 12)
- Homecoming

STEP PRAYERS

STEP ELEVEN: In my busy and stressful times, draw me to your peace. May I find time each day for union with you through prayer and meditation. Continue to convince me of how essential this bond with you is.

STEP TWELVE: Indwelling Spirit, as I live these truths through what I say and do, may I be mindful that your grace is sufficient for me, that your power working through me can do more than I can ever ask or imagine.

THE AA PROMISES

1. If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through.
2. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
3. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
4. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.
5. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how we can benefit others.
6. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
7. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
8. Self-seeking will slip away.
9. Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change.
10. Fear of people and of economic security will leave us.
11. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
12. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us-sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

(Big Book, pp. 83-84)

NOTHING IS MORE PRACTICAL THAN FINDING GOD

Nothing is more practical than
finding God, than
falling in Love
In a quite absolute, final way.
What you are in love with,
What seizes your imagination, will affect everything.
It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning,
what you do with your evenings,
how you spend your weekends,
what you read, whom you know,
what breaks your heart,
and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.
Fall in Love, stay in love,
and it will decide everything.
(Pedro Arupe, SJ)

“AWAKENING” “CONTACT”

