

PREPARING FOR THE SEVENTH TRADITION

THE SEVENTH TRADITION:

“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

1. To prepare for our next meeting, let us examine our spiritual life in A.A. to see if we are self supporting spiritually by working the twelve steps on a daily basis or are we staying sober on the sobriety of others. Have we taken responsibility for our spiritual growth or are we coasting on meetings?
2. Are we self supporting in relationships or do we find our identity becoming a chameleon in a relationship? Are we true to the vision we had of us or do we go contrary to our inner self in order to get the approval of a lover? Am I placing my relationship with God first in my human relationships?
3. Are we self supporting financially? Are we serving with our best work talents or are we using our lesser talents out of fear? Have we accepted a spirit of personal poverty or have we been misusing our work talents out of greed? Do we believe that we only have problems that money can cure? Are we living on our own talents and efforts? Do we decline outside contributions to our support?

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

**THE SEVENTH TRADITION:
“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self—supporting, declining outside
contributions.”**

Homework: Writing Inventory on the Seventh Tradition
By Dennis F.

Read pp. 160—165 of the “12 & 12”.

This tradition has far reaching implications beyond that of getting a job and being self-supporting. This tradition challenges me to ask myself “am I am spiritually self -supporting?” This tradition speaks to me in two key words: am I “spiritually responsible” for myself or am I sober on the sobriety of others?

To grow up spiritually means that I must become “spiritually responsible” for the condition of my sobriety.

Let us examine our relationship with God and A.A., our human relationships and our relationship to our work talents and see if we are self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

I am fully self—supporting in my relationship with God if I approach him through sobriety and A.A. Am I working the steps on a daily basis or do I rely on outside contributions such as the sobriety of others? Am I spiritually responsible for my growth by continuing to work the steps, traditions, and concepts of service or do I coast off of meetings?

Have I permitted worthwhile but outside contributions such as religion, psychologists, the relationships of others with God, or other approaches to goodness to replace my relationship with God through my alcoholism? Am I working a program since I am spiritually an alcoholic or am I trying to use other ways that might appear to be easier and softer?

Part of being self-supporting spiritually, is learning to listen to God’s voice in all my affairs. I take responsibility for communicating with God in prayer. I learn to consult and hear His loving voice in the group conscience.

A second area to examine is my human relationships. Do I place God first in my intimate relationships? Have I permitted another human being to become a false God? Is my soul—mate (and my Sponsor) secondary in my relationship with God?

Do I become a chameleon in an intimate relationship and become whatever my lover wants and thus place God second? Am I true to the vision God has of me or do I go contrary to my inner self in order t approval of a lover?

Am I emotionally responsible or do I feel good if I’m emotionally high and depressed if I’m emotionally low?

I had to give up living by my emotions since my life was an emotional ping pong ball, up one minute and down the next.

There is nothing wrong with emotions but mine were emotions gone astray. My moods were unpredictable. As I became spiritually responsible for myself and started to live by faith rather than emotional binges, I noticed that depressive feelings happened more frequently.

I soon recognized that these depressive feelings were the insane of my alcoholism.

Depressive moods would try to attack me in the mc with thoughts like, “You will never have a good relationship with a human being. What’s the use?” Or, “You will never get out of debt. What’s the use?”

Those last three words, “What’s the use,” describe how my alcoholism is cunning, baffling and powerful in sobriety!

The point of my alcoholism is to get me to give up so I will die drinking or die in sobriety because I believed those three fatal words “What’s the use.”

Instead of living by negative emotions, I have become spiritually responsible for my moods by praying for faith when these insane thoughts of my alcoholism recur.

People, places and things cannot make me unhappy, only I can. My relationship with others is a reflection of my relationship with God

The proof that God hears my prayers and rescues me from my insane moods that have no hope is the fact that I am still sober today a day time. I know He did not get me sober to be unhappy but to carry a message of hope to the alcoholic who still suffers.

The third and final area to examine is probably the most explosive one: “What is my spiritual point of view toward money?” Am I willing to adopt a personal attitude of poverty in relationship to money? As Bill Wilson says in the “12 & 12” in a discussion of the seventh tradition at the group level, “A.A. (We) must always stay poor. Bare running expenses plus a prudent reserve would henceforth be the Foundation’s (our) financial policy...the principle of corporate (personal) poverty firmly and finally embedded in A.A. tradition.”

(We have supplied the words in parenthesis to translate these principles from the A.A. group to home and work. Try reading the quotation in this manner.)

The idea of A.A. poverty is also enshrined in the first two warranties of the twelfth concept of service.

Would I be willing to turn down an offer of ten thousand dollars when I needed the money because I didn’t earn it and I would have to spiritually sell part of myself to get it? That is just what A.A. did to arrive at this principle of poverty which we just read about in the “12 & 12” (see Seventh tradition, p. 164).

The first vow taken by a religious person is a vow of poverty. Yet here am I, a worldly alcoholic, being called upon to live by the same principle.

Nothing, outside of the misuse of my sexual instinct, has caused me more problems with my alcoholism than the pursuit of grandiose dreams and schemes of financial power. “Everybody knows that active alcoholics scream that they have no troubles money can’t cure.” (“12 &

12,” Tradition Seven, p. 160).

I had made a false God out of money when I was drinking. I carried the same attitude into early sobriety. I had a spirit of grandiosity. I thought, “Now that I’m sober I should really be able to make money because my drinking wouldn’t interfere with it.’

The best writing about money and work that I have ever encountered is contained in the “12 & 12,” Step Twelve, pp. 120—122. These three pages are worth reading and re-reading if one has financial fears.

Bill Wilson mentions here that after we got sober, “Financial importance was no longer our principal aim; we now clamored for material security...This made us misers and penny pinchers all over again.” (“12 & 12,” p. 121).

I found that in sobriety I was still placing my dependence on money rather than a Higher Power. I had bank balance sobriety. I was happy or sad in sobriety depending on the size of my bank account.

The question the seventh tradition raises is whether or not I’m ready to surrender these old ideas about money for a personal spirit of poverty

Having an attitude of personal poverty does not mean to me that I can’t handle large sums of money.

I am not saying that there is anything wrong with money as such. It is neutral. Motive and attitude is what makes the difference. If my motive is to do God’s will and my attitude is loving, I can do anything.

God might choose some of us to be responsible for handling a great deal of money. If we make a lot of money, we are not to be guilty about it. We then have the ability to give a lot to help others. I think of money as a trust, like my music talent that I will have to report on to my Maker when I die. It is “the” money not “my” money.

I am saying that I need to have a personal sense of selflessness about money.

I need to avoid an attitude of greed that can be present in me when I am rich or poor: “life will finally be happy for me if I reach this or that financial plateau.”

I need to practice personal poverty. By this I mean that I need to do without things. When carrying the message makes me happy rather than plotting to buy a new “Mercedes,” I know that I will have a sobriety based on true values rather than “things.”

I also needed to stop and look at the talents I was using to support myself. Was I serving with my best work talents or was I using lesser talents out of fear? Have I been misusing my work talents out of greed?

Am I living financially on my own talents and efforts or am I using outside contributions to support me when I am able to work? Do I use my work talents to get money or to give service?

I am spiritually responsible for myself financially when I work for living. The world doesn’t owe me a living. I owe the world my service as a way of saying thank you for my sobriety. When I give service, I get paid. When I don’t give service, the group conscience speaks to

me (see the seventh concept of service) by not paying me. I have hard times until I learn to give service. Money represents the world's approval of my service.

When I am not self—supporting, I starve. When I go to the opposite extreme, I get greedy. Being self-supporting is a middle road. I become content with what I need, not what I want.

I don't pray for money anymore unless it is needed to help others as God directs me. When in doubt about a financial situation, I now can consult the group conscience.

I want to live on the income from my own efforts, not the efforts of my parents or friends. I want the self-respect that comes from being self-supporting.

I am here to do God's financial will for me, whatever that might be, I praise God for any difficult periods that I am going through financially, because He gives me these periods in order to teach me a lesson. God has an unlimited supply of cash, and when He wants my undivided attention, he'll put me in a financially tight situation. The answer to the lesson is always the same, dependence on Him, rather than dependence on money, property, and prestige. To me that's the lesson of this seventh tradition. I get rid of the attitude that the problems that I have in life can only be cured by money, or relationship problems can be handled if only there were money, or spiritual problems could be handled if only there were money. Gradually we grow up spiritually and get rid of these ideas. We see them as a sham.

I also misused money for ego-feeding purposes. I tried to play God the lives of others by my attempts at grandiosity in buying drinks. I tried to buy approval. I have given money in sobriety to others that was done out of pride. "I realized that my five dollar gift to the slipper was an ego-feeding proposition, bad for him and bad for me." (12 & 1 Tradition Seven, p. 163). I had to learn to be generous with my time and love in working with others, not with money that was entrusted to me for my family's welfare.

I do not loan money anymore.

My ethic about money in A.A. is this: if somebody is hungry for a meal, then I will give him enough for a meal, or if he needs shelter for that night, I'll give him money for shelter for that night. But I will only give money for one day at a time. I won't give it for a week's rent or a month's rent. God takes care of us one day at a time, and if someone is in need, I will help them one day at a time. Beyond that, I'm getting into the area of ego-giving.

God has an unlimited supply of cash! When he wants my undivided attention, he permits a tight financial situation to develop in my life. He does the same for other people. I no longer want approval by being financial rescuer. That is not the message of A.A. We carry the mess not the alcoholic, even the sober one!

I will give, not loan, money occasionally to someone who doesn't have money for dinner or for a place to sleep. But I keep these alms to cover one day at a time only. God has a financial will that is adequate for each one of us and I don't want to interfere with his plans or will for or others. I don't want to try to be God in other's lives.

I believe in tithing \$1 a day to my cigar box for the purpose of helping the sick and suffering alcoholic with a meal or overnight shelter as described above. I was taught to do this by my sponsor. He calls "God's money." I use this money to pay for the "We Care" cards that contain my phone numbers, which I give to newcomers at meetings; I use for gas to pitch at distant meetings or distant twelve step calls; and membership in organizations that admit alcoholics for detoxification.

I like to remember this quotation from scripture about tithing: “Donate the full amount of your tithes to the Temple. Then there will be plenty of food there. Test me and you will see that I will open up the windows of heaven for you and I will pour out blessings on you that are great that you won’t have room enough to take them all in.” (Malachi 3:10)

The seventh tradition is linked to the sixth tradition just as the seventh step is the natural outcome of working the sixth step.

What do I do when I become entirely ready to give up my defects of character? I humbly ask God to remove my shortcomings. What do I do when I become entirely ready to give up pursuing outside contributions to my spirituality by not lending my name to related approaches or outside relationships? I avoid the problems of money, property, and prestige - carrying a message that will be believed because it is carried with a spirit of poverty and not greed.

I seek to be financially self-supporting, not wealthy. We all know how suspect the message is when carried by wealthy organized religions. “May I have just enough to satisfy my needs! If I become wealthy, I become content without God.” (Proverbs 30:8)

The seventh tradition, completed the seventh step this way: Father I humbly ask you to remove my major shortcoming, not placing you first in life but placing false Gods first, including money. Please teach me to be self-supporting in my relationship with you!

“Fear” automatically results when I think I should handle any situation in life by myself. As soon as I place God first in my thinking and try to hear his voice through prayer and meditation, “fear” is removed.

To prepare to meditate on the seventh tradition, let us examine some ideas.

First, is pursuit of money and the worldly prestige that surrounds it still a false God in my life? Am I willing to make a decision to turn to God and write inventory tonight to surrender to this? The decision to do this is like a third step decision. The third step is only a decision. It is the fourth step that produces the awareness I need to be surrendered.

Do God and I have an intimate relationship? Am I self-supporting spiritually in that relationship? Do I contribute toward it by hearing his voice in prayer?

I also like to meditate on God’s goodness in seeing that I haven’t missed any meals. He has financially taken care of me all my life. I want to look to him with an attitude of trust about money, and not an attitude of “I need more.”

Finally, if I were to try to carry a message about being self-supporting, yet I was just going for as much money as I could in sobriety for myself, in order to store it up with a greedy attitude, what kind of message would I be carrying to the sick and suffering alcoholic?

So I don’t feel that I can fulfill my primary purpose in life, which is to carry a message of sobriety to the sick and suffering alcoholic, unless I also have an attitude of poverty about myself.

In this period of meditation, I want to take the plunge, I want to surrender. I want to go over the cliff and vow a personal spirit of poverty in my life. I will use money as He gives it to me to help others. I don’t want it for myself. I only want to stay sober with grateful attitude and

be a message of inspiration to the sick and suffering alcoholic.

(Pause for three minutes of meditation)

Working a step, tradition or concept to me means that I am willing to take inventory and allow it to surrender something within me.

Let us write inventory on our willingness to adopt a personal spirit of poverty in our lives and surrender our grandiose ideas of self-serving wealth that we may better carry the message.

HOMWORK WRITING INVENTORY

1. GOD and A.A.: Do I take spiritual responsibility for myself and work a program or do I coast on meetings and the sobriety c

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I used to depend on more meetings to make me feel better, rather than work the steps.
- b) What did I do wrong? I was not spiritually responsible for myself since I leaned on others whenever possible.
- c) What would God have me do instead the next time? Face everything that comes up in the day and use prayer and especial inventory and the following steps when I have problems.

2. RELATIONSHIPS: Do I lean on a human relationship in order to feel happy? Am I able to have a happy relationship with God despite the difficulties that might occur in my single or married life?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: When I have a disagreement with someone I care for I let it make me unhappy in all my relationships.
- b) What did I do wrong? I'm not spiritually responsible for my emotions or moods.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray that I speak the truth in a loving manner and live in a loving attitude rather than the ups and downs of my emotions.

3. WORK AND OTHER TALENTS (arts, sports, etc.): Do I think that the world owes me a living? Does the world owe me happiness? Do I go to the other extreme and demand security? Am I greedy?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I thought that now I'm sober I can really earn the money and become wealthy.
- b) What did I do wrong?: I realize that I am greedy and more concerned about my security than I am about my primary purpose carrying the message to the sick and suffering alcoholic.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time?: Father, I now humbly ask you to remove my grandiose dreams and give me a spirit of poverty and selflessness in regard to money for the sake of my sobriety.