

PREPARING FOR THE ELEVENTH STEP

THE ELEVENTH STEP:

“Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.”

Read the bottom two lines of p. 85 through p. 88 of the “Big Book” and read pp. 96-105 of the “12 & 12”.

1. What are the specific ways I have sought to improve my conscious contact with God in the last year?
2. How do I determine the difference between God’s will and my will?

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

THE ELEVENTH STEP:

“Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.”

Homework: Writing Inventory on the Eleventh Step
By Dennis F.

Read the bottom two lines of p. 85 through p. 88 of the “Big Book” and read pp. 96-105 of the “12 & 12”.

This is the only step, tradition or concept of service that tells us “to improve”. Therefore prayer and meditation require special daily attention and effort as I seek to grow closer to God in a personal relationship through the eleventh step.

I like this simple definition: prayer is talking to God and meditation is listening to Him.

When I was newly sober, I had my list of wants and my list of answers to my problems. I would repeat both lists over and over and then wonder why I didn’t hear anything back from God. I wasn’t listening! In this way I began to learn the value of meditation. It permits a two-way conversation with God.

We are made for meditation, and it is simple. I use the three steps to meditation described in the “12 & 12” on page 101.

First, I get the subject of my meditation and examine its “inner essence” (see top of p.101 of the “12 & 12”). In the first three years of my sobriety, I didn’t take daily written inventory, so I used as the subject of my meditation whatever idea jumped out at me from my morning reading of the “Twenty-Four Hour Book” or other such reading. Now I use the subject of my tenth step inventory that I wrote the night before as the subject of my meditation.

For example, last night my inventory revealed that I was not being as productive as I should be and was not doing toughest things first. The “inner essence” of my meditation is gratitude to God for the “tough things” He has done for me and a desire to be fearless in doing His will in return.

Secondly, the “12 & 12” suggests on page 101 that we take “a good look at where we stand now” in relationship to the subject of our meditation. My inventory of the night before revealed that I put off attacking a difficult project. I admit that I am in need of divine power to carry out God’s will.

Thirdly, the “12 & 12” suggests on page 101 that we examine “what might happen in our lives were we able to move closer to the ideal we have been trying to glimpse”. I then visualize what it would be like and how good I would feel if I did tackle my toughest project the first thing in the day.

It never fails that an opportunity will come during the day for me to accomplish the subject of that morning’s meditation. It becomes the spiritual theme of that day that will provide me with the growth I need to stay sober.

It always works, whether the subject is fearlessness in doing tough jobs or surrendering in relationships. The opportunity to surrender will occur if I become tuned into it through my meditation period.

Meditation leads to the action of carrying a spiritual message. Thus step 11 is a preparation for step 12. I suspect it is this daily cycle of step 10 to step 11 to step 12 that keeps me sober. The inventory subject of step 10 is the subject of my meditation in step 11, which in turn gives me the spiritual message I am to carry out today in my 12th step work.

The “12 & 12” comments on the importance of the relationship between step 10 and 11 on page 98: “There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation, and prayer. Taken separately, these practices can bring much relief and benefit. But when they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an unshakable foundation for life.”

(In order to rid myself of any alcoholic negativity on awakening in the morning, I think of something enjoyable I am looking forward to doing today. I think about this as I go to sleep the night before. I wake up with an expectant attitude thinking of those pleasures God has in store for me today: getting caught up at work, or playing tennis, or taking my wife out to dinner, or working with a newcomer, or thinking of what I am going to accomplish, etc.)

Prayer to me is talking to God, and in the morning I pray my steps, traditions, and concepts in a personal way. The words change from day to day. Here is an example of how I pray them today:

1. Father, I admit I am powerless over alcohol and my life is unmanageable, so I come to You through A.A. because my personal recovery depends upon it. May I place our common welfare first by dedicating my life to serve the group by serving the greater good of the greater number, as You direct me.
2. I believe that You are restoring me to sanity by trusting me as Your servant and by my learning to trust the world by seeing others through the eyes of a loving God. May I have the discipline I need to serve others.
3. I commit myself and my life to Your care. The only requirement I have to meet to turn it all over to You today is the desire to stop drinking. Thank You for giving me the right to decide to come to You for sobriety.

4. I dedicate myself to be searching and fearless about myself today. I will look only to You for approval, and I thank You for giving me the right to participate in life sober.
5. I now admit to You the exact nature of my wrongs. I thought I was God in my own life. I thought I was You. I thought I was in charge. Instead, I now focus on my primary responsibility in life to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers and to be of loving service to anyone who comes to me no matter how much they might disagree with me.
6. I am entirely ready to ask You to remove from me my defect of character: the pursuit of money, property and prestige rather than carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. The ultimate responsibility for carrying the message is Yours, but the active responsibility is mine.
7. I humbly ask You to remove my shortcomings: May I be spiritually self-supporting by coming to You more often; may I be financially self-supporting by being responsive to the judgment of the world on my service.
8. I bring to You my willingness, my enthusiasm and the zeal of a non-professional. May I also be willing to accept the responsibilities You give me today in carrying Your message.
9. I will make any amends I need to make today so that I stay in divine order that I can give you reliable leadership in my service: I will seek advice and accept criticism with love, I will compromise with love, I will take tough stand with love, and I will accomplish the vision you give me.
10. I will take my own inventory and not the inventory of others. I will inventory my responsibilities in carrying the message.
11. I will seek You throughout the day in prayer and meditation. (I stop here to meditate on the inventory subject of the night before already described.) I will try to live a life of attraction and not promote anything for myself today. I dedicate myself to giving You quality in my service today.
12. I will carry the message today in all my dealings with others. I will not take credit for Your gifts to me, and I will practice principles over my appetites in the food area today. May I have the freedom of selfless service by observing the six warranties of continued sobriety in my life:
 - a) I will not seek authority, wealth, and power in my life.
 - b) I will be financially prudent.
 - c) I will not be a dictator in relationships.
 - d) I will seek consensus in my dealings with others.
 - e) I will not be punitive to anyone nor will I seek public controversy.
 - f) I will be democratic in spirit and action.

I tithe \$1 a day to be used for the sick and suffering alcoholic. Next, I ask God to accept this money in gratitude for my sobriety and to use it for the care of the sick and suffering alcoholic. I call it God's money and save it in an old cigar box.

I then pray to be helpful in the three main areas of my life: A.A., my family, and my work, in that order. Without A.A., I would not have a family or work. I mention any specifics in these areas for God's special attention, since I know He will not be deaf to a prayer for others from a sober alcoholic.

At lunch, I read Dr. Robert Schuller's "Daily Power Thoughts", which keep me in positive contact with God again.

Sometime during the day, such as waiting for the elevator in my building, I read and meditate on "The Daily Word" reading which I detach and carry with me throughout the day. I pray before starting work, before meals, and take tenth step inventory before sleeping.

By doing these things, I am trying to improve my conscious contact with God so that it is constant throughout the day. (My goal is to pray unceasingly.) I stop and pray for knowledge of my Father's will for me (love) from activity to activity!

I feel that I have only one choice in life and that is to pray. All I did to get sober was to pray to God after I saw a vision of my drunken death. I do one percent and God does ninety-nine percent. My One percent is to pray. I do not take credit for taking action because it is God who gives me the power to act.

Since the only area of my life that the steps mention I should "improve" is my prayer life, my conscious contact with God, this is an area that is helpful for me to inventory, to see if I am improving or not.

My meditation has given me a new attitude that helps me to cope with "seeming disaster" throughout the day.

When something happens I do not like, I praise God for it. You might say, "Why should I praise God when I can't pay the rent?" I have two reasons for this unusual attitude. I can only have one attitude toward God: I praise Him or I blame Him for what is happening in my life. When I blame Him, I end up in a depression.

Depression is a state where I secretly blame God for life as it is happening to me. The only way out of this dilemma is to write inventory and make an amend to God for not accepting life as he permits it to happen to me. (I need to look into my misuse of my work talents and lack of financial responsibility and praise God for this opportunity to learn to be more industrious and prudent with His gifts and goods, and to rely on Him to be rescued again.) I do not blame God for the existence of evil. I know that the price of my freedom to come to Him and ask for sobriety is also my right to drink myself to death if I wish. He permits evil because He does not want me to have to love Him like a robot. He gives me the freedom to

admit I'm powerless over alcohol and then gives me all the power I need to stay sober as long as I choose to come to Him for sobriety.

This same freedom of choice, to drink or not to drink, He gives to others. All of His children can choose to come to Him or go their own way. This explains to me why "evil", or disastrous choices, must exist with "good" loving choices.

Even though I, and others, make disastrous choices, God is able to bring "good" from "evil". Therefore, the first reason I have for praising God when something disastrous happens to me is that I know that such times are learning experiences meant for growth. If I don't learn the lesson now, I will have to repeat difficult lessons until I do learn. We repeat the experience until we learn the lesson.

When God wants my undivided attention, He gives me financial problems, relationship problems, or He put me flat on my back in a sickbed. The lesson to be learned is always the same, and I will continue to be broke and/or lonely until I learn it: when will I learn dependence on a Higher Power rather than on money, property, prestige and people, places, and things!

Secondly, now that I have given up being God, I don't have to know why things happen. I cannot possibly understand God's ways unless He chooses to grant me understanding. So I praise God for it and surrender to it with enthusiasm, rather than make a reluctant surrender. I pray for an enthusiastic surrender, especially when I don't feel it (which is much of the time). Why should God trust me if I don't trust Him?

One other way of getting me to the place of an enthusiastic surrender is to pray to be willing to do the exact opposite of what I want to do. This helps me to get back on an even keel through surrender.

When I became willing to go bankrupt if that is what God wanted of me to stay sober, I became usable by Him rather than being obsessed by my own will. He has saved me from bankruptcy more than once, so I know that willingness to do His will, however perplexing, is much safer than my life-long rebellious attitudes.

I rely on conscious contact with God throughout the day to smooth my way. I need to remember that I have a progressive disease that requires a progressively tougher program to preserve my sobriety.

The question is sometimes asked, "How can I tell the difference between God's will and my will?" The answer is found in the eleventh step. The more my conscious contact improves, the easier it is for me to be led by inspiration through my spiritual awakening.

"In thinking about our day, we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while. What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration

gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it.” (“Big Book”, pp.86-67)

The question is also asked if we can pray for ourselves. I do not. I only pray for knowledge of His will for me, and the power to carry that out. On page 87, the “Big Book” gives a very pointed answer to this question”

“We ask especially for freedom from self-will and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that, and it doesn’t work. You can easily see why.”

Working on a step to me means that I take written inventory and allow myself to be surrendered to a new spiritual state. The principles remain the same. The longer I am sober, the more vigorous my progress has become, that the rewards may become richer!

Let us take inventory on how we may improve our conscious contact.

Before I had taken inventory in applying the principles of the traditions and concepts to my life, I used the twelve steps as my prayer in the morning, or I used as many steps as I had worked as my prayer:

1. The Father, I come before You powerless over alcohol with an unmanageable life,
2. And I believe in You and ask for more sanity in my life today.
3. I ask You to take my will and life and use me as You will in the next twenty-four hours.
4. I will be searching and fearless about myself today.
5. And I admit the exact nature of my wrongs: I thought I was in charge. I admit that to You and my I admit it to one other person today.
6. I am entirely ready to have You remove these defects (I then name them).
7. I humbly ask You to remove them and to help me practice their opposites. (I try to practice purity of intention when I feel lust, love when I feel anger, etc. See the seventh step for the complete list.)
8. I am willing to do what You ask of me today,
9. including making any amends I need to make.
10. I will take my inventory tonight and
11. seek You through prayer and meditation (I stop to meditate).
12. I will try to carry the message of my sobriety in whatever way You will use me today and practice a good program with all I encounter.

Then pray the seventh step prayer from the “Big Book” on page 76:

“My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that You now remove from me every 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.”

I conclude my morning prayer with a personal version of my favorite prayer to God:

THE LORD’S PRAYER

1. Our Father and Mother in heaven, Holy is your name.
2. May Your divine order come now within us.
3. May we do Your will here on earth just as it is done in heaven.
4. Please feed, guide, shelter and support us again today, as usual, and show us how to have fun (and name request).
5. Please forgive us as we forgive each other, and accept our amends just as we make amends and accept each other’s amends.
6. Please strengthen us to confront ourselves with rigorous honesty. Help us to surrender to each other and to new states of awareness about ourselves, not with reluctance, but with enthusiasm.
7. We praise You for everything that has happened all of our drinking life and everything that is happening today, both the good and the seemingly bad, the positive and the negative appearances, the abundance and the apparent lack.

For everything that happens:

- is an opportunity to further Your kingdom within us,
- is an opportunity to surrender to your power,
- is an opportunity to give you glory,
- now and forever.

It takes me fifteen minutes to a half hour to pray and meditate. I begin in bed as soon as I awake. I sometimes like to do part of it as I jog. If I have finished praying before I have finished jogging, I tune in to the beauty of the sky, nature, and all of God’s creation. (I jog in an effort to develop the “sports gifts” God has given me.)

I am also a classical musician, and I find myself using music as a source of conscious contact with my Maker.

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

- a) The Story: I don’t give enough time to meditation on God’s goodness.
- b) What did I do wrong? I need more meditation to balance accomplishing things.
- c) What would God expect me to do instead? Utilize special time during the day to meditate on God when I have to wait, and once a week or so, listen to some music or recording that puts me into a state of conscious contact with my Maker.