

## PREPARING FOR THE FIFTH TRADITION

(Read pp. 150-154 of the “12 & 12.”)

### **THE FIFTH TRADITION:**

**“Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers”**

1. Let us prepare for next week by calling to mind what our current “message” is in A.A.: is it sponsorship, inventory, being a secretary, helping on the phone, helping young people?
2. Let us take a look at how well we are carrying our “message.” Are we working with the alcoholic who still suffers or are we only pursuing our own interests in life?

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”  
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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

Read pp. 150-154 of the “12 & 12”.

If there is one word that describes the fifth tradition, it is the word “consecration.” I have been preparing all of my drinking and sober life for my primary purpose in life: to carry the message of my drinking and sobriety (my death and resurrection) to the alcoholic who still suffers.

The fifth tradition is a turning point in my sobriety. Am I willing to consecrate my life to carrying the message as my primary purpose in living?

Is my primary purpose right now to carry my message each day to any alcoholic who calls upon me or is my primary purpose centered around sex or relationships or security or money or making more money or getting “comfortable”?

Am I willing to surrender my old primary purposes?

To work this tradition means that I am willing to say “yes” to this question and rearrange the rest of my priorities.

My old primary purpose of getting and maintaining a romantic relationship must become secondary. It is no longer my primary purpose. This doesn’t mean that I’m against having a soul mate relationship. It means that it is no longer my primary purpose. It is secondary.

In fact, I cannot have a soul mate relationship unless carrying the message is my primary purpose. “It is the great paradox of A.A. that we know we can seldom keep the precarious gift of sobriety unless we give it away.” (12 & 12,” fifth tradition, p. 151.)

Consecrating my life to the fifth tradition also means that worrying about owing money is no longer my primary purpose in life. If I am dedicated to worrying and anxiety I will spend much of my time in depression. My primary purpose is not to be depressed but to carry a message of sobriety, not a message of self-pity.

Consecrating my life to making more and more money is an old idea of “grandiosity” that must be sacrificed. I am still self-supporting but my job is not my primary purpose.

The quotation that speaks to me most profoundly from the reading on the fifth tradition in the “12 & 12”, (p. 150) is the place where Bill Wilson compares a discovery of the cure of cancer with the discovery of the miracle of sobriety in A.A. He says, “Any doctor would set his other ambitions aside, at whatever personal cost.”

Am I willing to surrender “all ambitions, at whatever personal cost” so that I may devote myself to my primary purpose?

Devoting myself to a new primary purpose means that I am willing to let go of many old ideas. I have many thinking patterns that are automatic that I need to change in order to consecrate myself to a new primary purpose.

One of the most devious of the old ideas that pervades sobriety that I must surrender is the idea of staying sober in order to get “comfortable”. I don’t believe that this is the point of sobriety.

It is “uncomfortable” to examine myself in written inventory every night (step ten.) It is “uncomfortable” to get up early so I have time to pray and meditate (step eleven). It is decidedly “uncomfortable” to get dressed and get out of bed when I’m enjoying watching television with my wife in order to make a twelve step call.

If my primary purpose is to be “comfortable”, I won’t do these things or I will resent doing them. I need to undergo a total change in the way I think about myself when I take the fifth tradition each day. Being consecrated means that I will not spare myself. I will go through my discomfort in order to carry the message.

What do we say to the alcoholic who still suffers? There is a helpful sentence in the “12 & 12” in the fifth tradition (p. 152) where Bill describes how he carried out the message: “I bore down hard on the hopelessness of the drunk’s dilemma.” I like to emphasize how hopeless my life was until I surrendered to the purpose of A.A., got a sponsor, and began to work the steps, traditions and concepts.

What is my message? One way of answering this question is to ask myself what are my talents? Am I an understanding person? Can I develop a listening ear and an understanding heart? Can I volunteer to answer A.A. phones?

How can I carry the message to the sick and suffering alcoholic if I haven’t completed the steps? Can I carry the alcoholic to the message instead and give him or her a ride to a meeting?

After completing the first nine steps and doing the last three steps on a daily basis will I make myself available to God to be used as a sponsor?

Do I have a one-on-one talent? Do I have a prison or hospitalization in my background? Can I do institutional work and go to hospitals to carry the message?

Am I a leader? Would I like to be a leader? Can I serve as a secretary of an A.A. meeting?

Can I cook? Can I speak? Am I willing to see these talents as possible expressions of my primary purpose?

When I have problems in my life is it because I forget what my primary purpose is? I have found that each day there is at least one opportunity to carry the message if I look for it and ask for it in my morning prayer.

The relationship of the fifth step to the fifth tradition is that the fifth step taught me the exact nature of my wrongs, "I'm not in charge." In the fifth tradition I learned just the opposite, I learned what my exact nature should be: my talent to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, my primary purpose.

In the fifth step I learned what's wrong about me and in the fifth tradition I learned what's right about me. What's right about me is my ability to carry the message when no one else can because of the experiences that I have had which were transformed into a message of hope in the fifth step. My alcoholism is my greatest talent, not my talents as a husband, father, son, or my job or my music. I can fulfill my primary purpose for being born by carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

I have a primary purpose that is demanding. Being consecrated to it is like taking the vow one takes in a religious order. I voluntarily agree to give up placing romance first (vow of chastity). I agree to give up pursuing wealth (vow of poverty), I don't pursue what's comfortable for me at the moment when I am asked to go on a twelve step call (vow of obedience.)

Let us stop for a few minutes of meditation now and see if we have come to that point in our lives where we are willing to consecrate ourselves to that point in our lives where we are willing to consecrate ourselves to our primary purpose and put aside relationships and money as secondary. Let us examine ourselves and see if creeping complacency has overcome us. Have we gotten away from our primary purpose of carrying the message? If so, let us rededicate ourselves to our primary purpose.

I like to deconsecrate myself to carrying the message as my primary purpose. I like to give thanks to God for giving me a way to contribute to the lives of other people. Without my alcoholic talent, I would be a pretty lonely person. I would not be involved in the joy of recovery of other people. I would not be able to share my experiences if I didn't have an alcoholic past.

Truly, we lay down our lives for each other when we share our experience, strength and hope. No greater love can an alcoholic have than to surrender his life to help the alcoholic who still suffers!

I am one indispensable aspect of someone's recovery. I want to be found worthy to carry the message and to this end I consecrate my experience, strength and hope.

Let us meditate in gratitude for our alcoholic talent.  
(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. The fifth tradition suggests to me that I surrender “all ambitions, at whatever personal cost” (“12 & 12”, p. 150).

If I am not receiving opportunities to carry the message, I need to examine myself to see what my message is in A.A. When I know what my message is, I need to give it priority over my other interests in life and to “consecrate” my life to carrying my message. Let us examine our priorities in life and write inventory.

## HOMWORK: WRITING INVENTORY

1. GOD AND A.A.: When something is primary in my life I spend time doing it. Am I spending time in prayer that I can use to carry the message?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences)

- a) The Story: I sometimes dislike receiving calls from alcoholics who repeatedly complain about the same things.
  - b) What did I do wrong: I get wrapped up in complaining myself instead of taking action.
  - c) What would God have me do instead the next time?: Pray for willingness to risk losing the person's approval by pointing out what happens to me when I constantly complain and to pray for the eternal patience God has shown me.
2. RELATIONSHIPS: Do I treat my loved ones with the same consideration I would give a newcomer. Can I carry a message of spiritual support to the non-alcoholic as well as to the alcoholic?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences)

- a) The Story: I am sometimes more patient with strangers than I am with my family.
  - b) What did I do wrong: I don't always carry a message of love in my own home.
  - c) What would God have me do instead the next time?: Pray to be as loving at home as I am with a newcomer and not presume on the tolerance of those who love me.
3. WORK AND OTHER TALENTS (arts, sports, etc.): What kinds of message do I carry at work? Is it self-seeking or am I the servant of all in my attitude?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences)

- a) The Story: I get impatient at work and become too demanding.
- b) What did I do wrong? My motive is self-centered and my attitude is unloving.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray to carry a message of sobriety at work as I try to do in A.A.