

PREPARING FOR THE TENTH TRADITION

(Read pp. 176-179 of the “12 & 12”.)

THE TENTH TRADITION:

“Alcoholics Anonymous has not opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”

To prepare for next week, let us think over the answer to these questions:

1. Do I find myself taking the inventory of others when I do not take my own in a regular nightly tenth step?
2. Does practicing the tenth tradition mean that I do not get involved in outside issues?
3. How can I be involved in the issues of our day in a non-controversial manner?

UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE"
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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

Read pp. 176-179 of the “12 & 12”.

The tenth tradition is rather clear as it applies to A.A. A.A. has prospered by having no opinion on outside matters and not being drawn into controversy. For instance, A.A. has avoided the outside issues that tore apart the Washingtonians. A.A. has never become a temperance crusader or taken stands on important but outside issues, “particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion”. (See the long form of this tradition on p. 567 of the “Big Book”.)

How do the principles of the tenth tradition apply to our home and business life? Can the same principles apply there and to A.A.?

Bill Wilson differentiates the responsibilities of the A.A. member and the A.A. group in this tradition by saying on p. 177 of the “12 & 12” that the tenth tradition does not “mean that the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, now restored as citizens of the world, are going to back away from their individual responsibilities to act as they see the right upon issues of our time. But when it comes to A.A. as a whole, that’s quite a different matter. In this respect, we do not enter into public controversy because we know that our society will perish if it does.”

Let us examine the principles behind this tradition.

What is an outside issue to me? An outside issue is anything outside of my relationship with God through sobriety. Another way of stating the same idea is to say that I engage in outside issues when I take your inventory.

The tenth step and tenth tradition clarify each other: I take my own inventory and not yours. The relationship is even stronger than I have indicated: if I do not take my own inventory on a regular basis, I will end up taking your inventory!

Without nightly written inventory, I become involved with the wrongs of the world that I think keep me from being happy. Dwelling on the defects of others prevents me from seeing my own and have to change.

I don't gossip about you, I don't criticize you. I don't do any of those things I used to do when I drank in order to make me feel better. They are all outside issues. I don't do anything that concerns you and your relationship with God, or the lack of it, or the improvement of it – it's not my place to get involved in your relationship with God. I only get involved in my own relationship with God.

If I am not taking my own inventory, then I automatically begin to blame the world for the happiness that I think the world is keeping from me. By the world, I mean you. The purpose of this tradition is to teach me how to develop relationships of love with other people. One of the most alienating things I've done in my drinking life is to take other people's inventory. I find that the more intimate the relationship, the more difficult it is not to take your inventory. I must especially learn to stay out of outside issues at home and at work.

If I don't judge you, I avoid justified resentments. If I don't judge myself, I am free of guilt. Resentments and guilt come from the same place, passing judgment.

Passing judgment also gives rise to both self-pity and overconfidence. I give up judging myself as superior or inferior. Only God is qualified to judge me. I have got to get off my own back or I swim in a sea of remorse that paralyzes me from taking the tough stands in the world that God expects me to take.

I no longer see myself as a victim or a martyr, but now I see myself as a peacemaker! You no longer come up short, because I see that you are doing the best you know to do.

I know that two people can disagree and that they can both be right in different ways.

I temper my stands with love by surrendering to the exact opposite of what I want so that my attitude is loving and not demanding.

Surrender means that I surrender my self-will-run-riot and do God's will instead. Surrender doesn't mean I am a doormat. Many times surrender means confrontation, if that is how God wants to use me. I confront my fear and do his will with courage.

I avoid my old drinking attitude of being wishy-washy, particularly when it means that I need to say no to someone or a situation and risk losing your approval.

Instead, I sue the principles of the tenth tradition to avoid taking stands on outside issues in a controversial manner but take tough stands on matters of justice as God directs me with the love of a peacemaker. Justice for all, you and me, is the lesson of the tenth tradition.

The principle of the tenth tradition is the same for the A.A. group and the A.A. member: we turn from a controversial point of view to a peacemaker point of view. The application of this principle is what differentiates me from A.A., however. A.A. is not involved in political or social issues or other important issues in the world, but I am.

I am God's voice, hands and feet in the world. A.A. is the nursing station that prepares me to be hurled sober back into the fray, but armed this time with the principles of the steps, traditions and concepts of service. I can now serve as a peacemaker in controversial confrontations without losing my sobriety or serenity!

I have a favorite quotation from scripture that I use to correct my perspective when I find myself taking a tough stand, and I feel fearful. I use it to keep me quiet during the storm.

It concerns Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, who is going to be militarily overwhelmed. He saw the reality of his situation. He saw his powerlessness, so he prayed. God heard his prayer and said: "Do not be afraid or dismayed at their large army, for the battle is not yours, but God's!" (2 Chron 20:15)

A few verses later, Jehoshaphat told his army to take their position, stand their ground and watch the Lord give them success. (2 Chron 20:20) My assignment in difficult situations is just to show up, pray and let the Lord take care of the conflict.

To summarize: The relationship of the tenth tradition to the tenth step for me is this: I can be at peace and avoid outside issues by taking my inventory and not yours. I avoid controversy by taking stands with the attitude of a peacemaker. The tenth concept of service takes the process one step further and specifies what kind of inventory I should be writing about: The responsibilities for which God has given me authority.

The tenth step poses the question, "How can I survive successfully in the world by taking my own inventory and promptly admitting it when I am wrong?" The tenth tradition supplies the answer; "I survive by being a peacemaker with you because I am at peace with myself through my own inventories."

To prepare for our three-minute meditation, let us examine our relationship with God and A.A., the world, home, and work. Am I still taking anybody's inventory? Do I still take God's inventory? Am I still taking A.A.'s inventory or the speaker's inventory? Do I take inventories in my relationships at home? Am I taking my boss' inventory? Will I give up this way of living?

Let us also examine any stands that I should be taking that I have been avoiding out of fear. Finally, let us look at our attitude on tough stands we have already taken and ask ourselves if we have the attitude of a peacemaker. Have I been angry or upset and not been going about Father's business in a loving manner?

In my meditation, I want to thank God for His merciful justice in rescuing me from my alcoholism. I want to be as just as I can to others in imitation of the justice God gives me. Even when I'm wrong, He forgives me and gives me His merciful justice.

I want to thank God for being a Divine Peacemaker in my life. He made peace between me and my disease. He makes peace between me and A.A. I have good relationships in A.A. He makes peace between me and the world in practicing the spirit of the traditions. I'm

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finally learning how to get along. He makes peace between my wife and I, and gives us both sobriety. Let us meditate.

(Pause for three minutes of meditation.)

Working a tradition to me means that I am willing to take inventory and allow it to surrender me. The tenth tradition tells me I will stay out of controversy with you by taking my own inventory and not yours.

HOMWORK: WRITING INVENTORY

1. GOD and A.A. Do I gossip about other A.A. members? Do I like to listen to others gossip? Do I get high on controversy? Do I avoid taking my own nightly written inventory? Do I pray to be a peacemaker?

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

- a) The Story: I am usually silent when someone gossips to me about another A.A. member's lack of a program.
- b) What did I do wrong? By my silence, I encourage gossip.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray to be a peacemaker and next time state that this person is doing the best they know to do, just as we are.

2. HOME: Do I criticize other members of my family? Am I constantly taking my mate's inventory? Do I love with the attitude of a peacemaker?

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

- a) The Story: I find that critical thoughts occur first to me in the morning about my wife when she is not ready to handle problems.
- b) What did I do wrong? Pray before I speak.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray to say loving thoughts and express my needs as a request and not as a criticism.

3. WORK AND OTHER TALENTS (arts, sports, etc.): Do I judge those in business who disagree with me? Do I avoid seeking justice and giving justice under the guise of avoiding "outside issues"? Am I a competitor or a peacemaker with my fellow workers, customers and other companies?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences)

- a) The Story: When I brought suit on a business matter of justice, I really only wanted justice for me, and I condemned the motives of those who disagreed with me.
- b) What did I do wrong? I judged those I sued, took their inventory and behaved in a controversial manner.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray for justice for all concerned, stick to principles, love my enemies and remember that it is God's fight, not mine!