

Practicing Spiritual Principles - Notes

Schedule Overview – Friday, Saturday and Sunday

Introduction – Spiritual Principles (25 minutes)

- Overview: Bob D's story - (Garden of Eden – Letting Go of Judgement – “A New Pair of Glasses”)
- Definition of “principles” vs. rules or laws – “supporting pillars of a building”
- Principles are descriptions of “how things work or function” rather than “rules to be followed” (e.g. Gravity):
 - Engineering: Tension and Compression
 - Aeronautics: Thrust, Lift and Drag
 - Architecture: Form follows function; sustainability
 - Science: “Occam’s Razor” – the simpler explanation is usually better
- A.A. Steps – “set of spiritual principles” to be practiced (12X12, p. 15—**handout**)
- Examples of spiritual principles and applied to Steps (list)
- Oxford Group – Four Absolutes (Principles) and Four Practices (Actions)
- Spiritual flow: God’s spirit flows through us into the world (prism artwork)

Step 1 – “Identification” Step (or “Requirement for Membership”—20 minutes)

- Identification (vs. Transformation)
- “What WE were like, what happened and what WE are like now”
- Two parts: a) Powerless over alcohol and b) Life is unmanageable
- Principles:
 - Surrender
 - Unconditional (no negotiating)
 - Anything would be better than what I have now
 - Honesty
 - Powerless over: a) alcohol and b) alcohol-ISM

Step 2, 3 and 11 – Spirituality Steps (45 minutes)

- Transformation: from Insanity to Sanity
- More About Alcoholism – “Curious mental twist or phenomenon; blind spot; crazy” Jaywalker’s story (pp. 37-38); “one more journey to the asylum for Jim” (p.36)
- The insanity that precedes the first drink; the obsession and compulsion
- “All great spirituality is about what we do with our pain: transform or transmit it”
- NOT God – Can’t fix my brain with my brain. “This is the how and the why of it. We had to quit playing God. It didn’t work.” (p. 62)
- Lack of power = lack of “control” -- Delusion: “If he only manages well” (p. 62)
- Prayer changes things because prayer changes us – “Grace” (orig. Serenity Prayer)

(continued)

- Five-Step Prayer Formula:
 - God is all there is;
 - So, I am one with God;
 - Therefore, I am already connected to all the qualities I am seeking;
 - Knowing this, I am grateful God is gracious; and
 - I release and let it go, knowing that all is well.
- Big Book provides prayers to say whenever we're in:
 - **Fear** (p. 68) "God please remove this fear and direct my attention to all you would have me be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear."
 - **Anger** (p. 67) – "How can I be useful to this sick person?"
 - "the **bondage of self**" (p.63) – the Third Step Prayer
- Step 3 is "making a decision" – not having a "spiritual awakening"
- The Decision: to be in a "relationship" – not an "arrangement"
 - Arrangement = a "quid pro quo", 50%-50% contract or agreement
 - Relationship = 100%, "all in" decision;
 - No longer what's good for me or you; what's good for my relationship with my recovery, my sobriety
 - Relationship is really with A.A., then my recovery, ultimately with God
- Principles:
 - Step 2 – Hope – "If it worked for you, maybe it will work for me"
 - Step 3 – Faith – Promises after Step 3 (p. 63)
 - Step 11 – Awareness, Intuition -- Conscious Contact – Cultivation (p. 87)
 - Thomas Merton's Story
 - "Still, Small Voice" reading by Emma Curtis Hopkins

Small Group Discussion (45 minutes)

Steps 4-5, 6-7 and 10 – Personal Inventory Steps (45 minutes)

- Designed to remove those things blocking "Sunlight of the Spirit"
- "Causes and conditions" - Separation from God and Others
- Maximum Usefulness, not "personal happiness" (p.77)
- Inventory:
 - Assets vs. Liabilities (old thinking)
 - Actual inventory vs. "expected" inventory – What SHOULD I have?
 - Character defects = defense mechanisms, poor coping skills
- Self-Conscious vs. God-Conscious (see list) How I react to "life on life's terms"
- "Name it, claim it, tame it" and "Uncover, discover and discard"
- Principles:
 - Step 4 – Courage ("big heartedness")
 - Step 5 – Integrity ("wholeness")
 - Step 6 – Willingness ("became entirely ready")
 - Step 7 – Humility ("right-sized")
 - Step 10 – Patience/Perseverance ("Position of Neutrality" – p. 84-85)

Small Group Discussion (45 minutes)

Steps 8-9 – Restitution Steps (30 minutes)

- The “exact nature of our wrongs” (their point of view, not ours)
- Wrong of commission vs. omission
- The Role of Forgiveness (self and others – Lord’s Prayer)
- Owing Nothing – No payables, no receivables
- Not about paying back; instead: healing, making whole
- God’s mercy “can’t be counted;” Neither should our forgiveness be “counted.”
- Restorative Justice vs. Retributive Justice
- Ultimately, it’s about becoming Vulnerable

- Principles:
 - Step 8 – Love/Vulnerability
 - Step 9 – Justice/Discipline

Small Group Discussion (30 minutes)

Step 12 – Service Step (45 minutes)

- Humility and Anonymity
 - Anonymity – “Anyone can do it”
 - “Sr. Ignatia-Bishop Story” -- Leave your cleric’s garb at the door
 - We share our “experience,” not our opinions
 - I am not the message; I am only a messenger
 - My sobriety is not about Me
 - “Why We Were Chosen” reading
 - “Father’s Day” story

- Principles:
 - **Selflessness** – Relief from the bondage of self
 - **Responsibility** – A.A. Statement: “I am responsible, when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.”
 - **Generosity** – We only get what we give; giving, receiving are the same

Matt Talbot Retreat Closing Ceremony