

You're Sober - Now What? A 12-week Series  
PREFACE TO LIVING EACH TRADITION

1. IN TRADITION ONE I LEARNED THAT IT WAS MY ATTITUDE WHICH DETERMINED THE QUALITY OF MY RELATIONSHIPS. I ALSO LEARNED THAT MY ATTITUDE ABOUT LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS WAS FORMED AS I GREW UP WATCHING MY PARENTS AND OTHER IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN MY LIFE AND INCORPORATING WHAT I PERCEIVED AS "THE TRUTH". BY THE TIME I WAS 7 MY BELIEFS AND THEIR CONCOMITANT CHARACTER DEFECTS WERE SET IN STONE.

COMING INTO A.A. MY ATTITUDE WAS ONE OF SELF-CENTERED FEAR. I OPERATED FROM A POSITION OF HOSTILE DEFENSIVENESS WHICH INFLUENCED NEGATIVELY EVERY RELATIONSHIP I EVER HAD.

THROUGH THE ACTIONS I TOOK ON A DAILY BASIS MY ATTITUDE CHANGED FROM EGO-DRIVEN SELF-CENTEREDNESS TO ONE OF UNITY, LOVE AND TOLERANCE. THE "WE" BECAME MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE "YOU" OR THE "I". THE FIRST TRADITION BECAME THE CORNERSTONE OF THE WAY I PERCEIVED LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS.

THE SOLUTION WAS SIMPLE. THE SOLUTION WAS SPIRITUAL.

2. IN TRADITION TWO I BEGAN TO LEARN ABOUT HUMILITY. HUMILITY IS ESSENTIAL TO ANY HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP. WHEN I INCORPORATED THE SECOND TRADITION, A LOVING GOD BECAME MY REFERENCE POINT, NOT ME ME ME! SAINT FRANCIS' PRAYER BECAME MY NEW SKILL SET OF HOW TO DO LIFE. "WHAT CAN I BRING TO THE SITUATION" NOT "WHAT CAN I GET OUT OF THIS" BECAME A THINKING GOAL. I BEGAN TO SEEK TO LOVE, COMFORT AND UNDERSTAND RATHER THAN TO BE LOVED, UNDERSTOOD AND COMFORTED. I BEGAN TO WANT TO BE A TRUSTED SERVANT. IT WAS A SPIRITUAL SOLUTION OF COURSE.
3. IN TRADITION THREE I LEARNED THAT THE ONLY REQUIREMENT TO BE IN A 100% COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP IS A DESIRE TO BE IN THAT RELATIONSHIP AND A WILLINGNESS TO TAKE THE ACTIONS NECESSARY TO MAKE THAT RELATIONSHIP WORK. THIS REQUIRED THE ADOPTION OF SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES, OF COURSE. ONE PERSON

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CANNOT MAKE A RELATIONSHIP WORK. EACH PERSON MUST BE DEDICATED TO THE RELATIONSHIP ITSELF AND HONOR THE CONCEPT OF UNITY.

4. TRADITION FOUR TEACHES ME THAT EACH PERSON IN A RELATIONSHIP SHOULD BE AUTONOMOUS EXCEPT IN MATTERS AFFECTING EACH OTHER, THE RELATIONSHIP ITSELF, OR OTHERS IN OUR LIVES. "HOW DO MY ACTIONS AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIP? "HOW DOES THIS AFFECT US?", NOT "HOW DOES THIS AFFECT ME?" THERE IS A RESPONSIBILITY THAT GOES ALONG WITH AUTONOMY. THERE MUST BE A SHIFT IN THINKING - IN OTHER WORDS, A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING. AUTONOMY MEANS SELF-GOVERNING. AS GOD'S CHILDREN AND UNDER HIS LOVING GUIDANCE, AUTONOMY ALSO MEANS WE ARE EACH RESPONSIBLE TO PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF THE RELATIONSHIP.

5. TRADITION FIVE SHOWS ME THAT EACH RELATIONSHIP HAS BUT ONE PRIMARY PURPOSE: TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER 100% AND SERVE AS AN EXPRESSION OF GOD'S LOVE. SOUNDS SO SIMPLE! IT REQUIRES A REVOLUTIONARY UPHEAVAL IN MY THINKING AND BEHAVIOR. IN ORDER TO INCORPORATE TRADITION FIVE INTO MY DAILY LIFE, I LITERALLY HAD TO OVERTURN MY COMFORTABLE STANCE OF JUDGEMENTAL, CONDITIONAL LOVE TO NON-JUDGEMENTAL, UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

ST. FRANCIS' PRAYER BECAME MY "TO DO" LIST. TRADITION FIVE ASKS US TO GIVE LOVE, UNDERSTANDING, COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO OTHERS. IN ORDER TO DO THIS, I HAD TO LEARN HOW TO AUTHENTICALLY COMMUNICATE, AND HAD TO LEARN HOW TO AUTHENTICALLY LISTEN. BOTH OF THESE REQUIRED HUMILITY, GUIDANCE AND A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT EVERYONE I ENCOUNTERED DURING THE DAY.

6. TRADITION SIX STATES THAT IN OUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS A PARTNER OUGHT NOT BE OVERLY SUPPORTIVE OR DEPENDENT ON THE OTHER - SPIRITUALLY, EMOTIONALLY OR PHYSICALLY, LEST

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PROBLEMS OF EGO INFLATION OR DEFLATION DIVERT US FROM OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE. OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AND SERVE AS AN EXPRESSION OF GOD'S LOVE. OUR SEPARATENESS IS OUR MUTUAL STRENGTH, PROMOTING A PARTNERSHIP OF HEALTHY EQUALS.

7. TRADITION SEVEN IS ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIMSELF OR HERSELF WITHIN THE GROUP. I HAD TO BE CENTERED INSIDE MYSELF IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE MORE THAN PHYSICAL SOBRIETY. MY GOAL BECAME TO KEEP ME COMFORTABLE INSIDE OF ME IN SPITE OF WHAT IS HAPPENING OR NOT HAPPENING OUTSIDE OF ME. THIS MEANT A MAJOR REARRANGEMENT OF MY THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, BELIEFS AND ACTIONS. AS A RESULT OF MY OWN CHANGE OF ATTITUDE, I BEGAN TO WANT THE BEST FOR MY PARTNER ACCORDING TO HIS HEART'S DESIRES, NOT MINE.
8. TRADITION EIGHT EMPHASIZES THE FACT THAT EACH RELATIONSHIP SHOULD REMAIN FOREVER A FREE, GIVING AND RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP, WHETHER IT'S MARRIAGE, SPONSORSHIP, FRIENDSHIP, WORK RELATED OR FLEETING, AS AT THE GROCERY STORE. IN A.A. I CAME TO BELIEVE IN A LOVING POWER GREATER THAN MYSELF WHICH CREATED ME AND THEREFORE YOU. THIS MEANS WE EACH HAVE THE SAME SPIRITUAL POTENTIAL. I DISCOVERED I HAD NO IDEA OF THE UNREALISTIC, SELF-ORIENTED EXPECTATIONS I PLACED ON MYSELF AND EVERYONE ELSE. ALL THE GOOD INTENTIONS AND LOVING THOUGHTS I HAVE IN MY INNER REALITY HAVE NO MEANING UNLESS THEY ARE TRANSLATED INTO THE OUTSIDE REALITY AS LOVING, THOUGHTFUL ACTS.
9. TRADITION NINE IS ABOUT FLEXIBILITY. IT IS ABOUT MY WILLINGNESS TO KEEP AN OPEN MIND AND AN OPEN HEART WHEN DEALING WITH ANOTHER HUMAN BEING, WHETHER IT'S IN MARRIAGE, FRIENDSHIP, A CO-WORKER, OR THE GROCERY STORE CLERK. THIS REQUIRES LOVE AND TOLERANCE ON MY PART IN AN EFFORT TO COME TO MUTUALLY AGREED UPON SOLUTIONS TO

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ORDINARY PROBLEMS. IN A HEALTHY, GROWN-UP RELATIONSHIP, THERE MUST BE SOME GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR. THERE IS AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT IN ANY RELATIONSHIP, NO MATTER HOW FLEETING, WE ARE BOUND IN AN UNSPOKEN COVENANT OF RECIPROCITY, A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WELL-BEING OF ALL WHO CONSTITUTE THAT RELATIONSHIP. IT IS AN ATTITUDE! IT IS THE OPPOSITE OF MY OWN BASIC PROBLEM, SELF-CENTEREDNESS!

10. TRADITION TEN DELVES MORE DEEPLY INTO THE CONCEPT OF "LIVE AND LET LIVE", A SLOGAN WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO THE WELL-BEING OF ANY RELATIONSHIP. FOR THE PURPOSES OF INCORPORATING THE SPIRIT OF THE TRADITIONS INTO OUR EVERYDAY RELATIONSHIPS, THE TENTH TRADITION EMPHASISES THE FACT THAT EVERY RELATIONSHIP SHOULD AVOID HEATED CONTROVERSY. EACH PERSON IS ENTITLED TO THEIR OWN OPINION ON OUTSIDE ISSUES.
11. TRADITION ELEVEN TEACHES US ABOUT THE WISDOM OF OUR REVOLUTIONARY CONCEPT OF ATTRACTION RATHER THAN PROMOTION IN CONVEYING MY PROGRAM, MY BELIEFS, MY ATTITUDES. *EMPHASIS IS PLACED ON PRINCIPLES.* PERSONAL AMBITION HAS NO PLACE IN A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP. AT THE CORE OF ALCOHOLISM IS OBSESSIVE SELF-ABSORPTION. THE OPPOSITE IS HUMILITY, SELFLESSNESS AND ANONYMITY. THE 12 STEPS AND 12 TRADITIONS ARE THE ROADMAP OF HOW TO GET FROM SELF-CENTEREDNESS TO HUMILITY, FROM LONELY AND ISOLATED FEAR TO CONNECTEDNESS. IT IS A LONG AND WINDING ROAD.

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12. TRADITION TWELVE IS A CULMINATION OF ALL THE TRADITIONS. IT INCORPORATES THE UNITY OF THE FIRST TRADITION, THE HUMILITY OF THE SECOND TRADITION, THE 100% COMMITMENT OF THE THIRD TRADITION, THE RESPONSIBILITY OF AUTONOMY OF THE FOURTH TRADITION, THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF ANY RELATIONSHIP OF TRADITION FIVE, THE PARTNERSHIP OF HEALTHY EQUALS OF THE SIXTH TRADITION, THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE SEVENTH TRADITION, THE FREEDOM AND THE RECIPROCITY OF RELATIONSHIPS OF THE EIGHTH TRADITION, THE FLEXIBILITY NEEDED FOR A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP OF THE NINTH TRADITION, THE CONCEPT OF "LIVE AND LET LIVE" IN THE TENTH TRADITION, AND THE WISDOM OF "ATTRACTION NOT PROMOTION" EXPLAINED IN THE ELEVENTH TRADITION.

THE REAL REASON I INCORPORATE THE 12 STEPS AND 12 TRADITIONS INTO MY DAILY LIFE CAN BE SUMMED UP THIS WAY: I PROMISED MYSELF AT THE BEGINNING THAT I WOULD BE *CONTINUOUSLY* WILLING TO GO TO ANY LENGTHS TO OVERCOME THE DEMON ALCOHOL.

I THOUGHT I JUST CAME TO A.A. TO QUIT DRINKING. TO MY GREAT SURPRISE, AS I INCORPORATED THE 12 STEPS AND 12 TRADITIONS INTO MY DAILY LIFE, I DISCOVERED THAT MY PRIMARY GOAL IN LIFE TURNS OUT TO BE TO FIT MYSELF TO BE OF MAXIMUM SERVICE TO GOD AND THOSE ABOUT ME. THE TRADITIONS SHOW US HOW TO LOVE EACH OTHER. THE TRADITIONS TEACH US TO LIVE IN THE SOLUTION, NOT THE PROBLEM. IN THE TRADITIONS WE ARE UNITED WITH EACH OTHER IN LOVE AND WHEN WE LOVE WE WANT TO SERVE.

LOVE AND TOLERANCE OF OTHERS IS MY CODE.

I AM HAPPY, JOYOUS AND FREE.