

THE RISKS AND REWARDS OF PRAYER IN 12-STEP RECOVERY

A “Threads of Recovery” Workshop: July 1 through July 29, 2022

(All cites from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted.)

Session Four: July 22, 2022: The Prayer of St. Francis.

“PEACE”

“... though perhaps he came to scoff, he may remain to pray.” (**Surrender**) (p. xxxii)
“... we asked God ...” (**Seeking**) (throughout Alcoholics Anonymous)
“[Prayer] works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it.” (**Continuing**) (p. 86)

I have seen in the Set-Aside Prayer and in the Alcoholics Anonymous prayers in Steps Three through Eleven that prayer changes me. All prayer changes me.

In my Set-Aside Prayer, I **surrender** to God to “constantly disclose more” to me.

In my prayers in Steps Three through Nine:

I **seek** God’s will for me, as I stop denying, defying and doubting God;

I “offer myself” to God;

I ask God to “save me from being angry”, to “remove my fear”, to “mold my ideals and help me live up to them”, to forgive me and to help me be willing to “let go” of my “objectionable” defects of character;

I ask God to “take all of me” and to grant me the willingness to amend all my harmful wrong-doing from my past.

In my prayers in Steps Ten and Eleven:

I **continue** to surrender my will and seek God’s will for me. I ask God to remove my selfishness, dishonesty, resentments and fears “when they crop up”, make amends quickly if I harm someone, try to help another. I seek God’s forgiveness, to continue to know God’s wisdom and receive God’s power to carry out God’s will for me.

Prayer changes me. Prayer changes me in my relationship with God.

As I pray more, I resist less and desire more to be in relationship with God. I desire to improve my “conscious contact” with God. I desire to enlarge my spiritual life as I seek and accept God’s limitations, opportunities and liberation from my bondage of “self-will run riot”.

.....
So we come to consider the Prayer of St. Francis as it is presented in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. Some say that St. Francis did not say or write this prayer, that the prayer appeared on a prayer card of St. Francis in the early 1900s.

What does it matter? Bill W. included the prayer in his Step Eleven essay in the AA 12 x 12 published in 1953 and wrote a Grapevine article in 1958 about the use of the prayer in AA. The prayer embodies the spiritual principles of Alcoholics Anonymous.

As we say the prayer, we fully experience the **peace** of this prayer, as we have already:

“I was to know happiness, **peace**, and usefulness ...” (p. 8)

“... such a **peace** and serenity ...” (p. 14)

“... circle of **peace** ...” (p. 16)

“... they found that a new power, **peace**, happiness ...” (p. 50)

“... **peace** of mind”—Step Three. (p. 63)

“... be alone at perfect **peace** and ease”—Step Five. (p. 75)

“... we will know **peace**”—Step Nine. (p. 84)

“Lord, make me a channel of thy **Peace** ...” (AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p.99)

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The first simple request is the purpose of the prayer. I request of God, seek from God, the help I need to align my will with God’s will so that I can be a source of God’s **peace** to others. God has been offering God’s **peace** to me since the day I was born, even when I did not know it, want it or know I needed it. Now, I desire to receive God’s **peace** so that I can share God’s **peace** with others:

“[God], make me a channel of [your] **peace** ...”

In the second part of the prayer, I request that God change me “on the inside” in eight ways so that I have God’s **peace** within me to share with others:

“... that where there is hatred, I may bring *love*—

“*Love* and tolerance of others is our code.” (p. 84)

“... that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of *forgiveness*—

“... we ask God’s *forgiveness* ...” (p. 86)

“... that where there is discord, I may bring *harmony*—

“... *common ground* of tolerance, understanding and love.” (p. 122)

“... that where there is error, I may bring *truth*—

“... you have swallowed ... big chunks of *truth* about yourself.” (p. 71)

“... that where there is doubt, I may bring *faith*—

“... *faith* in some kind of God was a part of our makeup ...” (p. 55)

“... that where there is despair, I may bring *hope*—

“... sharing experience, strength, and *hope*.” (p. xxii)

“... that where there are shadows, I may bring *light*—

“... a new *light* had entered the dark world of the alcoholic.” (p. xvii)

“... that where there is sadness, I may bring *joy*.”

“... our *joy* in escape from disaster ...” (p. 17)

In the third part of the prayer, I request that God guide my motives and my actions to use the **peace** God has given me as I interact with others “on the outside”:

“[God], grant that I may seek rather to *comfort* than to be comforted—

‘to *understand*, than to be understood—

‘to *love*, than to be loved.”

In the final part of the prayer, I am reminded that:

“It is by self-forgetting that one finds. (***The Risk***)

It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. (***The Reward***)

It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. Amen.”

.....
“***Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.***”

“***We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the road of Happy Destiny.
May God bless you and keep you—until then.***”