

Fifth Step

Primary Purpose of Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions

I always start out with primary purpose. The primary purpose for all the steps, one-on-one sharing, is to attain a certainty in our hearts that we are part of one, that there are no big-deals in the world, so that we will instinctively desire to go out and find someone else to share this “good news” with. As a result of sharing this, at the bare minimum, we get to maintain the awareness in our hearts...hopefully they decide to walk along this path with us. Whether the person we’re trying to help comes along with us or not, isn’t mandatory...what is mandatory is that I’m making it available to him/her...that way I get to maintain this awareness/awakening. This puts me in a constant state of “Love and Service”...we serve to love, and then love to serve.

Primary Purpose of the Fifth Step

I briefly explain the five things that I need to be doing, consistently and simultaneously, to attain and maintain this awareness. Then I narrow it down to the step we’re on, in this case the fifth step. I explain that the primary purpose for the fifth step is to see if this theory they offered me in the third step has validity in my experience...the theory being that all my problems are rooted in some form, to some degree, in self-centered fear...fear that I’ll lose something I have, I won’t get something I want, what are people thinking of me or what am I thinking of me. Putting this theory to the test is what we are going to attempt to accomplish in this fifth step.

The word “sin” originated in the sport of archery...it means to miss the mark. Anytime I am unaware, in any degree or any variation of the “bull’s eye”...the bull’s eye being an absolute certainty that I am part of “One” and so is everything and everyone else. The certainty that there are no big deals in the world and that God has got everything under control, I don’t need to control it. The certainty that we have the ability to live comfortably and confidently, without having to know God’s plan, is what we are trying to attain.

The purpose for getting that out at first is because when we start talking about the items on his/her fifth step, we tend to tell war stories and the conversation goes off on a tangent. Reminding myself of the purpose of the fifth step allows me to reel the conversation back so that this fifth step gets accomplished in a simple, effective and efficient manner...therefore maximizing the chances that this person will see that this concept of self-centered fear is a little more than just a theory...we cannot find a single instance on our fourth steps, where we were disturbed, that did not have something to do with me thinking about me, with no God...or in other words, self-centeredness, driven by some kind of fear. This is not a “bad” thing...it is a normal reaction, probably by design, for all human beings, hopefully causing them to move back toward the bulls-eye...back toward God and hundreds of forms of “love”. All pain is designed, in my opinion, to cause me to move in a different direction...a direction away from pain.

Identifying the Fear

The tendency is to overshoot the mark, and try to figure out exactly what the fear is. We are not amateur therapists. Trying to understand the fear is not only a waste of time, it’s a distraction from my primary purpose, therefore increasing the chances of this not

working. All we need to see is that each item on the fourth step has some factor of fear, sometimes small, sometimes large...either getting into it, during it and looking back at it. At the very least, I placed myself in a position to be harmed based on some kind of selfish motive.

What am I going to do about these things?

We discuss the specifics of what we are going to do about each item, using the 9th step principles, after we identify our part in it during the 8th step. When we get tempted to go off on a tangent, and try to figure out the fear or figure out the specifics of what my part in it is, I advise you to stop...get back to the primary purpose which is to simply realize that this definitely has something to do with self, driven by some kind of fear...hundreds of forms of fear...getting into it, during it and looking back at it. That's all we need to see for the fifth step purposes. We will discuss the details of what we are going to do about it when we get to the eighth and the ninth step.

The Prayer

I always start out with a simple prayer. I tell the person I'm doing the fifth step with that I'm going to go into my heart in silence, try to bring to my consciousness the presence of an infinite God, not a God in the human form but an omnipresent God...and ask this God to help me to remember that I'm making myself available to be used as He sees fit...not as I see fit, not as this person doing the fifth step sees fit and not as AA sees fit...only as God sees fit. I ask God to remind me to stay focused on principles and not personalities. I also ask God to please help me to help this brother/sister of mine...at the very least, help me to not hurt him/her.

I then tell the person doing his fifth step, to go into his/her heart...ask God to help them be as open minded, honest, thorough and fearless as possible.

What did you leave off? What did you write down that gives you the most fear in talking about?

The first question I ask the person who's fifth step I'm going to listen to is "What did you leave off?" We want to get this out of the way first. This is the thing that is most likely giving them the most fear and will probably kill them if they don't get it out. It will also make it easy to see the principles in the small stuff if I can see it in the big stuff. The sooner I get it out, the less chance they will have of talking themselves out of sharing it...the best time to get the courage to share it is right after the prayer.

In almost all cases, it will be something on the sex conduct list...something that they did that is out of character for the ideal they have chosen for themselves and probably, at least in their mind, something that is unacceptable to them.

Another common thing that people want to leave off is something they did illegally that they could do a lot of jail time for.

We should assure them that we are not an "arm of man's law". We may, as their friend and confidant, try to persuade them to turn themselves in so that this doesn't continue to block them off from God and helping others, but we are not to turn them in ourselves. I assume that just like everything else in life, there is always exceptions to that rule, but my experience is generally that nothing good ever comes from involving the government or

police that could possibly enhance my or his spiritual growth. These agencies have a far different primary purpose than we do.

For the sexual things, we should not be impressed or disgusted by anything that anyone could have possibly done. I assure you that no one has done anything that is not in the dictionary...if it's in the dictionary, someone has done it before us...probably did it better, so we need to get over ourselves and get it out so we can address it and get free of it. These principles will turn the experience in to a finely honed tool that you can use to help someone, where someone else would not be able to. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see where our experiences will have value and purpose.

Things that have happened to us as children or things that we have done to children can get very sensitive, obviously. We view a child with innocence and vulnerability, as it should be. I honestly believe that the judgment we have in our hearts in this area, are not specifically because of the age of the child, but more because of the innocence and vulnerability. There are a lot of people of legal age of consent, that are also very innocent and vulnerable...selfish actions toward these people are obviously just as spiritually compromising. However, it is not our place to judge. It is our place to help people heal. The healing will not only allow people to help others, but also serve to protect any future victims of this activity in a way that no other approach could.

I believe that spiritual principle has no regard for man's clock and calendar, biologic age is not the factor that determines consequence. It is that degree or variation of innocence and vulnerability. We do not have the power to harm another spiritually. We do have the power to harm people physically and mentally, not without consequence, but no matter what happens to us in this game of life, I am the only one that has the power to block me off from God. No matter what you do to me, I have the power to know that this about you, not about me. I can still be free.

Even though God's law has no regard for man's clock and calendar, there is serious power in "consistency". In any given situation, all the other factors, besides consistency, make it virtually impossible to scale or measure the affects of consistency alone. Therefore "consistency" is a force that requires recognition, but it cannot be measured in a linear fashion...not accurately at least.

Man's law needs to be removed from any equation that attempts to understand spiritual principle. Man's actions upon another person can easily be attributed to the spiritual condition of the man invoking the action and the person's reaction can be attributed to his spiritual condition. However, God's created principles don't change because man has enacted a law of the land. Man's law is flawed due to the indisputable nature of the fact that a human being, including an appointed judge, does not have to ability to have all of the required information to fairly judge another human being. He would need to know, in the moment in time that the person being judged did whatever he did that he is being judged for, where that person was physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, environmentally and spiritually. We cannot even know that information about ourselves in any given moment in time. God alone can judge us. Man had to draw a line somewhere, because of the nature of man's law and the court systems. But the reality is God's law has no regard for man's law...sometimes I think that if God thought and felt

like a man, He would be amused and sometimes disgusted with man's law, merely by the results or lack of results of implementing man's law on someone who is obviously lost and misguided. There is no justice in man's law...and thank God for that...otherwise those of us who have been misguided would be done. However, there is perfect justice in spiritual principles, God's law.

When people do things to me that are seemingly unfair

No one is getting out of this life unscathed. In the normal course of human events, we all come in contact with unfortunate results of another's behavior. This is unavoidable. The question is not "how could that happen to me?" The real question is "what am I going to do with the experience?" Am I going to let it destroy me further, therefore becoming part of the problem...or am I going to use the experience to grow and to help another, therefore not only becoming part of the solution, but also minimizing or eradicating the results all together?

No one gets through life unscathed. Other people's actions will affect me. My actions affect others. That's unavoidable. This is why the traditions work so well because they acknowledge this. We need each other to survive and at the same time, our actions affect others. So the real dilemma is am I going to affect others with love or fear. It will always be one or the other. Love is always the solution. Where it gets a little challenging is when I realize that the person who I've affected is not aware of this principle and he wants to retaliate toward me. So now, I need to find love in a defensive posture. That requires a lot of love, a lot of trust and a strong spiritual condition.

It is my reaction to the unavoidable and inevitable actions of others and its affect on my life that will express the state of my spiritual condition. That same principle applies to my actions and how they affect others. I believe that even if my actions were not intended to affect someone else negatively and their reaction is a direct result of their spiritual condition, they are typically not aware of this. Then it becomes my responsibility, if I want to stay spiritually strong, to understand and have compassion for them and attempt to show them these spiritual principles. If I'm not willing to do that, I am no longer serving my primary purpose of being my brother's keeper and attempting to nudge them in the direction of God and therefore I will experience some form of pain. All pain is designed to cause me to change my course of action.

Even if I'm aware that I haven't harmed anyone spiritually from my behavior, the other person might not be aware of this. If he/she is listening to the majority of the people in the world, they will probably believe that they are a victim of my behavior. So I need to cooperate with them in trying to help them find peace with the situation, which sometimes means leaving them alone completely. I would refer to the ninth step principles and the writing that I did on sexual/physical/mental abuse if necessary.

The only thing we really need to see is that anything that disturbs me has something to do with me, driven by some kind of fear. We can discuss the details of the event and what we can do about it when we get to the ninth step.

Don't be afraid to tell the person that you don't know what you don't know

People always remember your actions...rarely do they remember your words. If you are not sure about something, be honest...let the person know that you will check with your sponsor and get back to him. This act will go a long way in showing him that he can do the same thing when he is listening to someone else's fifth step.

Go through the list

Go through the list one item at a time. All you need to point out is that when he's disturbed, it has something to do with him, driven by some kind of fear...sometimes small, sometimes large...but it's always there if he is disturbed.

One of the things that I like to do...just to drive the point home...is when we start the fear list, I tell him that the first fear that I want to talk about is the one you wrote down that had nothing to do with you. He won't be able to find one.

Relationship Titles: Mom & Dad, Husband & Wife, Brother/Sister, Sponsor

Regardless of what title I put on a relationship, God does not have any grandchildren...we are all God's kids...we all came into this world the same way...through someone's womb with no directions. Before she's my mom, she's my sister in spiritual terms. She has done the best she can with the resources she has available to her, not only to find happiness in her own life, but also to try and raise a child. My problem is typically that the best she had was not enough for me, I always wanted more.

We inevitably find that when I stop trying to see what I can "get" from a relationship and begin seeing what I can bring to the relationship, my perception changes and the disturbance gets removed.

Sex Conduct

Sex is just as normal as breathing, eating, drinking water, pursuing shelter and society. Sex is not the problem. The problem is the way we use it. Just like any other part of the human experience, when I am doing anything for self-serving reasons, driven by fear, the result is always disturbing to some degree and in some fashion. When the driving force is love, or at least casual respect, the results are not disturbing, they are typically good memories.

So we treat Sex in the same way as we treat anything else. We get it all on paper so we can see the price tags that we pay for certain behaviors, so that in the future these prices will be at the forefront of our minds which will allow us to make informed decisions on whether to engage in the behavior or not.

The Hour After

I do not believe that we need to pull out a stop-watch here. What we are trying to accomplish is thoroughness. Spend approximately an hour in quiet meditation, examining what I have done in the first five steps in the spiritual sense. Have I ensured that I gave this my best and not tried to cut any corners? Make sure I show my gratitude to God in some kind of Prayer. I do not believe that this is Step 6 and 7 like some believe. I believe it is exactly what it says...an hour to reflect on my thoroughness.