

Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Step

This sixth & seventh steps combined is almost identical to the third step...the only difference being that this theory they offered me in the third step, that all my disturbances are driven by self-centered fear, is now a little more than just a theory. I just did a thorough inventory and I could not find an exception...so it seems that this is my experience.

Now that I can see that this is the root underlying cause and condition of all of my disturbances and, for all intents and purposes, at this stage, it's important to see that I really only have one character defect...*a lack of awareness in God in any given situation that reveals itself in some form of self-centered fear*...am I now ready to have these defects of character, in whatever form they reveal themselves, removed if they are not useful to God and helping others?

In other words, character defects and shortcomings are a normal part of life. Whenever they get removed, it's only to make room for the next set of defects and shortcomings. Having defects of character or shortcomings is not the problem. We're always going to have shortcomings...the real problem, which will cause insanity if not addressed, is experiencing the same defects of character and shortcomings over and over again and not learning and growing from them.

If I never experienced any shortcomings, I would have no experiences to draw off while attempting to execute my primary purpose of helping others, but even more important, I would have no compassion for you when you're experiencing yours. So I suspect that these defects of character are absolutely essential and by design so that I can be uniquely qualified to help you. Carrying this message with no compassion (or no Love) would be received to the person I'm trying to help as the equivalent of Charlie Brown's teacher...or as Corinthians in the Bible says...just clanging symbols.

I want to emphasize that the shortcomings and character defects that I'm asking to get removed are ONLY the ones that are blocking me off from serving God through helping others. This leads me to presume that the particular characteristics that don't get removed still have purpose...maybe to give me experience that I can use to help others at a time when I wouldn't be able to if I didn't experience them. Delusional? Maybe. Is not believing this delusional? More likely. Remember that I made a decision that I was going to try to live a life serving God, not serving myself, if for no other reason, just so I could say to myself that I tried it and it didn't work. If it's truly a principle, it will work regardless of whether I believe it will or not.

If my decision in the sixth step is yes...I want to go further...just like in the third step...I think well before making this decision...than I need to tell God. The seventh step prayer is pretty close to the same as the third step prayer in spirit. In both prayers I'm asking God to remove the things that are blocking me off from helping others and doing God's bidding. Notice the third step prayer begins with "My Creator..." but there is no "Amen" at the end. "Amen" means "That is all". However, the seventh step prayer does not begin with a salutation to God such as "God" or "My Creator", but it ends in "Amen". I

often wonder if this was intentional since steps 3 through 7 is really one complete prayer that also includes actions. “Faith without works is dead.”

Just like after the third step, after the seventh step the decision and the prayer will have little permanent effect if not at once followed by the next step.

I believe the eighth step to be a fluid document, always changing as my perceptions change and as my experience changes. I also believe that it has far more value than simply just a harms list.

For the eighth step list, I have people take all the names off of their fourth step and put them on a new piece of paper. After each name, I ask them to write what their part in it was. In attempting to identify their part, I ask them to ask themselves the following questions:

- Where did I cause harm? *We need this to identify where we might need to make amends.*
- Where did I behave in a way that is not the kind of man that I want to be? *We need this to see what particular types of behavior I am vulnerable to so that I can do the best I can to “change the things I can” before leaving the rest in God’s hands. I want to set an ideal for the type of person I really want to be.*
- What would I do different if I had to do it over again? *I want to set an ideal for the type of person I really want to be.*

Please remember that all of this is simply the format that I have personally found to be most effective while searching for that balance between not making this more difficult than it needs to be for the person I’m trying to help, but also not making it so simple that I compromise the integrity of what I’m trying to accomplish. What I’m trying to accomplish is “accepting the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference”. If you have a better format to more effectively accomplish attaining the wisdom to know the difference, by all means use it and share it with me. I’m open to growing.