

STEP 11

There is a principle for a healthy relationship between two entities...whether those two entities are two people, a person and an animal, a person and an institution or even a person and God.

This principle will ensure that the relationship will naturally be better every day than it was the day before...it will be easy, natural and enjoyable. It will also ensure that “when” the two entities go separate ways, there will be no regrets and only good memories. My relationship with God is different, presuming our spirits are eternal. If so, the only relationship that’s staying forever is the one with God. We will never go separate ways from God.

The principle is two-fold. (1) There must be a common goal and (2) effective communication expressed almost completely by consistent action.

Common goal – If there is an ulterior motive in a relationship, no matter how much communication is present, that relationship is doomed. When two people have the same goal in a relationship, regardless of what that goal is, the relationship stands a good chance of being healthy as long as there is effective communication.

Effective communication – Anyone who is paying attention in this life will report to you that “actions speak louder than words”. People instinctively notice “consistent action”. In other words, I can tell a lie, but sooner or later, the truth will reveal itself. Also, people make mistakes. Occasional burps are overlooked...what is truly in one’s heart will be expressed by his/her “consistent actions”.

My relationship with God is the same except that since God has already laid out the principles of the universe and it doesn’t appear that He has any intention of changing them, I need to get into harmony with these principles in order for God and I to have a common goal. Once we have a common goal, the next issue is communication.

God appears to communicate to man with pain, joy, the promise of joy or the fear of pain. Pain tells me I’m on the wrong path...joy tells me that I’m on the right path. Sometimes this is so subtle that we refer to it as inspiration. God’s communication to me is consistent and relentless. However, I’m not always paying attention or listening (meditation). I am always communicating with God by the way I express myself (prayer), even when I’m not aware that I’m communicating with Him. Since I have free-will and I don’t enjoy pain, the goal is to get aware of these principles so that I can execute my free-will in harmony with them, with intention. The more I do this, the more second-nature it will become to do this instinctively.

The majority of my communication is expressed by my consistent actions. 100% of God’s communication to me is with action...pain, joy, fear and promise. The obvious question is “why would I want to communicate back to God in a language other than action, or in other words, how I live my life?” 100% awareness is unrealistic. However, it can be my goal so that I can maximize the time that I am aware. The Franciscan Monks say “our prayer is in our work”. I don’t like the word work...it implies that this is heavy or burdensome. I think this way of life is the easier, softer way. But I understand what they mean, I suspect. Our prayer is in our expressions...it is in the way we live our lives. It is in the way we execute our free will. My goal is to get as close to 100% of the time as possible expressing myself in a way that says to

God (symbolically) “I need direction, please guide me” and “thank you”. I can only improve on something I begin, so I suggest to the reader to just begin praying as often as possible and just like everything else...the more you do it, the more second-nature and effective you will become with it.

We cannot pray for selfish things however. A tree has everything it needs and will continue to have everything it needs to live a long life as long as it is allowed to continue just being a tree. As soon as it tries to be something other than a tree, its needs will be difficult to come by. The human being has everything it needs and will continue to have everything it needs to live a long life as long as it is allowed to continue just being a human being. So what is it that God intends of the human being? Obviously he intends for the human being to have free-will, because we do. When we use our free will to live our lives in service to others, showing others how to do the same, all of our needs are met...this leads us to believe that we were designed for this purpose. Therefore, we need to pray for the guidance and direction as to how we can effectively be of service to others.

When I pray and meditate, God does not change his principles. I believe that when I pray and meditate, the first thing that happens is my perception changes. Once my perception changes, then my actions that I chose to take change. The world runs on principle, action and reaction, cause and effect. So as soon as my actions change, the world's reactions to me change. Sometimes this happens so fast that it appears that God is answering my prayers. I do not believe that God is interfering with every transaction. If He did, there would be no principle and the world would be in chaos. I do not believe that God thinks like a man, judges like a man or makes decisions like a man. I think we, as human beings, like to use these images of God as a man for symbolic purpose so that we can communicate it better, typically in parables.

When we're communicating with children, we have to communicate the image of God in the image of man. It's the only thing the undeveloped mind can comprehend. If we don't, we have no way of giving our children a sense of security. The dilemma is that we don't grow our communication techniques about God to our children as the child grows and they typically leave that image of God when they stop believing in the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus. Once we become adults, we don't think like a child anymore, so we need to adopt a more Omni-present conception of God...something that is too big for the human mind to comprehend.

We don't confuse this with the passages in the Bible referring to God making man in His image. That passage suggests that everything is made in God's image, not just man.

I like traditional prayer & meditation, on my knees, hands folded, talking to God, for a few reasons.

- Because of the society I was raised in, it's familiar.
- I enjoy praying this way with others. There is no act that two people can share that is more intimate, bonding and safe than the act of praying together...even if nothing is said out loud.
- When I'm overwhelmed, I enjoy being able to throw myself to my knees and go “God, please get me out of this one...”

So for all intents and purposes, my prayer is how I express myself with all of my senses and my meditation is the information that I absorb, also with all of my senses.

I like how my sponsor talks to a new guy about meditation...

New Guy: "I don't know how to meditate"

Sponsor: "Yes you do"

New Guy: "No I really don't"

Sponsor: "Yes, you really do"

New Guy: "What do you mean?"

Sponsor: "Have you ever had a crush on a girl before?"

New Guy: "Oh yes, lots of times"

Sponsor: "You thought about her a lot, right?"

New Guy: "All the time"

Sponsor: "That's meditating. Do that...change the subject"

I need regular communication with God, through consistent prayer and meditation, intentional expression and absorption, in order to get a "conscious contact". I always have a contact with God, I'm just not always conscious of it. Once I have the conscious awareness, now I can execute my free-will in harmony with God's principles. It really is a fairly simple concept.

I believe this to be the spirit of the message of the eleventh step of AA. If I can practice this on a regular basis, as close to 100% of the time as possible, followed up with love-driven service to others as we will discuss in the twelfth step...I don't have a lot of need for the tenth step because I don't disturb easily. However, I'm not perfect, I'm human. I make no apologies for being human, so I have the tenth step to catch me when I stumble. These stumbles are necessary to remind me that I am human and keep going to God for direction, give me experiences to share with others as I try to help them, but most important, give me compassion for my brother/sister as I try to help them. To attempt to carry this message without love (compassion) would sound like "clanging symbols" or "Charlie Brown's teacher". There would be no "language of the heart" which is really all we can hear, deep down within.