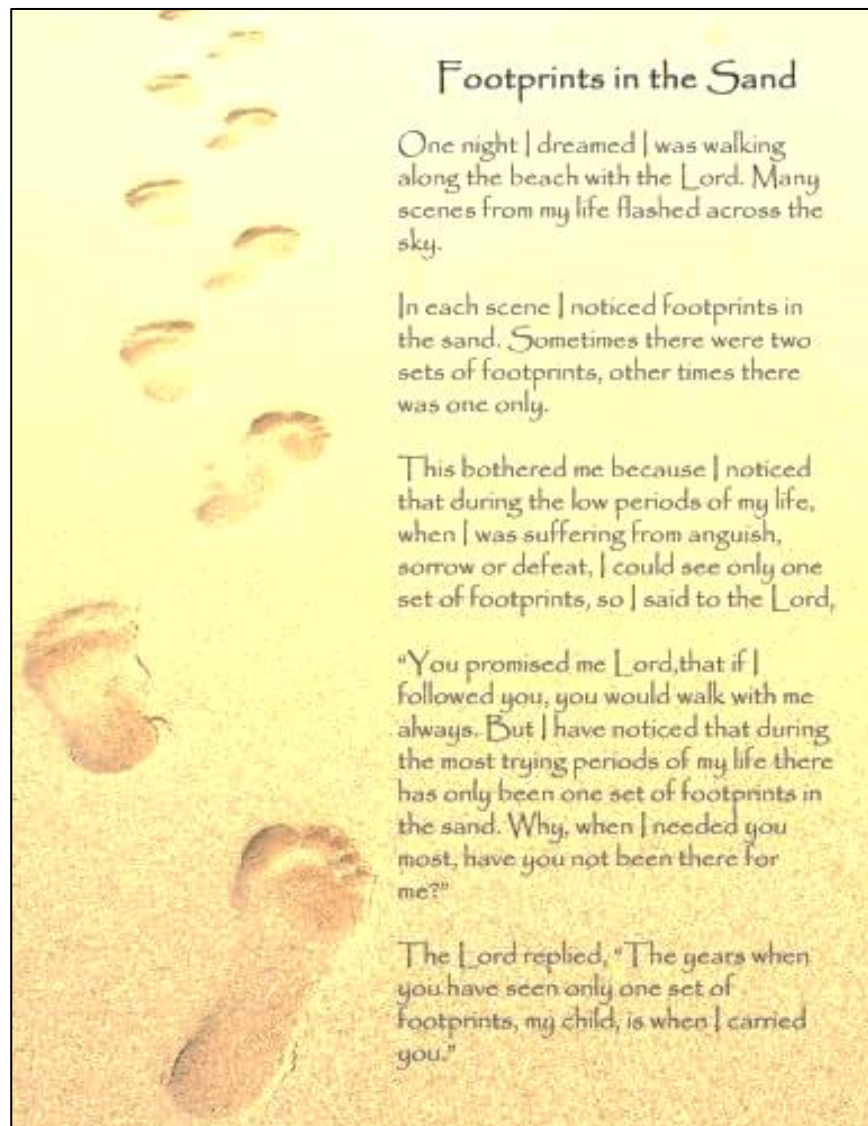


Step 11 - a simple guide to encourage practice of this step



Quotes from BB and 12 & 12 in black.

Some thoughts and pointers from an AA member
Personal view text in blue, (*where God is mentioned - note it will always mean as you understand Him*)

Definitions

Grace of God = The unmerited favour of God, divine saving and strengthening influence.

Meditation = to ponder, to concentrate on what God has done for us.

Prayer = make supplication, beseech, entreat, give thanks.

“Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of meditation and prayer is the sense of *belonging* that comes to us. We no longer live in a completely hostile world. We are no longer lost and frightened and purposeless. The moment we catch even a glimpse of God’s will, the moment we begin to see truth, justice and love as the real and eternal things in life, we are no longer deeply disturbed by all the seeming evidence to the contrary that surrounds us in purely human affairs. We know that God lovingly watches over us. We know that when we turn to him all will be well with us. Here and hereafter.” *12&12 step 11*

Introduction

I well remember when I first came to the fellowship, how delighted I was with the Just for Today Card. In a sense there I began the journey towards step eleven, “Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself and relax. During this half hour, sometime, I will try to get a better perspective of my life.” Coming to see that I needed a Higher Power, God, who could provide what I lacked “Our dilemma was lack of power” I began to practise the steps which could lead me to a better relationship with God. Step three is quite clear “It is when we make our will conform with God’s that we begin to use it rightly... To make this increasingly possible is the purpose of AA’s Twelve Steps, and Step Three opens the door...”

In my experience the opening of this door, by a generous readiness to seek and do Gods will produces the ‘gift of prayer’. So begins what Bill W. loves to call the *adventure* of a sober life. The practice of step eleven is a very private matter yet we are bound by the call of our fellow alcoholics to share our experience strength and hope and this must include our grasp of step eleven.

The text in blue is derived from the experience of a long time sober member.

The best introduction to this step is of course found in the text itself from the AA literature.

“There is a direct linkage among self examination, meditation and prayer. Taken separately, these practices can bring much relief and benefit. But when they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an unshakeable foundation for life....” *12&12 step 11.*

So let us remind ourselves about self examination:-

Self examination steps 4-10

“...Step four is our vigorous and painstaking effort to discover what these liabilities in each of us have been, and are. We want to find exactly how, when, and where our natural desires have warped us. We wish to look squarely at the unhappiness this had caused others and ourselves. By discovering what our emotional deformities are, we can move toward their correction. Without a willing and persistent effort to do this, there can be little sobriety or contentment for us. Without a searching and fearless moral inventory, most of us have found that faith which really works in daily living is still out of reach.” *12&12 step 4*

“... Steps eight and nine are concerned with personal relations...”

“... Every AA has found that he can make little headway in this new adventure of living until he first backtracks and really makes an accurate and unsparing survey of the human wreckage he has left in his wake....”

“...As we work the first nine steps, we prepare ourselves for the adventure of a new life. But when we approach step 10 we commence to put our AA way of living to practical use, day by day, in fair weather or foul. Then comes the acid test: can we stay sober, keep in emotional balance, and live to good purpose under all conditions?”

A **continuous** look at our assets and liabilities, and a real desire to learn and grow by this means, are **necessities** for us. We alcoholics have learned this the hard way.

...It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong *with us...*

...Learning daily to spot, admit and correct these flaws is the essence of character building and good living. An honest regret for harm done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek...”

12&12 step 10

Steps 6 and 7

These are fascinating steps, little is said of them in the Big Book, in fact two short paragraphs of less than a hundred words. In the 12&12 expansion and clarification is provided. These two steps are formally taken once - as shown in the BB but clearly we need to keep an attitude of willingness and honesty in place on a daily basis. Daily living will reveal to me what I need to be free of. I will know what those defects are firstly from the 4th and 5th Step and as I go on - from the 10th step.

“The seventh step is where we make the change in our attitude which permits us, with humility as our guide, to move out from ourselves towards others and towards God. The whole emphasis of step seven is on humility. It is really stating to us that we now ought to be willing to try humility in seeking the removal of our other shortcomings just as we did when we admitted that we were powerless over alcohol, and came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. If that degree of humility could enable us to find that grace by which such a deadly obsession could be banished, then there must be hope of the same result respecting any other problem we could possibly have.”

12&12 step 7

So we think 6 and 7 are the link between Steps 3 and 11.

Now let's look at Meditation

Meditation steps 3 and 11

“It is when we make our will conform with God's that we begin to use it rightly... To make this increasingly possible is the purpose of AA's Twelve Steps, and Step Three opens the door...”

“Then it is explained that other steps of the AA programme can be practiced with success only when Step Three is given a determined and persistent trial...” *12&12 step 3*

“Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us. To some extent we have become God conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense. But we must go further and that means more action.” *BB Chpt 6*

“...If we belong to a religious denomination which requires definite morning devotion, we attend to that also. If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorise a few set prayers which emphasise the principles we have been discussing...”

BB Chpt 6

“ For in meditation debate has no place. We rest quietly with the thoughts of someone who knows, so that we may experience and learn.” *12&12 step 11*

Meditation lets us see our needs and shows us the dangers of self deception that can exist in us, it is the beginning and root of all good, it is the sister of spiritual reading, the nurse of prayer, the director of good actions... it opens the eyes of our understanding for if we are focusing on God and what He has done for us, we gain perspective, and a right humility.

The first advantage of this is we draw the grace of God upon us and because He requires our co-operation we must take care to co-operate with Him. Consider that we are always one drink away from a drunk, that life is each heartbeat, of how God as we understand Him has rescued us through AA. Consider your most obstinate failings and defects, consider how *“God could and would if He were sought...”* That we have *“a daily reprieve contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition”*.(BB)

Another advantage of meditation is that we can increase in our love of God, meditation warms our heart and our will, gives us a prompt disposition to “work the steps” Then our will is always ready to do God’s will. It also disposes our mind, in a healthy way for the future- so make meditation with as much attention as possible.

So when we have applied all the powers of our soul to meditation, our hearts will be grateful, (Our memory will be filled with the recollection of His benefits), our understanding will be deeper, our will prompt and ready to seek and do His will. This is the proper time to ask and obtain things. For the prayer that proceeds from the meditative heart will be pleasing to God.

And lastly prayer:-

Prayer steps 3 and 11

“... On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought plane will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.”

BB Chpt 6

“...Those of us who have come to make regular use of prayer would no more do without it than we would refuse air, food or sunshine. And for the same reason. When we refuse air, light or food, the body suffers. And when we turn away from meditation and prayer, we likewise deprive our minds, emotions and our intuitions of vitally needed support. As the body can fail its purpose for lack of nourishment, so can the soul. We all need the light of God’s reality, the nourishment of His strength, and the atmosphere of His grace. To an amazing extent the facts of AA life confirm this ageless truth.” *12&12 step 11*

“When we retire at night, we constructively review our day”. Were we resentful? Were we selfish? Were we dishonest? Were we afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Were we thinking of what we could do for others? Of what we could pack into the stream of life? After making our review we ask God’s forgiveness and enquire what corrective measures should be taken?
BB Chpt 6

Without prayer our souls will grow weak, good desires vanish away, negative thinking and old inclinations come in their place; we come at last to please ourselves in nothing. All the ‘stinking thinking’, all the negativity we thought we had extinguished begins to revive in our hearts. Without prayer we are like soldiers with no weapons to go into battle with.

So the operation of the understanding is the foundation of our acts in prayer; now from our meditation we are improving our conscious contact with our Loving Creator so our spiritual life needs the nourishment of prayer, prayer gives us the strength to fulfil our obligations. Prayer is to the spiritual life what the hands are to the body. If we do not exert ourselves to know and examine our weakness and defects we shall be deceived and misinformed of our needs, so that in prayer we will not know what we ought to ask for, nor will we ask it with the requisite sincerity. Our prayer will be tepid unless supported by meditation

It can happen that in prayer we dwell upon everything else except what is most necessary for us. If we wish then to learn to pray and beg of God what we stand most in need of (power to carry that out!) let us employ ourselves in considering exactly our defects and shortcomings, as revealed to us originally in the foundation steps and on a daily basis in our step Ten.

Nothing can so much contribute to our progress in sobriety/humility as frequent prayer and conversation with God. Our heart becomes filled and relishes positive and grateful thoughts. It is an efficacious means to regulate our life, surmount obstacles, praying as we should we will live as we should. *Through prayer we see our defects and also the means to mend them.*

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

- 1.** *We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.*
- 2.** *Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
- 3.** *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*
- 4.** *Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
- 5.** *Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
- 6.** *Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
- 7.** *Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*
- 8.** *Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*
- 9.** *Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
- 10.** *Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*
- 11.** *Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*
- 12.** *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.*

God grant me the
Serenity
to accept the things I
cannot change...

Courage to
change the things I can

and Wisdom to
know the difference...