

STEP ELEVEN

"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."

Step Ten, the first of the maintenance steps:

1. Suggests taking a daily personal inventory and when we are wrong, promptly admitting it.
2. Helps us to develop the habit of accurate self-appraisal, and;
3. Makes us aware of the necessity of admitting our wrongs, first to ourselves, and then to others when the admission would be helpful.

Also, we are starting to develop self-restraint and build character by spotting, admitting, and correcting the acquired defects of character. Step Ten is the beginning of a lifetime practice centered in the here and now.

Step Eleven, the second maintenance step, is also a NOW step. Previously, in Steps One through Three, we found that:

1. Our lives have been, are NOW, and will remain unmanageable.
2. God can restore us to sanity if we rightly relate ourselves to him, and;
3. We made a decision daily to turn our lives and our will over to his care.

Since we are undisciplined in almost all areas of our lives, we now must use prayer and meditation as the principal means of maintaining a conscious contact with God.

The first element of Step Eleven concerns itself with prayer and meditation as the principal means of improving our conscious contact with God. Meditation is the process that allows us to become closer to God and gain a deeper and deeper awareness of his presence within. In the beginning, we use the prayer found in Step Eleven of the *Twelve and Twelve*, which is given below. Praying this prayer several times very slowly, we dwell on and savor every word, letting God illumine the deeper meaning of each phrase. We relax and breathe deeply of the spiritual atmosphere with which the grace of this prayer surrounds us. Let us still the thinking mind, gently, and allow ourselves to then focus undisturbed on the essence of this prayer. For example, being "an instrument of peace," asking for the grace to bring love, forgiveness, etc. to others; seeking to give comfort, understanding and love rather than receiving it; trying to self-forget. Meditation is something that should always be further developed. *The object of meditation is to improve our conscious contact with God and allow God's views, ways, and grace to permeate and shape our personality.*

Prayer is the raising of the heart and mind to God. Using meditation to open ourselves, we use prayer to acknowledge God's Sovereignty and right to guide our lives; we praise God's capability, competence, and skill in managing our recovery; then and only then, we ask for

those right things of which we and others are in the greatest need. Too often we make our prayer time a to-do list for God. We need to grow towards balance of praising God as well as petitioning for ours and others' needs. We may thus end our meditation session with a prayer in which we ask especially for the freedom from self-will. We never pray for our own selfish ends. In the morning we ask God to direct our thinking so that it may be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Throughout the day, we constructively review the day (actually, an "interim Tenth Step" before the end of the day!) and ask God's forgiveness and guidance. The second prayer given below may help with this day-long praying.

The second element of Step Eleven suggests that we pray *only* for the knowledge of what God's will is for us. Our immediate temptation will be to ask God for specific solutions to specific problems; however, this is asking God to do it our way. Since our purpose is to conform our will to God's will, we should ask only for the guidance to follow God's will and leave our will out. If we do make specific requests, we might add, "if it be thy will." This is not to dilute our confidence in the prayer but to leave open other options we may not have envisioned. Remember, we receive guidance from God for our lives to the extent that we stop making demands upon God to give it to us on order and on our terms.

The final portion of Step Eleven suggests that after we have asked for knowledge of God's will, that we then ask for the will power to carry it out. To start, we must exercise our will power and, after we have done the footwork, God will supply us with the additional power to carry out God's will.

The entire Twelve Step program is spiritual. Step Eleven is where we start to practice the methods that will allow us, if we put forth enough concentration persistently and on a daily basis, to gain a deeper and deeper awareness of God's guiding presence. This step cannot be bypassed if we are sincerely seeking a spiritual awakening. We will be comforted and granted glimpses of the Kingdom so long as we try, however, falteringly, to find and do the will of God.

The purpose of writing the Eleventh Step is to help us formulate our prayer and meditation techniques so that we can improve our conscious contact with God. In doing this, we learn to pray only for the knowledge of God's will and the power to carry that out.

Eleventh Step Prayer
(Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace!
Where there is hatred,
let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not
so much seek to be consoled
as to console;
to be understood
as to understand;
to be loved
as to love;
for it is in giving
that we receive;
it is in pardoning
that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying
that we are born to Eternal Life.

Daily Prayer
(John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer*)

O Holy Spirit of God, visit now this soul of mine, and tarry within it until eventide. Inspire all my thoughts. Pervade all my imaginations. Suggest all my decisions. Lodge in my will's most inward citadel and order all my doings. Be with me in my silence and in my speech, in my haste and in my leisure, in company and in solitude, in the freshness of the morning and in the weariness of the evening; and give me grace at all times to rejoice in thy mysterious companionship.

QUESTIONS FOR WRITING

1. Why is it necessary to improve our conscious contact with God?
2. What are the principal means of improving our conscious contact with God?
3. What is the object of prayer and of meditation?
4. How do you attempt to get God to do your will? How do you attempt to give God orders? Give examples.
5. What should you ask God for in your prayers?
6. Is your prayer and meditation practiced throughout the day? How might that happen?