

## Purity: the last of the 4 Absolutes

Purity, the last of the 4 absolutes is perhaps the most obscure and difficult to understand. In general, the word purity has a religious connotation, and is not a virtue or concept that most people are aware of today. The strident religious overtone of the Oxford Group was one reason why the 4 absolutes were not incorporated into AA literature. However, the principles that the 4 absolutes represent are still embedded in the 12 steps, in particular in step 6 and step 7.

The difference between the 4 absolutes and the 12 steps is that the virtues described in the 4 absolutes are from an external standard: “a yardstick for behavior” as Dr. Bob described them. However, within the 12 steps, when we do our 4th step inventory, we discover what harms we have caused based on our character defects. The solution, when either using the 12 steps or the 4 absolutes is the same: humbly pray to God and ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

The dictionary definitions do not fully explain what it means to behave with absolute purity. The word pure means “unmixed with any other thing; containing nothing that impairs or is hurtful.” It also means: “Neither biased by practical considerations, nor directed toward the exposition of demonstrable realities or the solution of practical problems.” Purity also means: “Free from moral fault or guilt” and “belonging to a religious group that stresses personal purity and precision of conduct.”

The question remains: how does this relate to a spiritual principle to be practiced in all our affairs? The synonyms for purity present a more clear definition of what it means to be pure: freedom from guilt, dignity, genuineness, virtue, honesty, integrity, sincerity, clarity, decency, grace, restraint, transcendence, faith, grace, humility, spirituality, righteousness, devotion and SOBRIETY. Thus, purity encapsulates the totality of what recovery is all about as seen in The Promises: “We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.” (AA BB 83-84).

When defined as above, absolute purity is the quality of the heart and the mind of translating knowledge, what we know to be right or true into action. When we are pure, our thoughts/feelings and actions are integrated and balanced. When we act in harmony with what we know to be honest, unselfish, loving and pure, we live with conscious contact with the God of our understanding. We live in a place of gratitude, serenity, peace and humility free from our obsession to compulsively overeat.

Making daily choices to live in purity includes what we think, say, act, our attitudes, and what we do with our bodies. As we act upon what we already know to be right, we learn more about what

is right. If we do what is right and we try to do it in the right way, a Higher Power will aid our efforts. We stop and we ask ourselves:

- Is it right or is it wrong?
- Were my motives pure in my thinking and in my actions? Were my motives selfless or selfish?
- Did I maintain purity of mind, of body and of purpose in everything I did; my conduct in business, in work and play, my use of possessions, my attitudes toward relations with those I'm sexually attracted to, friends, acquaintances, as well as in my habits?
- Did I manipulate, seduce, pre-program or project hidden agendas onto anyone or anything?
- Do I have a conscious need for God, or are seeking comfort in our own piety? When we examine our motives we realize our shortcomings and we are humbled.

### **When I am living my life with absolute purity:**

I live according to the principles of integrity and honesty. I act with sincerity and without guile. I do the right thing even if it is inconvenient and I do not rationalize my behavior or justify any wrong doing. "The deception of others is nearly always rooted in the deception of ourselves. . . . When we are honest with another person, it confirms that we have been honest with ourselves and with God." (As Bill Sees It, p. 17). With integrity and honesty, we become a conduit for the flow of God's love and we can then carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer.

I do what is right and good towards others. I am careful that all my actions are done with fairness and justice and that I do not cause harm or pain to another person.

I try to be forgiving of minor offenses in the hope that this is just a temporary misunderstanding. The caveat to that is I seek to resolve arguments, whenever possible and communicate effectively, not to just blindly forgive.

I am accountable for my actions. When I make an amends, I seek to mend my ways. I recognize my mistake, ask for forgiveness and then resolve to change my behavior. As it says in the AA BB: "It is clear that we made our own misery. God didn't do it. Avoid then, the deliberate manufacture of misery, but if trouble comes, cheerfully capitalize it as an opportunity to demonstrate His omnipotence." (p 133)

I have integrity and I am honest in all my financial transactions. This means I do not steal, I keep my financial commitments, I respect my time, I arrive on time, leave on time and do my work when I am at work, and not my personal tasks on my employer's time.

I do not gossip. As Dr. Bob said: "Let us also remember to guard that erring member - the tongue, and if we must use it, let's use it with kindness and consideration and tolerance."

I do not harm others or seek revenge.

I avoid actions that could cause financial or emotional harm to others.

I look to be of service to others and practice patience, kindness and love towards my fellows. As it says in the AA BB: "We resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance is our code." (pp 84)

I do not insult or embarrass others or flatter them to get what I want.

I am careful with my speech: I am polite, speak the truth in my heart and do not reveal private information.

I look for the good in others: I am loving and tolerant and not critical and judgmental. "By living a spiritual life, by asking God for help, I have learned to love, care for and feel compassion for all my fellow men, and to feel joy in a world." (AA BB p 83)

I respect others, which means that I am sensitive to their feelings and their honor. "We must be loyal to each other if A.A. is going to be successful. While we're in this lifeboat, trying to save ourselves and each other from alcoholism, we must be truly and sincerely helpful to each other." (A.A. Thought for the Day)

I seek the company of like-minded people who will support me on my spiritual path. "As we made spiritual progress, it became clear that, if we ever were to feel emotionally secure, we would have to put our lives on a give-and-take basis; we would have to develop the sense of being in partnership or brotherhood with all those around us. We saw that we would need to give constantly of ourselves without demand for repayment. When we persistently did this, we gradually found that people were attracted to us as never before. And even if they failed us, we could be understanding and not too seriously affected."(ABSI)

I practice the virtue of temperance and self-control. I am moderate with my physical needs and desires: I follow my food plan. I do not seek material comfort to the detriment of my spiritual life. "Service gladly rendered, obligations squarely met, troubles well accepted or solved with God's help, the knowledge that at home or in the world outside we are partners in a common effort, the fact that in God's sight all human beings are important, the proof that love freely given brings a full return, the certainty that we are no longer isolated and alone in self-constructed prisons, the surety that we can fit and belong in God's scheme of things - these are the satisfactions of right living for which no pomp and circumstance, no heap of material possessions, could possibly be substitutes."(12 &12, p. 124.) We experience this, because, as addicts when we are in our disease "there was never enough of what we thought we wanted." (12 & 12, p. 71.)

I practice the virtues of faith and hope. I am willing to trust God, move out into the unknown, taking things one day at a time, without worry or anxiety, leaving the future outcome in God's hands. I trust that God is taking care of me and ask Him to guide me at all times.

I practice prayer and meditation. I practice the tools of literature and writing. "I believe completeness is waiting for anyone who will take the time to make the effort, through quiet thinking, honest prayer, chosen reading, and exercise. Those are the ingredients. It is an

adventure so worthwhile that all else fades in comparison, yet it makes all else worthwhile. (Came to Believe, 30th printing 2004, pg. 66)

I do not hold a grudge or blame other people for my feelings of discomfort, distress or unhappiness. I do this because: "Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake....unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes." (AA BB pg 449).

I am sincere: I do the right thing because it is the right thing, not for the reward that I expect to receive.

When we are guided by the principles embodied in purity, we seek constant growth and self-improvement to improve our moral strength and self-discipline. "We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition." (AA BB p 84-85)

Finally, purity is not a destination: we never arrive. The sanity of recovery is to know that we are all just human, doing the best we can with what we have. "God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us." (AA BB p 164) Thus, purity is a direction and a journey that we make as we strive to be God- Centered rather than self-centered.

**Bibliography:** These are most of the sources that I used, beyond the classic, main texts of program

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