

ES&F 2 Way Prayer Format 12-27-2020

Welcome everyone to our Tenth and Eleventh Step Guidance Meeting. My name is _____ and I'll be your leader for this meeting. If you are new to our group, welcome! We are so glad that you are here!

The format of this group is inspired by the Guidance Meetings run by Dr. Bob, Ann Smith and Bill W. during the summer of 1935.

Let's open with a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer

Serenity Prayer: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Leader: Thy will not mine be done!

This group is committed to helping each other find a deeper and more personal experience of God through an enhanced practice of the last three Steps of the 12-Step Program. We do this by following the original program of AA as practiced by the pioneers of program.

Many of the practices and spiritual principles of the 12 Steps came directly from the work of Dr. Frank Buchman the leader and founder of the Oxford Group.

Prior to the publication of the AA Big Book, the original program of AA included the principles of the 4 Absolutes and the practice of written guidance or 2 Way Prayer.

I've asked a friend to read the 4 Absolutes:

My name is _____ and these are the 4 Absolutes:

ABSOLUTE HONESTY: Not deceiving others or ourselves in word, deed and thoughts. Is it true or false? Am I being honest?

ABSOLUTE PURITY (FORGIVENESS): Freedom from being controlled by our desires or our fears and insecurities. Before acting, reacting or making a decision: Is it right or wrong? Are my motives pure?

ABSOLUTE UNSELFISHNESS: A commitment to fairness and justice and a willingness to share. Seeking what is right and true ahead of what I want in every situation. How will this affect the other person? Am I acting unselfishly? Is this self-serving or to serve others?

ABSOLUTE LOVE (FAITH): The feeling of affection, benevolence or devotion created through acts of selfless unconditional giving to another person according to one's highest spiritual values. Love is a commitment to be forgiving, compassionate, responsible and accountable for our actions for the purpose of nurturing our own or another's spiritual growth. Is it ugly (fear-based) or beautiful (faith-based)? Will this strengthen or weaken my spiritual life?

The 4 Absolutes were the guiding spiritual principles used to determine if one's decisions, thoughts or actions are in alignment with God-will or motivated by self-will.

[Please note that the 4 Absolutes are not specifically mentioned in the AA Big Book. Instead, they are referred to indirectly in their opposite self-will form in the AA Big Book. Rather than focusing on honesty, unselfishness, purity and love, the AA Big Book, asks us to examine where self-will fails us: where were we selfishness, self-seeking, dishonesty and afraid?]

(DO NOT READ CHART BELOW UNLESS THERE ARE NEWCOMERS WHO ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE 4 ABSOLUTES)

For reference purposes, I find it easier to list and define the 4 Absolutes by using the chart below. Here is the [link](#) to more information posted on the blog.

4 Absolutes & the AA Big Book: God's will vs Self- will				
4 Absolutes God's will	AA BB Self-will	Definition	Question	Application
Honesty	Dishonesty	Not deceiving others or ourselves in word, deed and thoughts	Is it true or false?	Am I being honest?
Purity OR Forgiveness	Resentment	Freedom from being controlled by our desires or our fears and insecurities.	Before acting, reacting or making a decision: Is it right or wrong?	Are my motives pure?
Unselfishness	Selfishness	A commitment to fairness and justice and a willingness to share.	How will this affect the other person?	Am I acting unselfishly?
Other forms of selfishness include: self-importance, self-interest, self-pity, self-seeking, self-consciousness, self-indulgence, self-centeredness, self-sufficiency, self-will.		Seeking what is right and true ahead of what I want in every situation.		Is this self-serving or to serve others?
Love (Faith)	Fear	The feeling of affection, benevolence or devotion created through acts of selfless unconditional giving to another person according to one's highest spiritual values. Love is a commitment to be forgiving, compassionate, responsible and accountable for our actions for the purpose of nurturing our own or another's spiritual growth.	Is it ugly (fear-based) or beautiful (faith-based)?	Will this strengthen or weaken my spiritual life? Am I seeking meaning, wholeness and purpose?

I've asked a friend to read Steps 10, 11 and 12 from the Original Manuscript:

My name is _____ and these are the last three Steps of the 12-Step Program:

Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for the knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Step 12: Having had a spiritual experience as the result of this course of action, we tried to carry this message to others, especially alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

As the AA Big Book says on page 84, after we complete Step 9: *We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime.*

IF THERE ARE NEW MEMBERS, DESCRIPTION OF 2 WAY PRAYER/ WRITTEN GUIDANCE

The Oxford Group believed in preparing for one's day by getting quiet and tapping into the intuitive voice that resided in each person in order to make "conscious contact" and receive "guidance."

During quiet time, one spends time in silent contemplation to listen to one's conscience or "inner voice" for direction and correction. Any thoughts, ideas and impressions that come into one's mind are written down, in order to free one's attention for the next thought. Afterwards, one then "tests" each thought using the 4 Standards to distinguish thoughts from God from the voice of the ego.

In this practice of 2 Way Prayer, one discusses any guidance received with other group members. The "God thoughts" are then acted upon and the "self-thoughts" are discarded.

It was believed that it was important to act on what is revealed though silence, as a voice which is repeatedly ignored eventually becomes silent.

CONTINUE FORMAT HERE: In this group, we will spend time in silence and listen for "the still, small Voice" that is within each of us.

If you come as a skeptic, please know that many of us also shared your honest doubts. But we have found that a willingness to live life by the Four Standards of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love along with a sincere effort to practice Quiet Time, has led us into a new, and often transforming, relationship with our Creator.

The God of our understanding has become the God of our experience. The Creator who once seemed distant and detached has become our closest Friend and Guide. We hope it may be so for you as well.

OPTIONAL: SEVENTH TRADITION

In accordance with the Seventh Tradition, our group is self-supporting. Your donation will help us meet our expenses and carry the message. Please send your 7th Tradition contributions through PayPal or Zelle to: _____. Please contact me directly if you have any questions.)

Our meeting lasts for approximately one hour. We generally share portions of our Two-Way Prayer journals with the group. All sharing is completely voluntary and confidential. We ask for this to be respected by one and all.

Please have a blank sheet of paper and a pencil or pen to write with.

OPTIONAL: I have asked _____ to read today's daily meditation.

OPTIONAL: read How to Listen to God or instructions for how to practice 2 Way Prayer.

THE FORMAT HAS ROOM FOR FLEXIBILITY. FOR INSTANCE, ONE CAN READ THE WHOLE PAMPHLET OR INSTRUCTIONS PRIOR TO QUIET TIME, OR, READ THE FIRST 5 INSTRUCTIONS PRIOR TO 2 WAY PRAYER, AND THEN READ THE REST OF THE INSTRUCTIONS PRIOR TO SHARING WRITTEN GUIDANCE. The links are posted below.

OPTIONAL: play quiet and meditative music. Although ideally it is better to sit in silence, when not in a face-to-face group, it is sometimes helpful to have music playing in the background during 2 Way Prayer.

We will now sit in silence for 10 minutes in order to listen to and record our guidance.

10 MINUTES OF SILENCE

If anyone needs more time, please raise your hand.

NEXT IS OUR TIME FOR SHARING THE GUIDANCE WE RECEIVED.

We will now go around the room. I ask that you share only what you have written without embellishment or explanation. This is called “two-way prayer.”

Before sharing, please test each thought using the Four Standards of HONESTY, PURITY, UNSELFISHNESS and LOVE to separate God thoughts from self-thoughts. Share only those thoughts that pass this test. If you haven’t written anything down, please pass.

All are welcome to share during this Round but please keep your sharing brief and focused on how it relates to you.

Unlike some 12-Step groups, we do allow crosstalk during our meetings. However, we try not to take the focus away from the person who is sharing.

While one member is sharing, we invite you to write down any thoughts or guidance you may receive while listening to that person’s share. We have found that one person’s guidance may hold important meaning for others as well.

[OPTIONAL: As you listen to other people’s Guidance, visualize being in God’s Presence and silently ask yourself: “Please God, what do I say to Your child in front of me?” Then write down whatever comes to mind after that.)

WE DO NOT INTERPRET ONE ANOTHER’S GUIDANCE.

Who would like to start?

SHARE “TWO-WAY PRAYER” First person shares guidance / members then share how they may relate to that / anyone is free to pass

3-WAY PRAYER:

Did anyone hear something during the sharing session that he or she feels was directed toward them in addition to the person who shared it? If so, please tell the group what you heard. This is called “three-way prayer”—the “Spirit of the Universe” speaking to us through others. If this has happened to you, please raise your hand.

SHARE “THREE-WAY PRAYER”

OPTIONAL: SHARING GUIDANCE: The leader (or another person) now shares some of his/her guidance selected from their last week's writings. Then, go around the circle inviting other or all members to share

CLOSING: When the hour is nearly up, say: Our time is almost up. Are there any announcements?

If you didn't have a chance to share or if you have any questions, some of us will remain after the meeting to answer them.

Thank you all for participating today either by sharing or by listening and for the opportunity to lead our meeting today. If you found it helpful, please come back next week and bring a friend!

We will close this meeting with the Third and Seventh Step Prayers.

Third Step Prayer: "God, I offer myself to Thee – to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always." (AA BB: 63)

Seventh Step Prayer: "My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen" (AA BB: 76)

OPTIONAL READINGS DEPENDING ON LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE OF THE GROUP.

Written Guidance & Western Meditation

Meditation, in the language of the Big Book – means concentrated thought, specifically about what happened over the previous 24 hours and what needs correcting and about what I am going to do over the next 24 hours.

Directions:

Choose a quiet place. Take this time to silently connect to God and feel His presence. Breathe naturally and be with what is.

Meditate or repeat an inspirational phrase or word of your choice, which could include the serenity prayer, the 3rd step or 7th step prayers.

Take a moment to be grateful for all of the good that was done for you and for all of the blessings that you have received.

Create a positive visualization -- Imagine God's Goodness, blessings, kindness, and compassion flowing into you like fresh water from a spring.

Set your intension by writing a question that you would like intuitive guidance on. OR, another way is to just set your intension is to ask: "God, please show me what I need to know so that I can be free from wrong motives and do your will throughout the day."

Listen to your thoughts and cultivate awareness. As thoughts come into your mind, write them down. Guidance can take the form of images, thoughts, feelings or inspiration.

Stop writing when the flow of thoughts slows down.

Examine what you have written down. What is the voice of addiction and what is the voice of recovery?

Test each thought using the 4 Standards to separate God thoughts from self-thoughts.

- Are these thoughts completely **honest, pure unselfish** and **loving**?
- Are these thoughts in line with our duties, to our family to our country?
- Are these thoughts in line with our understanding of the teachings found in our spiritual literature?

Discuss what you have written with another person.

Commit to acting on "God thoughts" and discard the "self-thoughts."

HOW TO LISTEN TO GOD—OXFORD GROUP PAMPHLET

(An Oxford Group pamphlet/technique used by early AA members)

These are a few simple suggestions for people who are willing to make an experiment. You can discover for yourself the most important and practical thing any human being can ever learn—how to be in touch with God.

All that is needed is the willingness to try it honestly. Every person who has done this consistently and sincerely has found that it really works.

Before you begin, look over these fundamental points. They are true and are based on the experience of thousands of people.

1. God is alive. He always has been, and He always will be.
2. God knows everything.
3. God can do anything.
4. God can be everywhere—all at the same time. (These are the important differences between God and us human beings.)
5. God is invisible—we cannot see Him or touch Him—but God is here. He is with you now. He is beside you. He surrounds you. He fills the room or the whole place where you are right now. He is in you now. He is in your heart.
6. God cares very much for you. He is interested in you. He has a plan for your life. He has an answer for every need and problem you face.
7. God will tell you all that you need to know. He will not always tell you all that you want to know.
8. God will help you do anything that He asks you to do.
9. Anyone can be in touch with God, anywhere and at any time, if the conditions are obeyed.

These are the conditions:

- To be quiet and still
- To listen
- To be honest about every thought that comes
- To test the thoughts to be sure that they come from God
- To obey.

So, with these basic elements as a background, here are specific suggestions on How to Listen to God:

1. TAKE TIME

Find some place and time where you can be alone, quiet, and undisturbed. Most people have found that the early morning is the best time. Have with you some paper and a pen or a pencil.

2. RELAX

Sit in a comfortable position. Consciously relax all your muscles. Be loose. There is no hurry. There needs to be no strain during these minutes. God cannot get through to us if we are tense and anxious about later responsibilities.

3. TUNE IN

Open your heart to God. Either silently or aloud, just say to God in a natural way that you would like to find out His plan for your life—you want His answer to the problem or situation that you are facing just now. Be definite and specific in your request.

4. LISTEN

Just be still, quiet, relaxed, and open. Let your mind go loose. Let God do the talking. Thoughts, ideas, and impressions will begin to come into your mind and heart. Be alert and aware and open to every one.

5. WRITE!

Here is the important key to the whole process. Write down everything that comes into your mind. Everything. Writing is simply a means of recording so that you can remember later. Do not sort out or edit your thoughts at this point.

Do not say to yourself:

- *This thought is not important!*
- *This is just an ordinary thought!*
- *This cannot be guidance!*
- *This is not nice!*
- *This cannot be from God!*
- *This is just me thinking! (etc.)*

Write down everything that passes through your mind:

- *Names of people*
- *Things to do*
- *Things to say*
- *Things that are wrong and need to be made right.*

Write down everything:

- *Good thoughts—bad thoughts*

– *Comfortable thoughts—uncomfortable thoughts*

– *Holy thoughts—unholy thoughts*

– *Sensible thoughts—crazy thoughts.*

Be honest! Write down everything! A thought comes quickly, and it escapes even more quickly unless it is captured and put down.

6. TEST

When the flow of thoughts slows down, stop. Take a good look at what you have written. Not every thought we have comes from God, so we need to test our thoughts. Here is where the written record helps us to be able to look at them.

Are these thoughts completely HONEST, PURE, UNSELFISH, and LOVING?

Are these thoughts in line with our duties?

Are these thoughts in line with our understanding of the teachings found in our spiritual literature?

7. CHECK

When you are in doubt and when it is important, what does another person who is living two-way prayer think about this thought or action? More light comes in through two windows than one. Someone else who also wants God's plan for our lives may help us to see more clearly.

Talk over together what you have written. Many people do this. They tell each other what guidance has come. This is the secret of unity. There are always three sides to every question—your side, my side, and the right side. Guidance shows us which is the right side—not who is right, but what is right.

8. OBEY

Carry out the thoughts that have come. You will only be sure of guidance as you go through with it. A rudder will not guide a boat until the boat is moving. As you obey, very often the results convince you that you are on the right track.

9. BLOCKS?

What if I do not seem to get any definite thoughts? God's guidance is as freely available as the air we breathe. If I am not receiving thoughts when I listen, the fault is not God's.

Usually it is because there is something I will not do:

– Something wrong in my life that I will not face and make right

– A habit or indulgence I will not give up

– A person I will not forgive

– A wrong relationship in my life I will not give up

- A restitution I will not make
- Something God has already told me to do that I will not obey.

Check these points and be honest. Then try listening again.

10. MISTAKES

Suppose I make a mistake and do something in the name of God that is not right? Of course, we make mistakes. We are humans with many faults. However, God will always honour our sincerity.

He will work around and through every honest mistake we make. He will help us make it right. But remember this—sometimes when we do obey God, someone else may not like it or agree with it. So when there is opposition, it does not always mean you have made a mistake. It can mean that the other person does not want to know or to do what is right. Suppose I fail to do something that I have been told, and the opportunity to do it passes? There is only one thing to do. Put it right with God. Tell Him you are sorry. Ask Him to forgive you, then accept His forgiveness and begin again. God is our Father—He is not an impersonal calculator. He understands us far better than we do.

11. RESULTS

We never know what swimming is like until we get down into the water and try. We will never know what this is like until we sincerely try it. Every person who has tried this honestly finds that a wisdom, not their own, comes into their minds and that Power greater than human power begins to operate in their lives. It is an endless adventure. There is a way of life, for everyone, everywhere. Anyone can be in touch with the living God, anywhere, anytime, if we fulfil His conditions.

When man listens, God speaks.

When man obeys, God acts.

This is the law of Prayer: God's plan for this world goes forward through the lives of ordinary people who are willing to be governed by Him.

John E. Batterson

HOW TO LISTEN TO GOD

There is a tradition of preparing for one's day by getting quiet and tapping into the intuitive voice that resides in each of us. Here is a technique that has been used for more than 80 years by the members of the *Oxford Group*, which is now called *Initiatives of Change*. This is a more modern updated version.

Optional: Read the first 5 instructions prior to 2 Way Prayer, and then read the rest of the instructions prior to sharing written guidance.

1. Take time each morning

An orchestra tunes up before the symphony. We can tune up our lives before the day begins. Once we open the newspaper or turn on the computer most of us don't stop until we drop wearily into bed. So wake up. Get your coffee or tea. Grab a piece of paper and pen.

2. Relax

Sit in a comfortable position. Consciously relax all your muscles. Be loose. There is no need to hurry. There need be no strain during these minutes. We cannot touch the Infinite if we are tense and anxious. Prepare yourself by breathing deeply and relaxing for three to five minutes.

3. Tune In

Open your heart to the Ultimate Reality. Either silently or aloud, say in a way that feels natural to you that you would like inspiration for this day. If you have a specific problem or situation you are facing, ask for the answer. Be definite and specific in your requests.

4. Listen

Just be still, quiet, relaxed and open. Let your mind go "loose". Let your intuitive self receive inspiration. Thoughts, ideas and impressions will begin to come into your mind and heart. Be alert and open and aware to every one.

5. Write!

Here is the key to the whole process. Write down everything that comes to your mind. ***Everything***. Writing is simply a means of recording what goes through your mind so that you can remember later. Don't sort out or edit your thoughts at this point.

Don't say to yourself:

This thought isn't important

This is just me thinking

This can't be inspiration

This isn't nice

This is an ordinary thought

Write what passes through your mind:

Names of people

Things to do

Things to say

Things that are wrong that need to be made right

Write down everything:

Good thoughts – bad thoughts

Comfortable thoughts – uncomfortable thoughts

“Holy” thoughts- “unholy” thoughts

Sensible thoughts- “crazy” thoughts

Be honest! Write down everything. A thought comes quickly and it even escapes more quickly unless it is captured and put down.

BREAK FOR WRITING MEDITATION FOR 10 MINUTES OF 2 WAY PRAYER.

[meditation music share screen AND sound](#)

AFTER MEDITATION LEADER WILL ASK YOU TO FINISH THIS READING

6. Test

When the flow of thoughts slows down, stop. Take a good look at what you have written. Not every thought is inspired. So, we need to test each thought by examining the written record.

- Is it honest - pure - unselfish - loving?
- Is it in line with our responsibilities?
- Is it in line with my understanding of spiritual literature?

7. Check

When in doubt and when it is important, ask another person who is on the spiritual path. More light comes through two windows than through one. Someone who is interested in our spiritual growth may see things more clearly.

Talk over what you have written. Many people do this with their domestic partners. There are always three sides to every question- your side, my side and the right side. Inspiration shows us which is the right side – not who is right but what is right.

8. Carry out the thoughts that come.

You will only be sure of your intuitive voice as you go through with it. A rudder will not guide a boat until the boat is moving. As you follow, very often the results will convince you that you are on the right track,

9. What if no inspiration comes?

Generally, there is a reason. Here are some blocks:

- Any wrong relationship in my life
- Any wrong that I have not faced and put right.
- Any compromise or indulgence I will not give up.
- Anything I know I should do but have not done.

10. Results?

We will never know what swimming is like unless we get down into the river and try. We will never know how wonderful this technique can be until we sincerely try it.

Every person who has honestly tried this has discovered a wisdom, not their own, comes into their minds and a Power greater than human power begins to operate in their lives.

IT IS AN ENDLESS ADVENTURE!

How to Begin Practicing Quiet Time

By: Bill W. (and tiny edits by Shira) (An updated version of the How to Listen to God pamphlet written for those in recovery)

Preparation:

Commit to practicing Quiet Time for a minimum of 10 to 20 minutes daily for 30 days.

Practice it each morning. If necessary, get up earlier.

If, for any reason you miss a morning, do not become distressed. Simply begin counting the 30-day period over again!

The likelihood is, once to do this for 30 days in a row, you will want to make it a practice for the rest of your life.

Location:

Choose a sacred space – a quiet place where you can be alone. It should be comfortable and inviting. Reserve it only for prayer, if at all possible.

Materials:

Have a pen or pencil.

Buy a notebook to write down your thoughts – have it ready when you begin.

Practice:

Sit in an upright posture. Remember into whose Presence you are entering.

Read a short passage from inspirational or spiritual literature.

Breathe deeply 2 or 3 times – let go of all tension and worry with each outward breath. (Add any other relaxation techniques, prayers, petitions or practices you find helpful.)

Write a question. A very honest question that captures your real need. If you have a problem that's troubling you where you really need God's guidance, write it out and ask.

Here are some examples:

God, I've tried getting clean and sober before – please tell me what I need to do that's different this time. (If you're already sober, look at other addictions or behaviors in your life that have you stuck and ask for guidance with them.)

Heavenly Father, I feel so alone and separated from You and from others, please help me feel Your presence.

God, I'm withdrawing / isolating again – moving further away from my spouse (or my child). Please tell me what to do.

My Creator, I need your guidance today as I face _____. Please show me the way so I can do Your will.

Notice the different names being used for God. Choose the name that feels right for you. If you are struggling to find a name, start with "Unknown God" or "God, if you're there" or "Ribono shel Olam" or "Papa," or "HaShem."

LISTEN FOR GOD'S VOICE, with your pen & notebook in hand.

If the connection isn't immediate and words do not come into your mind, use your active imagination, especially when you're first making conscious contact: Say to yourself, "If God were to speak to me this is what he might say:

_____”

Write the words that come into your mind. Try not to edit them. Only listen and write. (If words come that you think are not from God write them down anyway. Put them in brackets if you like and try to re-focus on listening for God's Voice. In time, you will come to distinguish God's Voice more clearly from the voices of the ego.)

If stuck, write your own name or write, "My child" or "My precious" or some other term of endearment that a loving Father-Mother God might use when speaking to you.

- Stop writing when it becomes strained.
- Feel the closeness of God as you experience conscious contact.

Following your Guidance:

- Share your writings weekly with a sponsor or with another individual who is also practicing Quiet Time. You may find that their writings contain some particular spiritual guidance for you or yours for them.
- Check your guidance. Does it pass the test: is it Honest, Pure, Unselfish and Loving?
- Act on your guidance – but only if it passes the test – and if it is a major move, check it with others who are also listening to God.

SOME HISTORICAL REFERENCES:

Dr. Bob and the Good Old-Timers tells of the 1938 report Frank Amos sent to John D. Rockefeller after studying the new A.A. movement. Amos reported "The A.A. members of that time did not consider meetings necessary to maintain sobriety. They were simply 'desirable.' Morning devotion and 'quiet time,' however, were musts." (p.136)

Bill Wilson: "I sort of always felt that something was lost from A.A. when we stopped emphasizing the morning meditation." Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers (p. 178)

In Dr. Bob's last major talk in Detroit, Michigan in 1948, he identified some of the spiritual principles that kept him and other A.A. Pioneers sober: "We were convinced that the answer to our problems was in the Good Book. To some of us older ones, the parts that we found absolutely essential "The Four Absolutes, as we called them, were the only yardsticks we had in the early days, before the Steps. I think the Absolutes still hold good and can be extremely helpful. I have found at times that a question arises, and I want to do the right thing, but the answer is not obvious; almost always, if I measure my decision carefully by the yardsticks of absolute honesty, absolute unselfishness, absolute purity, and absolute love, and it checks up pretty well with those four, then my answer can't be very far out of the way...."

The Big Book 11th Step instructions encourages us to "...ask God to direct our thinking" and that "we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought....What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We will come to rely upon it." (Big Book p. 87)

A FINAL NOTE: Sometimes people ask me, "How do you know it's really God's Voice you're hearing? How do you know it's not just you?"

My answer is that I really don't know – and in the end, it really doesn't matter. If it's me, it's the best part of me I've ever found and it's the part I need to start listening to more and more. It's the small, still Voice that quiets the raucous "ego voices" of guilt and shame, anger and fear, addiction and destruction. Those are voices I've known and listened to all of my life.

At 20 years sober, it was time for a major change to my program and not just a little tweaking around the edges. What I discovered was yet another Promise of the Big Book coming true: "When we drew near to Him He discloses Himself to us!" (Big Book p. 57)

This is just for fun. JUDAISM Spirituality *is not about gaining something new, but about remembering something timeless. You are the image and likeness of God.*

Hitbonenut, cultivating solitude, is the practice of removing yourself from the human community to commune with God. The master of Hitbonenut is the 18th century mystic Reb Nachman of Breslov the great grandson of the Bal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidic Judaism.

Hitbonenut cultivates a spaciousness of heart and mind that allows you to engage life without being trapped in the drama of living. There are three rules for the practice of Hitbonenut; sit down, shut up, don't move. (Lamentations 3: 28; Psalms 46: 10)

Sit comfortably, erect but not rigid. Place your hands on your thighs or in your lap. Your eyes may be open or closed depending on which adds to your sense of wakefulness. Now wait. "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him." (Psalms 37: 7)

Hitbonenut is about waiting without fretting. To keep from fretting silently chant the [thirteen attributes of God](#).

Nachman taught that you should walk one hour each day, walking alone and talking openly with God, asking God for everything you need and thanking God for everything you have.

Asking God for everything reminds you that everything comes from God. It is a humbling experience. The more you practice hitbonenut the more you simply realize you are simply one-way God gets things done.

Qualities of Hashem: Merciful, compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abundant in kindness; truthful, loyal, forgiving,

THE CHASSIDIC APPROACH

The concept of arousing G-d's Attributes of Mercy is understood simply: when we sin and seek forgiveness, or we are **we are going through a trying time, G-d will come to our aid.**

However, Chassidut takes us a step deeper.²⁶ It teaches that reciting the 13 Attributes of Mercy creates a strong bond between G-d and the soul.

Every Jew has within a spark of G-dliness that is constantly reanimating the body at every moment. When we nullify ourselves by putting away our selfish desires and letting that Divine spark grow into a raging fire, to the extent that we are willing to sacrifice our life for G-d, then G-d responds in kind, measure for measure, and reveals to us His inner G-dly light.

This is because the people of Israel, G-d and the first attribute of mercy (according to Kabbalah) all contain the word "E-l," "G-d," in them. This reveals the deep and powerful bond the three share, and shows that no matter what challenges we face, G-d is our father, and when we cry out, He will embrace us and love us as His children.

So, what does G-d wants us to do in order for Him to forgive us? "Let them carry out *this* service before Me." What is "this" service? It seems ambiguous and vague.

Some commentaries²³ believe that mentioning the Attributes of Mercy in prayer alone has the power to influence G-d to forgive us for our sins. However, most kabbalists and commentaries on the Talmud explain²⁴ that G-d is asking us to imitate His actions: just as He is merciful, so too should we be merciful; just as He is kind, so too should we be kind. Most opinions seem to follow this explanation; because if G-d meant for the prayer alone to be sufficient, the verse should have read, "Let them carry out this *prayer* before me."

13 ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Adonai	Timeless Being
Adonai	Spontaneous Becoming
El	Creative
Rachum	Merciful
V'Chanun	Gracious
Erech Apayim	Patient
V'Rav Chesed	Compassionate
Veh Emet	Honest
Notsair chesed la' alafim	Preserving Compassion
Nosay avon	Forgiving Iniquity
Va'fasha	Forgiving Willfulness
V'chata'ah	Forgiving Error
V'nakay	Cleansing Delusion

STEP 10 & 11 WITH MORE DETAILS

Step 10 Throughout the day Continue to take Personal Inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as you go along. You commenced this Way of Living as you cleaned up the past [9th Step]. You have entered the World of the Spirit. You now need to grow in Understanding and Effectiveness and this should continue for your Lifetime.

DIRECTIONS FOR STEP 10 FROM THE BIG BOOK PAGE 84

1. Continue to Watch for Selfishness, Dishonesty, Resentment and Fear and when these crop up, we Ask God at once to remove them. (84:2)
2. We Discuss them with someone immediately. (84:2)
3. We Make Amends quickly, if we have harmed someone. (84:2)
4. We resolutely Turn Our Thoughts to someone we can help. (84:2) Love and Tolerance is our Code.

Remember:

- We are not cured of alcoholism so we do not let up on our Spiritual Program of action.
- We maintain our Spiritual Condition to receive our daily reprieve from alcoholism.
- Every day we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities.
- Think constantly "How can I best serve thee – Thy Will not mine be done."
- We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.
- We must go further in action.

A 10TH STEP PRAYER FOR GROWTH AND EFFECTIVENESS:

"God, please help me Watch for Selfishness, Dishonesty, Resentment and Fear. When these crop up in me, help me to immediately ask you to remove them from me and help me discuss these feelings with someone. God, help me to quickly make amends if I have harmed anyone and help me to resolutely turn my thoughts to someone I can Help. Help me to be Loving and Tolerant of everyone today. Amen"

Step 11 Evening Review 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.

INVENTORY: GOD, PLEASE SHOW ME DURING THE LAST 24 HOURS

- a. Was I resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?
- b. Do I owe an apology?
- c. Have I kept something to myself which should be discussed with another person at once?
- d. Was I kind and loving toward all?
- e. What could I have done better?
- f. Was I thinking of myself most of the time?
- g. Or was I thinking of what I could do for others, of what I could pack into the stream of life?

After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken:

"God, please forgive me for where I've fallen short today. I know that because of my shortcomings, I was not able to be as effective as I should have been for you. Please forgive me and help me live you will better tomorrow. God, I ask you now to show me how to correct the errors I have just outlined. Guide me and direct me. Please remove my arrogance and my fear. God, show me how to make my relationships right and grant me the humility and strength to do thy will. Amen."

Sit in meditation wait for answers and write what comes. You can take this inspiration into morning meditation tomorrow.

MORNING MEDITATION

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.

ON AWAKENING:

On awakening let us think about the 24 hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. (Make a to-do list).

Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking:

“God please direct my thinking and keep my thoughts divorced from self – pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. God, please keep my thought life clear from wrong motives and help me employ my mental faculties, that my thought-life might be placed on a higher plane, the plane of inspiration. God, should I find myself agitated, doubtful or indecisive today, please give me inspiration, help me to have an intuitive thought or a decision about this problem I face. God, help me not to struggle, instead, help me to relax and take it easy. Help me know what I should do and keep me mindful, that you are running the show. God, please show me all through this day, what my next step is to be and please Grace me God, with whatever I need to take care of the problems in my life today. I ask especially God, that you free me from the bondage of self-will, give me knowledge of your will and the Power to carry that out. May I do your will always. Amen.”

CONSIDER MY PLANS FOR THE DAY:

In considering our plans for the day or considering any major decisions we have to make in our lives, we “ask God for an intuitive thought or decision” in other words we ask God for the answer.

In Bill’s Story, Bill talks about his step 11 practice “I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense. I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me. Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my usefulness to others. Then only might I expect to receive. But that would be in great measure”.

The practice that the early AAs had is called “TWO-WAY PRAYER”. It is a two-way process in which one asks God for specific direction on problems he is facing in his life, and then he sits quietly and listens for answers to his questions writing down the answers that come. This process is explained in more detail in the section entitled “How to Listen to God”.

MEDITATION:

“If circumstances warrant, we ask our wives or friends to join us in morning meditation. If we belong to a religious denomination which requires a definite morning devotion, we attend to that also. If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing. There are many helpful books also. Suggestions about these may be obtained from one’s priest, minister, or rabbi. Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer.”

A great way to start this practice is to buy a meditation book like 24 hours a day, Daily Reflections, or 365 Tao, read one page a day and spend 5-10 minutes at first in contemplation of that and of how you might be of maximum service in your day.

THROUGHOUT THE DAY

"As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day 'Thy will be done.'

“If we are not able to determine which course to take, we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don’t struggle.”

(p. 87-8 BB): God, I'm agitated and doubtful right now. Help me to stop and remember that I've made a decision to let You be my God. Give me the right thoughts and actions. God save me from fear, anger, worry, self-pity or foolish decisions that Your will not mine be done. Amen.”