

## 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.

<b>4 Absolutes &amp; the AA Big Book: God's will vs Self- will</b>				
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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> step or 7<sup>th</sup> 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