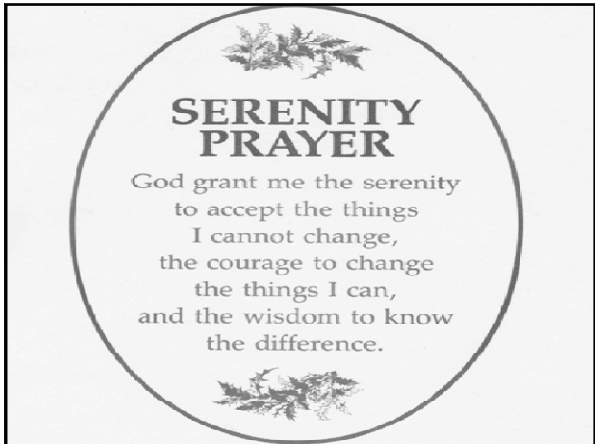


# Christian Spirituality and Recovery From Addiction

Ed Conlin, BSEd., CADC

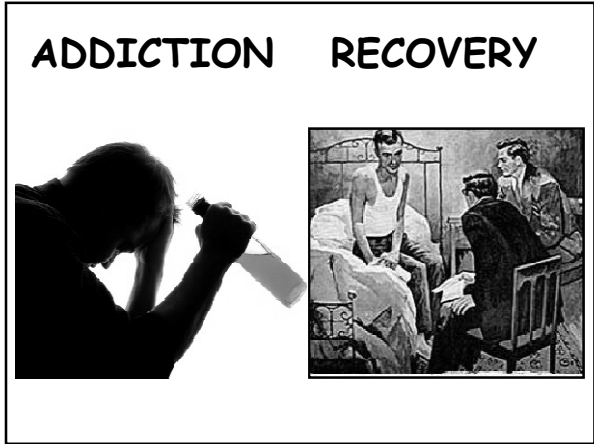


**Religion** is humanity's way of expressing our relationship with a Higher Power corporately.

**Spirituality** IS that relationship.

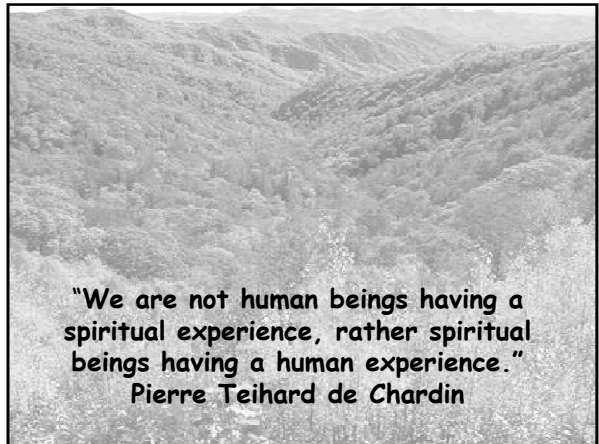
**There is a difference between religion and spirituality.**

AA Proviso ...  
 "Higher Power of OUR understanding"



- **Addiction: Psychological Definition:** "Pathological Relationship of Love & Trust with an object or event." ..(No longer using for pleasure but to avoid pain)
- **Addiction: Physiological Definition:** "Persistent & compulsive use of habit forming substance to alter mental state of addict despite knowledge of its harm."
- **Addiction: Spiritual Definition:** "Addiction results when we allow a habit to replace our spiritual center - from which we thirst for wholeness - our union with God" (Dr. Carl Jung)

**Spirit -**  
**The animating or vital principle which gives life to a living organism.**



**"We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, rather spiritual beings having a human experience."  
 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**

**Stories of love -**



**Love speaks,  
 and we know  
 what true  
 love is**

**AA promises:**

**We are made by a GOOD God with a Good purpose for us.**

**Our life is about finding and accomplishing that purpose.**

**The "promises" of A.A. -**

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. 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 loose 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 that used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, they will always materialize if we work for them.  
(Alcoholics Anonymous 4th Edition, pages 83 - 84.)

### Acceptance is the answer -

- to *all* my problems today. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing or situation - some fact of my life - unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I can not 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.

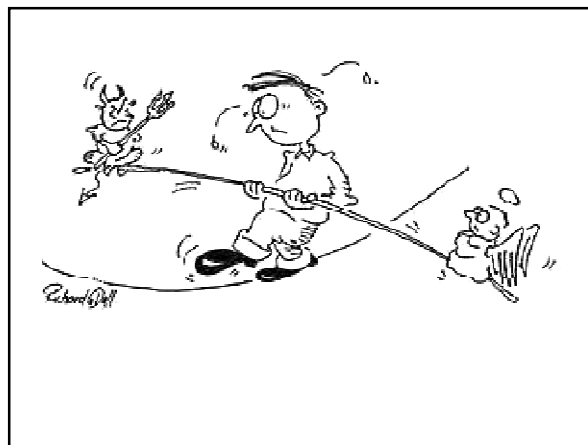
(Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, page 417.)

### Acceptance is the key -

- to my relationship with God today. I never just sit and do nothing while waiting for Him to tell me what to do. Rather, I do whatever is in front of me to be done, and I leave the results up to Him; however it turns out, that's God's will for me.

(Alcoholics Anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, page 420.)

**"If I have all success,  
all material wealth,  
and even all respect,  
but have not *love* ...  
I am bankrupt."**



Native American culture tells the story of a father who explains his struggle between good and evil by telling his son that he has two wolves fighting in his heart - a good wolf and a bad wolf.

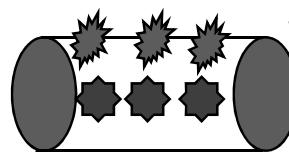
The son asks which of the wolves will win the battle.

The father replies ...



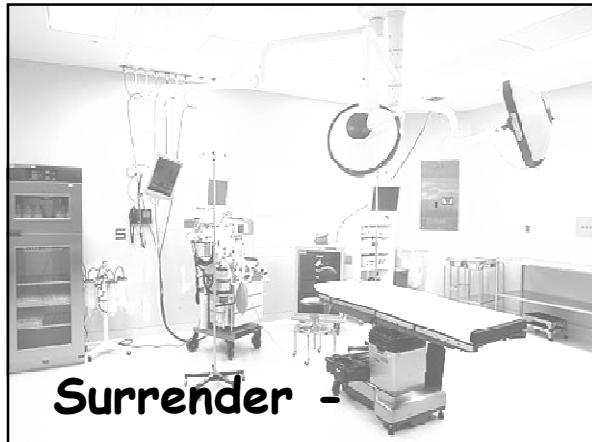
### OUR VALUES

When we closely adhere to our values - we feel great -  
← at the top of the curve



← When we "challenge" our values, we do not feel as good - but we do not necessarily experience guilt and shame so long as we stay within our values.

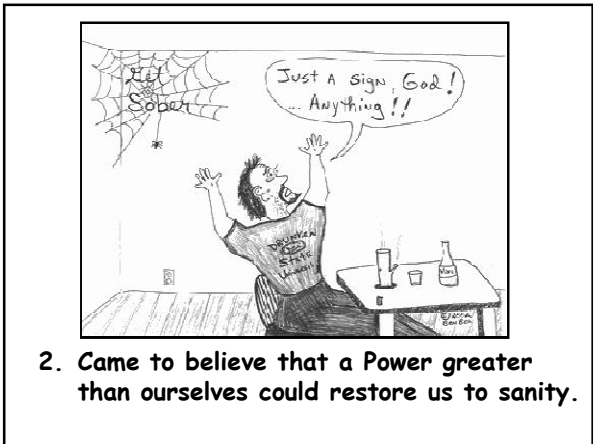
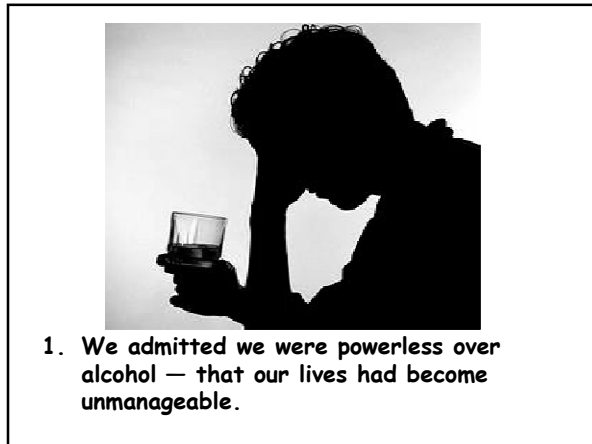
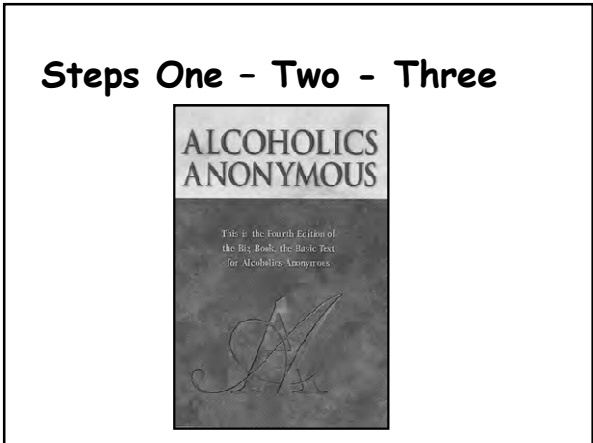
When we violate our values, we experience guilt and shame. A chemically dependent person  
← LIVES in guilt and shame.



From "Alcoholics Anonymous" (The A.A. "Big Book") Chapter 2, "There Is A Solution" - pg 18:

An illness of this sort - and we have come to believe it is an illness - involves those around us in a way no human sickness can. If a person has cancer all are sorry for him and no one is angry or hurt. But not so with the alcoholic illness, for with it there goes annihilation of all the things worth while in life. It engulfs all whose lives touch the sufferer's. It brings misunderstanding, fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad wives and parents - anyone can increase the list.

- ### Twelve Steps of A.A.
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.






**Step Three**

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him.*


**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!


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.




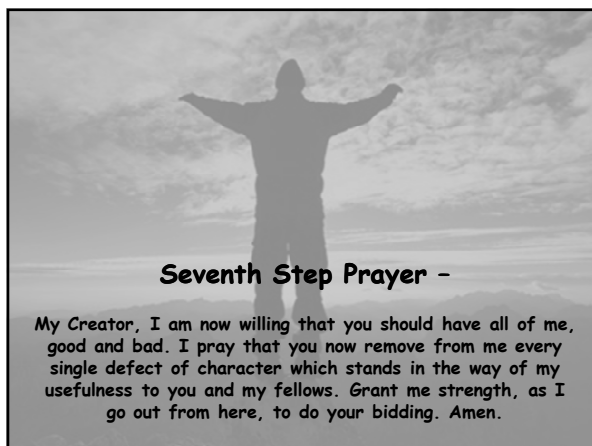
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.



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.


**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.


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.



## Eleventh Step Prayer -



Lord make me an instrument of Thy 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. 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; it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

## Humility and Spirituality -

"Many people believe that humility is the opposite of pride, when, in fact, it is a point of equilibrium. The opposite of pride is actually a lack of self esteem. A humble person is totally different from a person who cannot recognize and appreciate himself as part of this worlds marvels."

— Rabino Nilton Bonder

"[Humility is:] Greatness in plain clothes"

— Spencer W. Kimball (Improvement Era, August 1963, Page 704)

'Humility is a right recognition of the truth about ourselves. That truth is that we did not make ourselves and we cannot control others.

— Ed Conlin (Recently Thought This Up)

## Suggested Resources:

- **Alcoholics Anonymous** (4<sup>th</sup> Edition - the "Big Book" of A.A.) - especially Chapter 5 and Appendix II.
- **So Help Me God: Substance Abuse, Religion and Spirituality** a Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) "white paper" - <http://www.casacolumbia.org>.
- **Serenity: A Companion for 12 Step Recovery** by Robert Hemfelt
- **Spirituality and Addiction Recovery: An Interview with Ernie Kurtz, PhD** by William L. White, MA, published in *Advances in Addiction & Recovery* | Winter 2014.

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