

THE LORD'S PRAYER AND THE BIG BOOK

I recently heard about a website that actually suggests that new (and not so new) "atheistic or agnostic AA members" should try to get rid of the use of prayer at their AA meetings. The website then goes on to give guidelines on what to do and what to say in order to have prayer voted out. I was surprised that there was actually an organized attempt in this direction. I'm not sure why established AA meetings, with over 75 years of experience closing with the Lord's Prayer or using other prayers during their meetings, would give into newcomers' "sensitivities" so easily. These sensitivities are not new, they've been talked about since the founding of AA. But I learned very early on (over 20 years ago) that I needed to adapt myself to the Program instead of trying to get the Program to adapt to me. Prayer is a long standing practice at meetings and an essential part of AA's 12 Step Program. I would have had little to no success with the 12 Steps if I had picked and chose only what I agreed with, which wasn't much. Half measures avail us NOTHING.

Although G.S.O. and the AA Grapevine seem to be suggesting otherwise, it's hard for me to imagine anyone, even at casual glance, not noticing the large emphasis of the 12 Steps being a transformative spiritual program. The General Service Office (the headquarters of AA) is working on an atheist/agnostic booklet that will suggest that there is a way to work the 12 Steps without a Higher Power, and the August 2011 AA Grapevine had an article that strongly trashed AA members for upholding the spiritual integrity of the Steps and for emphasizing the necessity of seeking a Higher Power. The Grapevine actually called these quality AA members "bigots". A bigot is a believer who is intolerant of others. We have no right to condemn others who believe differently than we do, but we have EVERY RIGHT to uphold the spiritual integrity of the 12 Steps. Working the 12 Steps without a Higher Power is not AA and is a complete contradiction. I would even go so far as to say that working the 12 Steps without a Higher Power is absolutely impossible. You can't have a spiritual awakening as the result of a non-spiritual program. The AA 12 Step Program is not self-help, it's Divine Therapy.

I have learned from reading early AA literature and from my own direct experience that the goal of the 12 Steps is NOT recovery from alcoholism. Let me repeat that because I know that some of you may initially disagree - the goal of the Steps is NOT recovery from alcoholism. The goal of the Steps (as stated in the beginning of the Twelfth Step) is "having had a spiritual awakening as THE result of these Steps" and a BY-PRODUCT of the spiritual awakening is that we recover from the mental, emotional, psychological, & spiritual aspects of alcoholism and other addictions. Or like the beginning of the 12 & 12 says, "A.A.'s Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole." There's a BIG difference between 1) just not drinking (not my nor AA's definition of sobriety), and 2) not drinking and being happy about it (real, contented sobriety).

What this spiritual awakening has done for me is that I am no longer tormented by the past and no longer worried about the future. In other words, I no longer practice suffering. This may be news to most of you (I know it was news to me when I first realized it) but ALL of our suffering comes ONLY from OUR OWN thinking. It's never what happened to us that causes us suffering but what WE TELL OURSELVES about what happened to us that causes it. I have always manufactured all my unhappiness. It's a classic example of self-sabotage, and our mind is so convincing that we hardly even notice where our suffering comes from. If we're working our Program we cannot blame others any more. Victims don't get sober. The spiritual awakening as the result of the 12 Steps frees us of all that. If you are not currently experiencing this freedom, that's okay, it just means there is more to discover in your search for Conscious Contact and removing whatever is blocking you from true happiness and contentment. I know what changed everything for me was that after having worked the Steps once in a casual way, I needed a few years later to have a deeper, more thorough experience with all 12 Steps. After doing so, what I then awakened to is that this Conscious Contact is always and already available to all of us, awaiting only our recognition and remembrance, in this and every moment. Where isn't God? The only question is how are we spiritually "unawakening" ourselves? Like it was said to our co-founder Bill W. in his first days of sobriety, I promise that "when these things are done you will enter upon a new relationship with your Creator; that you will have the elements of a way of living which answers all your problems." May you find It now.

In an attempt to speak out FOR prayer at meetings, I present the following overview of a prayer that closed most of all the meetings I've ever gone to. Please note that not one of these meetings did I suggest the meeting close this way, that practice started well before I got there. But I now WILL strongly encourage members of all 12 Step meetings to keep the practice of prayer at meetings alive and well. It's an important part of our Program and our Fellowship of the Spirit.

Just Love,
Barefoot Bill
Member of the Thursday Night Big Book Group in Rockaway NJ

The Lord's Prayer

(Is it in the Big Book?)

Adapted from the AA District 40 Newsletter, Richmond IN & vicinity, Winter 2011

OUR FATHER

"I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all." - Big Book page 14; "If what we have learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try." – Big Book page 28; "God is the Father, and we are His children." - Big Book page 62

WHO ART IN HEAVEN

"We have found much of Heaven" - Big Book page 25; "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God" - Big Book page 59 (Step 11)

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

All Powerful, Guiding, Creative Intelligence; Spirit of the Universe; our Director; the Principle; the Father; a new Employer; Sunlight of the Spirit; Spirit; A Power greater than myself; Power; A Higher Power; Power of God; God's Power; God; new-found Friend; God-consciousness within; unsuspected inner resource; The Great Reality deep down within us; Our Creator; Our Maker; All Powerful Creator; A living Creator; A Supreme Being; Infinite Power & Love - many references all over the Big Book

THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE, IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

"Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. 'How can I best serve Thee, Thy will (not mine) be done.' These are thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will." - Big Book page 85

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

"It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. – Big Book page 85

AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES

"After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken." - Big Book page 86

AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US

"We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies" - Big Book page 70

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVERUS FROM EVIL

"Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen. When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!" - Big Book page 100; "We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for many of us. But it is clear that we made our own misery. God didn't do it." - Big Book page 133

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.

"As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction" - Big Book page 46

P.S. - If you research the Big Book I am sure you will find other relevant passages that resonate with the Lord's Prayer.