



STEP BY STEP

STEP 12: RECIPROCATION

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A RESULT OF THESE STEPS,
WE TRIED TO CARRY THE MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS.

Welcome to Step by Step. The first nine steps are all about reforming and rehabbing our lives in order to walk in the Spirit. Steps 10-11 show us how to maintain the new life that comes as a result of committing one's life and will to God. The final step 12 is about giving away what we have received. If you have worked the steps with honesty and thoroughness, you have witnessed the fruit of the Spirit born in your life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." This is good stuff! Too good to keep to ourselves. We have it to share it. The spiritual life that comes as the result of the steps is too good not to share. This is at the heart of what we're about at Jacob's Well. We call it reciprocation.

RECIPROCATION

The story of Jesus and the woman at Jacob's Well illustrates this point--Jesus began to address some of the divides between Jews and Samaritans regarding worship and in the course of their conversation, she realizes who Jesus is--the Messiah. She had a spiritual awakening as a result of her encounter with Jesus. Tell your neighbor, "When you meet Jesus, you wake up." And she takes off from the Well to tell the whole village about this man. In fact, she leaves in such a hurry that her water jug stays behind--the whole reason she came to the well in the first place. Why do you think she had such a drive to go and carry the message to others? Guilt? Obligation? NO! She had received and so she gave. This is what we call RECIPROCATION. The dictionary definitions for this word are, "A returning, usually for something given" or "a mutual giving and receiving." Has anybody ever gone out to help somebody else and you were the one helped? We were blessed to be a blessing, and it happened with Jesus in that he needed something from the woman at the well. How did the conversation begin, do you remember? Jesus asked her for something to drink. If Jesus needed and received something from her, chances are we need something from those we serve, even the hopeless alcoholic on the street. The 12 and 12 says it like this:

*"Even the newest of newcomers finds undreamed rewards as he tries to help his brother alcoholic, the one who is even blinder than he. This is indeed the kind of giving that actually demands nothing. He does not expect his brother sufferer to pay him, or even to love him. And then he discovers that by the divine paradox of this kind of giving he has found his own reward, whether his brother has yet received anything or not. . . Practically every AA member declares that no satisfaction has been deeper and no joy greater than in a Twelfth Step job well done. To watch the eyes of men and women open with wonder as they move from darkness into light, to see their lives quickly fill with new purpose and meaning, to see whole families reassembled, to see the alcoholic outcast received back into his community in full citizenship, and above all to watch these people awaken to the presence of a loving God in their lives--these things are the substance of what we receive as we carry AA's message to the next alcoholic."*¹

Like in A.A, here at Jacob's Well our ministry is reciprocal. We usually get more out of serving than the one we serve. But we don't do it because of what we'll get out of it. We do it because we've been spiritually awakened to see that everything is not always about me. And when we've had an authentic spiritual awakening, God leads us into two different ways of response: us **living differently**--"practicing these principles in all our affairs," and **telling others**--"Carrying the message."

¹ Bill Wilson. Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions. pp. 109-110.

Many are hesitant to carry the message to others because they're afraid that they won't have the answers to people's questions. "What happens if I start sharing about Jesus and they ask me how the whole earth could have flooded in Noah's day? Or worse, what if they start asking questions about those Nephylum in Genesis?" Anybody ever been asked about nephylum? I hope that you investigate the facts of the faith, for your own curiosity and to share with others, because the explanation and evidence for the reliability of the bible is very convincing, but let me share something more important to our friends. It's what Bill Hybels calls the "Law of Abundance." He tells about sitting on the dock with an agnostic friend after having talked about spiritual things and God. Feeling like his friend was really close to accepting Christ, Bill asked him if he had any more questions that he could answer to help him believe. His friend replied that he really didn't have any more questions, but that he still wasn't ready to believe. Bill said, "I'm a big boy, just tell me, why not?" His friend went on to share, "I'm just not sure whether I'll gain more than I'll lose." Bill's spiritual awakening from that night led him to realize that the main question people are asking about God has more to do with the practical aspects of life than the philosophical questions of theology. Basically, the world is looking at our lives and asking, "Is faith in Christ a trade up or a trade down?"

Used Hyundai or Jeep?

It's like where we choose to live. For those of you that live on the streets, some don't understand that it may not be the worst place to live. So they try to talk you into going somewhere else. But if you really rather keep to yourself, and the place they're telling you about has a bunch of people sleeping all around you, nosing around your stuff, then even though it is indoors, to you it would be a trade down. When you're sharing your faith with someone different from you, do they see life in Christ as a trade up or down? Or, for those of you with homes and vehicles, it's like when you're shopping for a used car. Let's say you're driving a good old middle american Chevy Cavalier. It's got some miles on it, but it is a good car. But you just got your tax return check and decide to stop at a car lot to see what your other options are. If the salesman tries to show you something like a used Hyundai, what do you think your response would be? You probably wouldn't be asking a lot of questions about the car, because you're not really interested. Why? Because this would be a trade down from your perspective. But what if, instead, you're walked over to a nice, well-kept Jeep Grand Cherokee? Now we're talking! That's when the questions start coming out about the mileage, whether it was any wrecks, etc. And if it all pans out, you could walk out of there trading up! Not saying that you should evangelize like a used car salesman, but hang with me.

I try to hang around irreligious, normal, everyday people as much as I can. And you know what their perception of Christians are? Usually narrow, oppressive, judgmental, hypocritical, no-fun, whiners. But when they look at their life, they're fun-seeking, beer-drinking, women-chasing, have a ball all you can type of people. Who would want to trade that in for that (I mean in the minds of the people doing the trading). Your life, is sometimes the only example of real faith in Christ a friend might see. Is it a trade up, or a trade down? This is so vitally important in our witness to others. That's why Jesus made such an impact on the people when He said: *Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.* (Matthew 5:13 from the Message) When we're consistently living this kind of joy-filled, purpose-driven, Spirit-saturated life that Jesus came to give us, it will be obvious to all who know us that if they give their lives to Christ, regardless of how much fun or success or whatever, it will be a trade up. And the way to get here is to work the steps! Not by going to a meeting once a week, but by:

PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OF OUR AFFAIRS

Last week we talked about how the steps give us the opportunity to do what is under our control so that we can do things that are not in our control. The hopeless drug addict who couldn't stop herself from stopping at the dope man's house, now finds herself clean and serene for 90 days in a row as she begins to work the steps. Then there's the housewife who kept yelling and screaming at her kids every time they stepped out of line, then she begins to practice the principles and finds new ways to cope with life on life's terms. There is hope for the hopeless, rest for the weary, mercy and healing! Tell your neighbor, "Neighbor. . . God will do for you. . . what you cannot do for yourself." And God will do it, when you work the steps. Step 10 teaches us how to work steps 1-9 in our daily life. We should get into the habit of doing an inventory at the end of every day, which is something John Wesley strongly encouraged his preachers to do. We can also do this when we notice something going wrong in our heart or we experience conflict throughout the day. If you're new and unfamiliar with this language, but interested in putting these principles into practice, fill out a Connect Card and we'll show you how. But for everybody, those familiar with recovery and not, take a moment to just think through your day, or the situation that is causing you some stress, and identify instances where you got angry, or hurt someone you love, or were tempted to use or drink. Now, in this moment of silence, think of one situation like that. Ok, now let's work the steps about it.

Step 1: *I am powerless over _____ (situation or person). I repent for putting my trust in other things.* You cannot control that person or situation, so let go and accept your powerlessness. You're gripping that thing tight within our hands; just let it go. . . you can't control it anyway. And turn towards the One who has all things in His hands.

Step 2: *Turn to God, believe in God's might & power, trust, let go of control, let go, and let God.* When I say, "let go," you say, "Let God." Let go - Let God. Let go - Let God!

Step 3: *Write out your decision to turn what it was you named in step 1 over to God.*

Tell your neighbor, "Don't over-complicate it." Simply put: Repent, Believe, Surrender. Next we move into action.

Steps 6-7: *Review list of character defects & sinful patterns and note any that surfaced during the day. Repent and ask for cleansing & healing.* Where do you keep falling into the same ruts, the same traps, and the same sins? Repent.

Steps 8-9: *Review any conflict that happened during the day. What was my part? What were the consequences? How can I make it right? Make a plan to make amends the next day.* Remember, it's not about saying "I'm sorry," they know how you are a sorry piece of. . . it's about admitting that you're wrong and seeking to make it right.

Tell your neighbor, "Don't over-complicate it." Housecleaning, Make Amends. Another way to do this is through the Serenity Prayer. When I first got clean, I worked in a restaurant and I don't know how many times I had to do a spot-check inventory by saying the Serenity Prayer to keep me from going out into the parking lot chasing after no-tipping customers. Do you know the Serenity Prayer? Do you practice it? Again, a moment of silence, thinking about that person or situation stressing you out. . . . *God, grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the Courage to change the things that I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference.*

Praying and practicing these principles on a daily basis is what God uses to transform us from the inside out. It doesn't happen overnight, but before we know it our lives are different and we have something to share with others.

CARRYING THE MESSAGE TO OTHERS

Attraction & Promotion

And that brings us to another big part of the 12th step, carrying the message, sharing with others about your experience, strength and hope, carrying the gospel to those who are in need, whether addict or not. But the church can learn a lot from those in recovery about public relations. The 11th tradition of AA, NA, and lots of other A's says this: *Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.* They realize that someone blabbing about how great NA is one day, then selling their body for crack the next is not good for the reputation of the organization. Those on the inside know that some make it and some don't, but it's harder to explain to the public, so recovery groups don't promote. They let people come to them. I found my first recovery group because I called a friend who I knew had gotten clean & sober and asked him how he did it. And if you're practicing the principles, people will notice that you're different. They'll ask questions that can lead into your sharing your story and gospel. You'll be the kind of person that they turn to when something goes wrong in their life. Attraction rather than promotion.

But some take this to mean that we ought not to open our mouths at all. I've heard it said that, "We should share the gospel and when necessary use words." . . . That's missing it!!! It's like saying, "We should feed the hungry and when necessary use food." The gospel is meant to be shared in word and deed. One cannot go without the other. Therefore if we are not practicing the principles, then we should not carry the message to others. We can do more harm than good. But the point of the 12 steps is to work them and have a spiritual awakening that enables us to practice them in all our affairs and carry the message to others! Let me finish reading the passage from Matthew 5:

Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

Why are we here? To be Light! It's time to come out of hiding and go public with this! Jesus longs for us to live the message and share the message with others. Three ways that we can begin to share the message is through sharing our story, inviting people to church, and walking someone through the steps.

Telling your Story

What you were like - What happened - What you're like now. Whether you used to be a drug addict or a housewife, there are people that can relate to both. Maybe you used to be self-centered, only thinking of your own needs, until you went to Bridging the Gap or CPR and encountered Christ out on the streets and now you save up 10% of your pay check to give away to people in need. Whatever your story is, write it down, and think about it in these three handles. That way if you're asked to share publicly and given 12 minutes you can easily break it down, giving 4 minutes to each part. If you're sitting in your friend's porch and you have hours, then spend more on each part. If you're in an elevator and only have 1 minute, each part gets 20 seconds. Turn to your neighbor and tell them, "You've got a story, tell it."

Invite 10, bring 2

Write down 10, pray, personally invite them to worship the next 2 Saturdays. Two weekends from now is Easter, the most well-attended church day of the year. All kinds of irreligious people are in the church-going mood. Why wait for Easter Sunday, be the first to celebrate the resurrection on Easter Saturday! Many of you will have family in town, bring them to the Well! Before the resurrection must come the cross and next weekend we'll be reflecting on the Passion of the Christ and entering into Holy Week. Bring friends to hear a message of the cross they will not soon forget. It's pretty simple. Make a list, pray for them, invite them, then follow up. Not everyone that you invite will come, but if you prayerfully invite 10, you can bring at least 2. We have invite cards that you can take with you to help with your inviting. They're available on the Info Hub in the back or on the Welcome Table in the front. Who in here will 10 people over the next two weeks? Raise your hands. Tell your neighbor, "Invite 10, Bring 2!"

12-stepping and sponsorship

Finally is the ultimate meaning of step 12, to begin sponsoring people and walking them through the steps. When Jesus had raised from the dead, he gathered his disciples and commissioned them say, "Go into all the world making disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all I have commanded you." Within the Great Commission is a great omission. Know what it is? Well, we get the baptize part down, but what about *teaching them to obey*? But this is exactly what the 12 steps equip us for, and we can't work them without a sponsor. We learn how to do what is in our control so that we can do what is not in our control. We follow the suggestions of our sponsor, read our literature, and do the next right thing, and when we look up, we've done the impossible. The 12 steps are a plan of discipleship that is designed to be passed on from one person to the next. If you've gone through the steps and are practicing principles in your affairs, you need to be walking alongside someone else guiding them through the steps. For many people, the first step is going to rehab or that first meeting. I have had the privilege of bringing many, many people to detox or their first meeting since we started Jacob's Well. I want to share that joy, and I need your help! If you'd like to be on the list of people that I call when someone voiced the desire to get sober, and you'd like to get trained to do what we call a 12-step call, please fill out a Connect Card or let me know.

Spiritual Awakening Defined

As the band comes up, I'll close with this thought. None of this is possible before being spiritually awakened. Ask your neighbor, "Are you awake?" I mean really awake? Has the veil been lifted from your eyes to truly see the light that Jesus is talking about in Matthew 5? It could be that your night became day through one of the steps, like when you made a decision to turn your will and life over to God or confessed your sins to your sponsor and accepted forgiveness. Or was it a gradual change over the process of them all? Or have you been wrestling with this whole thing and might be ready tonight to give your life to Christ? In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said to his sleeping disciples, *Wake up! And pray that you won't fall into temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Friends, I want to invite you to wake up tonight, and cry out to Jesus. He is here and while our flesh is weak, His Spirit makes us strong. Where our sin abounds, his grace and mercy abound that much more. There is nothing too big for him and no one too far gone. Would everyone now rise and pray with me.