

April 19, 2007

## **Reflections on the Third Step Prayer...**

### **God**

We have a higher power in our lives... something or someone to whom we are accountable... someone greater than my ego.

### **Story... The Airplane Pilot**

*A Pastor told this story of his most frightening airplane ride in his life...*

*The warning of the approaching problems came when the sign on the airplane flashed on: Fasten Your Seat Belts. Then, after awhile, a calm voice said: "We shall not be serving the beverages at this time as we are expecting a little turbulence. Please be sure your seat belt is fastened."*

*As I looked around the aircraft, it became obvious that many of the passengers were becoming apprehensive. Later, the voice of the announcer said, "We are so sorry we are unable to serve the meal at this time. The turbulence is still ahead of us."*

*Then the storm broke. The ominous cracks of thunder could be heard even above the roar of the engines. Lightening lit up the darkening skies, and within moments the great plane was like a cork tossed around on a celestial ocean. One moment the airplane was lifted on terrific currents of air, the next, it dropped as if it were about to crash.*

*I shared the discomfort and fear of those around me. As I looked around the plane, I could see that nearly all of the passengers were upset and alarmed. Some were praying. The future seemed ominous and many were wondering if they would make it through the storm.*

*Then suddenly I saw a little girl. Apparently the storm meant nothing to her. She had tucked her feet beneath her as she sat on her seat; she was reading a book and everything within her small world was calm and orderly. Sometimes she closed her eyes, then she would read again; then she would straighten her legs. Worry and fear were not in her world. When the plane*

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*was being buffeted by the terrible storm , when it lurched this way and that, as it rose and fell with frightening severity, when the adults were scared half to death, that marvelous child was completely composed and unafraid.. I could hardly believe my eyes.*

When our plane finally reached our destination and we were safe, as we were hurrying to disembark, I lingered awhile to speak to the little girl whom I had watched. I commented about the storm to her and about her behavior during the bumpy ride, and asked her why she did not seem to be afraid. *The sweet child replied, "Sir, my Dad is the pilot of this plane, and he is taking me home."*

What a beautiful story. All of us can fret and worry about so much.

We feel we need to be in control – we have to be the pilot.

We Americans glory in our ability to be in control, to have all of the answers... we are a "can-do" people.

Another example...

Then something like a Hurricane Katrina happens...

Our illusion of control is exposed and shattered.

We are not in control.

Our Hurricane preparations were not what they should have been.

The dikes were poorly constructed.

Whole neighborhoods were needlessly flooded.

Rescue operations were slow and uncoordinated.

The "battle plan" was flawed.

The emergency response was flawed.

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"Reconstruction" was flawed.

The "Blame Game" ensued.

Who is in control?

We thought we had it down pat.

Now many people are worried and anxious.

How much can we really control when a tragedy strikes?

We have to try.

We have to do our best.

We have to prepare as best we can.

We have to help out as best we can.

As a nation, we can do better for our people than we did in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in the Fall of '06.

But we also have to realize that we will never be in full control.

*We are not God.*

What about when personal disaster strikes?

What happens when our life journey gets bumpy and perhaps downright turbulent and scary?

What happens when we realize that we don't have all of the answers *and* we can't control what is happening in our life?

Do we get really upset and anxious and worried,

losing our peace of mind and even losing sleep?

Many of us drank ourselves senseless. (or drugged or overate)

Oh yeh, that really solved our problems!

Do we try to control the difficult situation,  
telling others what to do,  
giving orders,  
trying to make life fit our need to control?  
What happens when it doesn't?

Can we remember the story of the troubled airplane flight,  
the little girl,  
and the pilot of the airplane who was her father,  
in whom she had complete trust?

Can we then try to do the best we can, support each other, and recognize  
that we are cannot control our life completely?

We are not the pilot. God is... Can we trust God?

This story might help us...

### **Our Third Step Prayer...**

#### **I offer myself to you**

*"Offering" is something we do to someone else – it's not forceful, it's done humbly... and it's given as a gift.*

I offer my whole self... especially my talents, by strengths (physical, emotional, intellectual), my personality, my experiences (past and present), what I've learned, my time...

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and also my faults and failings.

What do I bring to God today?

What do I offer to God today?

Did you say "Good morning God" this morning, or "Good God, morning?"

**To build with me and to do with me as you will**

My life is no longer just about myself, what I want - my agenda, what I fear, what I worry about...

I give my life to God to BUILD... Use me to build, not to destroy.

How do I handle the destruction in my past? Tekkun olam... partner with God.

(What did the leads say last night?)

*Jessica Power's poem... Repairer of Fences.*

*I am alone in the dark, and I am thinking*

*What darkness would be mine if I could see*

*The ruin I wrought in every place I wandered*

*And if I could not be*

*Aware of One who follows after me.*

*Whom do I love, O God, when I love Thee?*

*The great Undoer who has torn apart*

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*The walls I built against a human heart*

*The Mender who has sewn together the hedges*

*Through which I broke when I went seeking ill,*

*The Love who follows and forgives me still.*

**Fumbler and fool that I am, with things around me**

*Of fragile make like souls, how I am blessed*

*To hear behind me footsteps of a Savior!*

*I sing to the east; I sing to the west:*

*God is my repairer of fences, turning my paths into rest.*

*(Underlining Mine)*

**As you will...**

What is God's will?

Stay sober, go to meetings, talk to your sponsor, use the tools of the Program (e.g. The Steps), be useful to others.... Keep it simple, a day at a time...

We say this prayer each morning.

God's will is that we should flourish, be alive, have peace of mind and heart, and have serenity...

God's will is that the Promises come into your life.

God's will is the 10 Commandments.

God's will is that we be people of integrity, of courage, of justice, of temperance – virtuous people.

God's will is that we be people of faith, of prayer, of forgiveness and compassion...

God's will is that we be people for others...

My friend in the nursing home said that the people who worked there might as well have on T shirts that say "You" or "Me".

What gets in the way of God's will?

**Relieve me from the bondage of self**

Relieve me from the restlessness, irritability, and discontentment that Dr. Bob spoke of in "The Doctor's Opinion" at the beginning of the Big Book.

These are the result of bondage to self.

Relieve me of self-will run riot, always wanting it my way

and the anger and resentments that arise from this... since we don't always get our own way...

We live in a society, which tells us that we should always have it our way – our job is to buy stuff, which will make us happy, and be an entertained consumer.

For example, we work to make a paycheck so that we can pay our taxes, eat, and then be entertained.

What about our working to use our talents and training,

to be useful to others and society,

to be concerned about others I work with –

to live out our AA principles in that part of our lives?

*Bondage to self* plays out in every part of our lives...

family, neighborhood, work world, play world.

How are we held in bondage to ourselves?

Do we ask God's help with that? Cf. Steps 6 and 7.

Bondage to self is not something we can get free of by ourselves.

We need insight to see how we are held in bondage to self,  
and we need humility to ask God to "relieve me of the bondage to self."

And it's a life long process... a life long Journey – but God is on our side if we would seek his help. God is the pilot now.

**That I may better do your will.**

It is difficult doing God's will if we have to have it our way all of the time, in  
"Bondage to self."

**Poem... My Way II**

I want it my way

Do it my way

No matter what you say

I want it my way

In bondage to self

So often angered

Frustrated

Fearful

So often others don't bend



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To my way

I know the best way...

Can't you see?

Don't you agree?

Don't you understand?

I want it my way

Do it my way

No matter what you say

I want it my way

Funny... life never fits into

My way

Others don't do it

My way

They don't think

My way

The day doesn't go

My way

God doesn't seem to want it

My way

Oh God, is there another way?

Help me in my bondage to

My way

Deliver me from my

Frustrated attempts

At tight management

Or coercive control

Help me to pray

Thy way be done

On earth, as it is in heaven...

Amen.

Our prayer is "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done" – not "my kingdom come, my will be done."

### **Take away my difficulties**

What are the "difficulties" in my life?

Things that bother me, tough life circumstances, personal failures, regrets...

We humbly ask God to help us with these.

I would also suggest that character defects get us into difficulties...

Character defects... envy, greed, pride, lust, sloth, anger, gluttony. (The seven Deadly Sins that **12 and 12** speaks about.)

Our character defects...

What are 2 or 3 of your character defects?

List them for yourself.

Maybe ask yourself, "If I asked my spouse or a close friend of mine what 2 or 3 of my character defects were, what would they say?"

We alcoholics have addictive personalities,  
and this is part of our "difficulties" that get us into trouble...

What does "addictive personalities" mean...

*We use addictive behaviors*

*to ease our brokenness,*

*to gloss over our pains,*

*to hide our secrets...*

*just like we used booze.*

*What are addictive behaviors?*

*I have a friend in the program in NY. He tells others in the program that when he first came into the Program his sponsor put him on the first three Steps immediately. However, his sponsor would not let him go onto steps 4 and 5. Everyone else he came into the Program with were thru these Steps, but his sponsor would not let him past Step 3. He finally asked him why, and his sponsor asked him if he still gambled a lot... The answer was "yes." His sponsor told him he wasn't ready for Steps 4 or 5, and certainly not 6 and 7. His gambling was an addictive behavior, and behind every addictive behavior is a drink. Why was he gambling so much?*

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*Character defects can lead to addictive behaviors, especially for us addictive personalities...*

*Other possible addictive behaviors: eating, shopping, internet and internet porn, TV, sports, and relationship addictions.*

*Addictive behaviors are usually a way we have of masking our self-centered fears, of anestisizing our regrets, our wounds, our brokenness or our dark secrets, which cause us such pain.*

*We can bring this pain to our loving God to remove... and bring it to our sponsors whom God uses to bring us healing.*

*And we have to be careful because such addictive behaviors can lead us addictive personalities back to alcohol.*

*We need to talk about them and about "what runs us around", and we need to give them to God.*

***That victory over them bear witness to those I would help***

AA is not just about stopping drinking.

It's about turning us into *better* people.

AA is not just about getting us *sober*.

We get *sober* so that we can be more *useful* people...

So that we can be people of character,

people of virtue,

people who make the world a better place, rather than a worse place...  
tekkun olam.

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With God's help we face our difficulties and live with them and are healed day by day, so that we can help others and...

Bear witness to those I would help of your power, your love and your way of life

*To whom do we give witness?*

*Our families, our kids, our neighbors, the guys and gals at the bar, the cops.*

*What did we give witness to when we were drinking?*

You and I have heard the leads and given them,

describing how we acted and what we did while we were still active alcoholics.

Are we proud of this?

Or are we ashamed?

How many regrets do we live with?

But as my sponsor said after I took my fifth step – “You don't have to be that man anymore”.

I can now be a man of virtue... kindness, courage, forgiveness, perseverance in the face of struggle, honesty, humility, gratitude and openness... all of the virtues the Big Book speaks about...

How can I do this?

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Only thru the power of God in my life, my awareness of God's love for me, my following God's way of life, and using the tools of the Program, with God's help.

Amazing Grace says it so well...

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me

I once was lost, but now I'm found

Was blind, but now I see.

Twas grace that taught my heart to fear

And grace my fears relieved

How precious did that grace appear

That hour I first believed.

Thru many dangers, toils and fears

I have already come

Tis grace that brought me safe thus far

And grace will lead me home.

Only with God's gracious love and help,

which touches us each day,

and is discovered in the Program in the lives of others...

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God can touch us so powerfully thru the Program, and the men and women in the Program...

God can touch us

on retreats like this one,

and in the silence of our daily prayer and meditation....

Then hopefully we begin to realize that God surrounds us with God's love and compassion.

And we can then gratefully pray...

**May I do your will always. Amen**