

Eight Principles for Progress

Reflection - the Three Acknowledgments

1. We acknowledged that we are the cause of our own unhappiness through our self-centered behaviors, thoughts, and feelings (otherwise known as *sins*); the cause is not other people or circumstances, no matter how unfortunate.
2. We acknowledged that we are unable to control our thoughts and actions perfectly and to rid ourselves of that unhappiness, which is in the form of resentment and fear.
3. We acknowledged that our sole hope for happiness is in God. We set ourselves this ideal for living: with God's grace, we can do his will, be free of resentment and fear and have a good, beautiful and joyful life. Once we have accepted this truth, then we *do* have a choice and we can say that misery is optional.

Action - the Five Spiritual Exercises:

1. We adopted a daily routine of prayer, reflection, and good works.
2. When the daily routine had become habitual, we undertook a detailed written self-examination, looking at our past thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in order to root out the resentments and fears arising from our self-centeredness. We admitted our shortcomings to God and to another trusted person.
3. We made amends for any harms done (provided that to do so would not cause more harm).
4. We discerned our personal vocation by consideration of what we would like to do *in our wildest dreams* and then worked towards that goal.
5. We continued to deepen our spiritual lives through the practice of a daily routine of prayer, reflection, and good works.

A Summary of the Daily Routine (Spiritual Exercise #1)

We adopted this routine of prayer, reflection, and good works until it became a habit of life:

Prayer:

1. In the morning, on your knees in an action of humility, say something like: - *'Please God, take care of me today so that I can be of service to you and my fellows.*
2. In the evening before retiring, again on your knees say: - *'Thank you, God, for looking after me'* - it's good manners to say thank you!
3. Reactive prayers during the day:
 - a. If you are angry or annoyed at someone? Pray for the person repeatedly until you feel better. eg *'Please give [the name of the person] everything that I would wish for myself*
 - b. If you are fearful or anxious? Say the Serenity Prayer repeatedly until you feel better - *'God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.'*
 - c. When you have been through the detailed **self-examination** as outlined in our spiritual exercises, apply this process to resentments and fears that crop up during the day as needed to remove them and to have a happy life.

Personal Reflection:

1. Write a gratitude list and thank God for each blessing that you find.
2. Spiritual reading: read something each day that gives you an ideal to live by. For example, the Just for Today card.

Good works:

1. We adopt a general attitude of seeking to be of service to others. We ask what we can give to the world, rather than what we can take.
2. We make a regular voluntary sacrifice of time devoted to the service of others. For many of us, this involved simply passing on this process to others by regular attendance at *The Vision for You* workshops. And by sponsorship - giving time to meet with others personally in order to take them through the process.
3. We strove to 'do the right thing', that is, to lead a good and virtuous life.

Spiritual Exercise #4

Eight Steps to a Life Beyond Your Wildest Dreams

Here are the steps we took along the road to our happy destiny

1. Ask yourself the question: If I inherited so much money that I never needed to work again for the money, what activity would I choose to do, nine-to-five, five days a week? and write your dream down on paper
2. Add your lifestyle dreams to this. It's not just about work, it's about your whole life.
3. Hold this up against what is good and true. If it's God's will it has to be moral.
4. Take action. Look for the first move to make, and then make it! Don't think about the second move until you have taken the first. If you take this step-by-step approach, you will get there, little by little.
5. Don't do anything that is reckless or foolhardy - you must pay the bills and meet your obligations. This is not an excuse to evade the responsibilities of life.
6. If you can, surround yourself with a number of people who will encourage you in what you are aiming to do, use them for advice and encouragement.
7. Be ready to modify your dreams as you go along. You may discover that God has something greater in store for you - something that you cannot even imagine at this point. Something *beyond* your wildest dreams!
8. Finally, enjoy the journey - embrace all that happens to you as part of a loving God's plan for you and remember that you are living your personal vocation right now! We have found that misery is optional and even in the face of setbacks and trials, we can enjoy every single day because it has been created for all of us by a loving God. God is both the means to happiness and the source of happiness itself - he is the Way and the Life and the Truth. Give yourselves to him and join us on the Way of Beauty.