

STEP 11 – SHARING HEART TO HEART

Step 11: We 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 it out.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

The purpose of prayer and meditation spoken of in Step 11 is to help us learn how to hear God and to sensitize us to a way of life that is being revealed to us through His word. Through prayer, we get in touch with a loving and powerful God who is already at work changing our lives. When we read His word and listen to what He has to say, God will respond and reveal His good and perfect and pleasing will to us. Jesus said, ***"If you stay joined to me and my words remain in you, you may ask any request you like, and it will be granted! Ask me and I will tell you some remarkable secrets about what is going to happen. If you need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking". And we can be confident that God will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.*** (John 15:7, Jeremiah 33:3, James 1:5, 1 John 5:14,15)

Using prayer and meditation as tools in our new life with God in recovery, we move from faint hope in some vague higher power to a deeply experienced relationship with a loving friend. We begin to invite the Holy Spirit of God into the deepest, most confused, most fearful, most painful, and most practical areas of our life. We don't seek to simply learn facts about God but rather to be safely at home in His loving presence with all that we are, all that we have been, and all that we long to be. We stay close to God because living in this atmosphere renews our whole being, body, mind and spirit.

In the past, when life became overwhelming, we used our addictions as a hiding place. Now that we are in recovery, life, at times, still feels overwhelming - sometimes more so because we aren't self-medicating to cover the pain. In this new life we need a place of refuge where we can escape the storms and find protection. God is available to be that hiding place. When we were in distress, trapped in our own personal hell, we called out to God and God brought us to where we are today. He's always there, ready to shield and protect us whenever we call on him. His great desire, however, has always been not just to bring us "out" of

trouble but also to bring us "in" to a new life of peace and joy and strength. Taking time to be with God in prayer and meditating on His word are wonderful ways to come to know God's heart and learn to live in relationship with a faithful and dependable friend.

"How can you say that the Lord doesn't see your troubles and isn't being fair? Don't you yet understand? Don't you know by now that the everlasting God, the Creator of the farthest parts of the earth, never grows faint or weary? No one can fathom the depths of God's understanding. God gives power to the tired and worn out, and strength to the weak. Even the youths shall be exhausted and the young will all give up. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint". Isaiah 40:27-31

Sometimes, in relationship with people, we feel close to them and at other times disconnected and lonely. There is a deep longing in us for intimate personal sharing and understanding, trusting and being trusted. It's a God-created desire and He wants to fulfill that desire first through our relationship with Him. God wants to share the deepest secrets of His heart with us. God wants to confide in us. It truly is amazing and very touching that God wants to speak in confidence to you and me. The creator of the universe, the truly "top dog" of all, not only has time to pay attention to the fact that we exist, but wants to divulge to us the secrets of His heart -- the things that really matter. God chooses us, chooses to confide in us.

"The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them." (Psalm 25:14)

The prayer and meditation to which Step 11 invites us is so much more than just trying to figure out what God's plans are for us. Meditation and reading scripture show us all that God promises to do and be for us. Underneath all of these "spiritual exercises" is God's desire to confide to us the heart of love he has for each of us, the heart that sent His son to die for us so that we might live forever with Him. The apostle Paul prays that we would come to know this great love. ***"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."*** (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Question for Reflection and Discussion

Why do you make prayer, meditation, and seeking God's will a part of your recovery program? How would you describe your experience of Step 11 – a spiritual practice or heart-to-heart sharing in confidence with a close friend?