

Wonderfully Awake

Step 12 - Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

As Christians in recovery, what is the spiritual awakening? What is the message that we share? What is the life we seek to practice?

O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. (Psalm 139:1-10)

Every week we look at the list of addictions that go from practices such as using drugs, food, sex, and gambling to relationships where we seek, in unhealthy ways, to have the needs of our human heart met. In Psalm 139 King David describes the relationship in which we experience what we've always longed for, run hard to attain, and never before found.

Only a spiritual awakening could bring us to the place where we believe this kind of intimate relationship with the Living God is possible for us. Only a spiritual awakening could support us as we actually take the "leap of faith" into this amazing intimacy. King David made that leap and his struggle for words to describe the experience is the best evidence. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is too high, I cannot attain to it." This is the satisfaction and security we crave. This is what gives us rest, gives us comfort, gives us peace. This is the reality that affirms deeply within that the future will be fine, that the present can be full, that circumstances are just that, circumstances. This is what makes life real. This is the experience we've run all over the place to find to satisfy our souls and we find it profoundly in this embrace of the Living God. This is the message we come alive to, try to carry, and seek to practice in all our affairs.

The LORD's kindness never fails! If he had not been merciful, we would have been destroyed. The LORD can always be trusted to show mercy each morning. Deep in my heart I say, "The LORD is all I need; I can depend on him!" The LORD is kind to everyone who trusts and obeys him. It is good to wait patiently for the LORD to save us. (Lamentations 3:22-26)

Since we have worked through the Twelve Steps, we are in a special position to carry the message to others. We understand a lapse in the practice of spiritual principles when we recognize addictive/compulsive tendencies slipping into a person's behaviour, including our own. We know it is caring to say something to challenge what we see. We know being "unpopular in the moment" will be appreciated later on if we are speaking the truth in love. These are always deeply sensitive encounters and we need to empty our minds of condemnation and accusation and fill our hearts with loving tenderness as we seek to intervene.

As we gently help someone back on the path we need to remember how we too were once slaves to our addiction just as they are now. We need to remember how we are all growing and learning. We need to give warnings against ongoing harm in a way that calls people to safety. We need to support the desire in the spirit of a person even while their flesh is weak in carrying out the new choices. We need to continue to give people an invitation to more than what they are currently experiencing. We need to share God's new way of life with them through our own story of transformation and ongoing life in God's grace.

As we get further along in our recovery, the memory of how bad our life really was may begin to fade, our desperation for God's intervention may settle a bit. We need to bring ourselves in a disciplined way before the grace and mercy of God every day in order to not fall into the fantasy of self-reliance that kept us bound in our addictive behaviours for so long. We need to continue to learn and submit our practices in every area of life to God's will revealed in the Bible. Are we taking care to practice these spiritual principles daily in order to stay securely held in this strong tenderness?

All athletes practice strict self-control. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I am not like a boxer who misses his punches. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9)

We are able to stay free only because God is with us, upholding us every step of the way. The need for spiritual self-discipline never ceases. This is why Step 12 urges us to "practice these principles in all our affairs." Doing this will minimize our slips and hold us close to the presence of God, so we can remain covered with the peace and serenity of His grace. It's all grace. It's applied to all our affairs. It's the experience of being wonderfully and fully awake to life.

Question for Reflection and Discussion

What does a spiritual awakening have to do with not drinking or drugging?