Spiritual Principles in Action

by Terry D.

A Spiritual Principle is a fundamental truth, an origin from which positive change can occur. Within the 12 Steps are Spiritual Principles that can be used to enhance us in recovery. To the newcomer, awareness, honesty, acceptance, and surrender are the underlying principles that must be adopted to successfully complete the 1st Step. By applying the Spiritual Principles available in the 12 Step program, you will have an array of guidelines to adhere to that will transform your standard of living.

Some of the significant Spiritual Principles include: honesty, acceptance, hope, commitment, faith, courage, willingness, humility, unconditional love, perseverance, open-mindedness, awareness, vigilance, self-discipline, sharing and caring, and service. Those are the basic principles from which we receive our strength and courage to move onward in our quest for spiritual enlightenment, personal fulfillment and positive growth. As we incorporate these principles into our daily lives, we gain awareness and become open-minded towards all values and virtues that free us from our addictive patterns and selfishness.

When we arrived, we heard it said, "We never have to use again, even if we want to." The first step towards sobriety was admitting our powerlessness over drugs and alcohol. We surrendered our will over to the Fellowship, who then began to love us until we could love ourselves. We recognized our need for help, and were offered guidelines to remain secure in our sobriety. Continuing on, we became aware of our Higher Power who could restore us to sanity. We relinquished our lives and our will over to the care of God, as we understood Him. At this moment, the Spiritual Principles can take hold, and guide us in the direction we should go. We can now overcome our fears, letting go and allowing God to take over to assist us in our recovery. Believing in God has
now become our shield against the destructive forces of active addition. We regain hope in our lives. We notice these Spiritual Principles working in other peoples' lives. We continue hearing that it works. Now we have made a commitment for positive change to transpire in our recovery. Recognition of spiritual enlightenment motivated us, driving us towards applying these suggestions in our lives.

Through our literature we learned HOW it works: Honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness. As we become centered in God - releasing old patterns of selfishness, ego, and false pride - we gradually start changing into the men and women we desire to be. We surrender our will, and accept the clarification that God brings birth to. We become tolerant over things that we cannot change. We strive to live in accordance with our Spiritual Principles. As we trust in God, while being responsible, loving and courageous in our daily lives, we grow along spiritual lines. We envision a more intense picture in life, and we become grateful addicts, alcoholics.

A Spiritual Principle that is important in recovery is humility. We have learned to let go of old behaviors and thoughts that prevent our forward progression. We develop into spiritual beings that are free from pride and arrogance. We seek out new ways of existing that enables us to experience miraculous achievement that were not a part of our addiction. We begin to learn the true meaning of love, forgiveness, and rigorous honesty. We soon discover that the swiftest way to obtain love is to give it. We learn to forgive ourselves, and others for all harm done in the past. We become totally honest in all our affairs. We focus on our path, willing to go to any length to achieve our goals, hopes, and dreams.

Courage in recovery is a vital virtue that can bring about success, understanding and inspiration. Courage establishes the possibility of better improving our reality; it clears a passage to explore new horizons, to stand up for those things in which we wish to achieve. It's the ability to achieve greatness in our lives. When we take a step resolutely forward, we are granted the strength and wisdom necessary to execute our wishes. We triumph over frustration, and rise above our perceived limitations. We expand our awareness, and acquire a fresh perspective - assured that God will lead the way. We gain a better understanding of purpose and direction, unafraid to move forward with a heightened sense of significance and self-consciousness. It is essential that we believe in ourselves, and never lose faith in our ability to accomplish our goals, while maintaining confidence and persistence.

As we courageously strive to achieve greatness in our lives, we realize that if
we pursue our inner source of strength we can unearth the energy power of our spirit and then nothing is impossible. We are the architects of our fate, and by living one day at a time we gain experience, strength and hope to face life on life's terms, to accept the things we cannot change, and the courage to confront the ultimate reality of life. Changing is a process that starts with the mind, then enters the soul, and comes forth through our decisions. We decide who we are and what we want. We define our current reality. We choose to decide how we feel, how we act, how we think, how we respond, what road to travel, who to call our friends, what goals to set, and how to allocate the circumstances that come our way. Are you attempting to be someone you're not? Have you been displaying a disguise that conceals your true self? Courageously step forth, while embracing the Spiritual Principles of the 12 Steps to ensure your positive growth and ongoing sobriety.

Coming to the Fellowship of the 12 Step program has enlivened security and hope for a new way of life. We absorb the wisdom we need to remain untainted through one more crack of dawn. We are told that via the Steps, we can grab a hold of freedom from active addition. We employ the Spiritual Principles to our objective, while we permit their influence to operate in us, modifying us for the better, molding us into spiritual beings capable of achieving the desires of our hearts. When we maintain balance in our lives (the outer world and inner world), we travel steadily on the road towards our purpose. Living a life of purpose, especially while in recovery, will expand your awareness, and you will rise above your limitations. When we are in connection with our purpose, we become full-fledged and at peace with our contributions and victories. Whether the path is easy, or awash with obstructions along the way, our Higher Power will steer our path, displaying the way, the truth, and the life. We are willing and able to transcend all challenges that may hinder our forward progress. Keep in mind that it is said, "Half measures availed us nothing"; furthermore, it is said, "Progress, not perfection".

Through a period of time, after applying the Spiritual Principles, we gain an advanced perspective, and at this time we can ascend to a new pinnacle on our voyage. We have become enlightened to ourselves, our spirituality, our capacities, and of the importance of utilizing the 12 Steps, and the Spiritual Principles associated with them. We can focus on taking ACTION in our daily walk. Actions are: Any Change Toward Improving One's Nature. And we must never forget the ABC's of recovery: Acceptance, Belief, and Change.

A very imperative Spiritual Principle during our rebirth is our willingness to change. We see the fruits of growth in our fellow addicts. We become hopeful in our ability "...to grow along spiritual lines," as it is said. We become inspired
to embrace the virtues that we aim for and admire. As we become optimistic, we receive a burst of hopeful expectancy. Once we acquire the willingness and courage to adjust, we receive from God the energy and the competence and potential that it takes to achieve the task. We come to realize that positive thinking, hope, and faith are the necessary requirements to accelerate in our recovery.

Personally, I am the kind of addict that always tried to analyze how it works, and who tried to uncover deeper meanings of our guidelines. During my addiction, I always tried to fill the bottomless void inside of me. I never felt fulfilled, or at peace with myself. I lived a worthless existence that evolved around my selfish transgressions. Through the course of my recovery, I've had the privilege to grasp serenity, purpose, worth, peace, love, and meaning to my human experience. The harmony that I clutched was the grace of God, the love of the Fellowship, and the bliss that was created from the awakening of my spirit. I devoted my life's endeavors to profit from understanding, and to the ensuing process of purification. I absorbed the critical magnitude of open-mindedness, love, humility and faith. As I welcomed the spiritual awareness of the connection between existence, and me, I matured into a spiritual being committed to living amidst the power, strength and inspiration that God has provided me. A whole new outlook of myself, my surroundings, my spiritual existence, and my persistence, has replenished that void that I was searching to satisfy in my addiction. The serenity that has poured over me is the vitality that points me in the right direction.

I am still astonished to this day how straightforward this program really is. I have learned through experience that by abiding in the Spiritual Principles of the 12 Step program, I can stay set free from active addiction, selfishness, doubt, fear, false pride, insanity, irresponsibility, chaos, anger, frustration, failure, discontent, weakness, negative thinking, and, most of all, hopelessness.

Here's an action plan that I would suggest on your journey in recovery: First of all, be honest with yourself, your addiction, your character defects and shortcomings. Accept your powerlessness over your addiction. Trust and believe that a Power greater than yourself can set you free from the chaos and despair of active addiction, and extract you from the plunder of hopelessness and insanity. Surrender to God, who I call my Higher Power, and allow Him to guide your way, and show you the route, the truth, and the luminosity of the emergence of your essence. Live in hopeful expectancy, and by no means give up the new initiative and tranquility that you have integrated into your recuperation through the grace of God. Hope for only the best, while surmounting all difficulties ahead, believing that nothing is unattainable under
the hand of God. Acquire a strong, solid, lasting faith in God, and in your aptitude to cobble together sound decisions to breath positive change in your recovery. Faith believes in the unknown, trusting that God will put aside your perceived limitations, and allow you to accomplish your goals. Faith is knowing that if you continue to be responsible in your journey, and to never admit defeat, that God will mold you, and arise in you the power, courage and strength necessary to possess the desires of your heart.

After already achieving success by abiding within the above Spiritual Principles, we can now tread upon the stairwell that will blaze a trail to a peace and serenity that we have never before experienced; freedom from active addition, from pride, from fear, and from self-doubt. Now it is time to don the armor of God, our Divine Essence, our Everlasting Strength, and utilize its shield in all our endeavors. Within us is an everlasting supply of strength to battle all the difficulties ahead, and to rise above life's chaos and destruction. The power within us is now the Light that guides our way. Not only are we fitted with the necessary tools for success - we are now new, enlightened people who are no longer frightened to pursue our purpose. Courage is a powerful Spiritual Principle in our Fellowship. With it there are infinite opportunities.

After adopting these principles we are now on our way to understanding forgiveness. As we give up resentments and make amends for our past, we discover and live within humility. We come to forgive ourselves for our former blunder, and most importantly, we make available the opportunity for people to forgive us. Forgiveness is a healing reconciliation that puts behind us our past faults, former behaviors, attitudes, selfishness, destructiveness, failures, hate, anger, and lack of self-control because of our addiction. As our family, friends, acquaintances, and victims forgive our mistakes, we start to feel the lack of love and personal attachment that we lost in our addiction. We can then start the ball rolling and devote ourselves to building healthy, loving relationships. We have the opportunity now to make up for wasted time, and to build trust and respect. We have learned through experience that actions speak louder than words, so we presently show everyone our newfound determination and strength provided to us through the Fellowship of the 12 Step program.

When I worked the 9th Step, I learned a vast amount of knowledge. As I embarked upon the undertaking of this step, I had to exhibit and continue enduring the integrity that I'd gained through applying the Spiritual Principles of our plan of action. I had to be honest with my actions, my past mistakes, and myself in order to uphold my integrity. I had to be completely honest and straightforward with the individual I was making amends with. I sensed that I
had to reveal the new me, to describe how I felt, and how I've grown through my recovery process. True feelings were exchanged and I felt a wave of relief, love and compassion flood over me. Bringing out the wreckage of my past brought me the peace that I needed. Each time I made amends, I grew in my recovery, and I took a step resolutely forward in my search for personal fulfillment, inner security, and spiritual growth.

As I finished making amends, putting my past behind me, I profited from self-esteem, self-respect, and contentment. I told myself that my journey would never come to an end. My new goal was to live in excellence, to grow spiritually and mentally, and to expand upon all of the new values that I've engrained into the depths of my spirit. I've become conscious of the fact that as I persevere, I continually grow and mature in my daily walk. My perimeters of development have become endless due to my devotion to abide amidst the Spiritual Principles of the 12 Steps, and to live the 12 Step way of life in utmost adoration. I must always remain teachable so I can attain unremitting growth and to never stray from the drive and hope that transported me to this point.

Today, as I work the 12th Step, I am astonished at the amount of love that I feel from my unwavering devotion to service. Spreading the awareness and knowledge that I've acquired is an awesome encounter that I will in no way give up. I am honored to give back what was so spontaneously given to me. I've heard it said many times that those of us who have service commitments are 90% likely to stay clean and sober. And those of us in the Fellowship that stray away from getting a service commitment are only 40% probable to remain clean and sober. The benefits and rewards in being of service are phenomenal. Displaying brotherly love in the unity of our Fellowship soothes my soul, and helps me to feel better in knowing that I contributed to the welfare of our affiliation. Giving back what was so freely given to me constituted a huge impact in my recovery. I am so grateful to have the opportunity to reveal my experience, strength, and hope.

After having a spiritual awakening as a result of working the 12 Steps, and applying the Spiritual Principles associated with them, I have encountered a pristine, exciting, and rewarding life. Today, I am indebted to all the little events that participated in lifting my spirits, and bringing me to the prominent state of peace, serenity and personal freedom. Today, I can be thankful of the rising sun, and all the beauty that surrounds me. I can observe all the good in people without judging them right from the get-go. I can feel at peace with myself, with my current reality, and state of mind. Today, I am able to unwind and clear my mind as I meditate and reflect upon all the splendid occurrences
in my life. I no longer have to bear with the baggage of my past. No longer does fear and hopelessness cloud my vision. I am not held back by absence of courage and strength. I have the tools necessary to not be deterred by obstructions along the way. I no longer have to analyze how the 12 Steps work because I'm presently knowledgeable from experience that it is simple, and the program has generated extreme progression in the time that I've been involved within it.

The Fellowship of the 12 Step program has become my family. Never before have I found a group of friends that welcomed me with no strings attached. The unity that we parcel out assists each of us to stay clean one more day. The Fellowship loved me until I could learn to love myself. Because of this it has become my goal to be a loyal beneficiary, and to contribute to this program to the best of my capacity.

With confidence I stride into each new day with the intentions to live fully in the moment, and to utilize the Spiritual Principles to continue growing in my daily walk. Daily, I must maintain conscious contact with God in order to completely live in His will for me. I live a humble lifestyle that brings me serenity and peace of mind. Happiness is one of the fruits of the spirit that I have found on my journey in recovery. I can't stress enough the advantages of bestowing kindness, generosity, love, care, support, and service. My past self-centeredness has evolved into God-centeredness, which then initiated a conversion from fear to trust, from shame to gratitude, from frustration to acceptance, from deceitfulness to honesty, from weakness to courage, from powerlessness to control and strength, from hate to love, from sadness to happiness, from chaos to serenity, and from failure to success. These virtues carry me through each day in serenity. Darkness now dissipates from the Light that guides my way. This Light is a soothing presence that is continually with me as I maintain conscious contact with my Higher Power, and as I pray for the knowledge of His Will for me, and the power to carry it out.

Numerous advantages have come my way as I truthfully work this program. I have an extra-heightened sense of strength and courage than no time before. I have an improved presence of self-esteem. I now feel comfortable with myself. I have gained self-acceptance. I can now rise above life's gloominess and anguish. I have a totally new outlook towards life, my involvement therein, and for my ability to understand the spiritual realm, and life in physicality. I can now feel confident in my competence to make good decisions, and the power to carry them out. I would have to write a book to describe the growth process that I have undergone. All of this has been made possible by following the simple guidelines of the 12 Step program.
In closing, let me list once again the Spiritual Principles of the 12 Steps:

1. Honesty
2. Acceptance
3. Surrender
4. Hope
5. Commitment
6. Faith
7. Courage
8. Willingness
9. Humility
10. Unconditional love
11. Perseverance
12. Open-mindedness
13. God-Centeredness
14. Awareness
15. Vigilance
16. Self-discipline
17. Sharing and caring
18. Patience
19. Forgiveness
20. Optimism
21. Selflessness
22. Compassion
23. Consideration
24. Kindness
25. Positive thinking
26. Responsibility
27. Tolerance
28. Trust
29. Unity
30. Gratitude
31. Service

I'm sure there are countless more Spiritual Principles implicated within this program, but the above-mentioned, in my eyes, are the most crucial in achieving greatness in your recovery. I must also make known that the 12
Step program is a spiritual program, not a religious program. Personally, my Higher Power is God; however, agnostics, atheists, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, or whatever you may choose to be your Higher Power is welcome in our Fellowship. May the practice of these Spiritual Principles bring strength, courage, hope, and happiness to your recovery. It does work, and remember, "Easy does it."

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