

PREPARING FOR THE NINTH TRADITION

(Read pp. 172-175 of the "12 & 12")

THE NINTH TRADITION:

"A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."

The two words that describe the ninth tradition in my life are "divine order". When I let go and stop trying to do the organizing and let God show me what to do, "divine order" takes over in my life. Let us ask ourselves the following questions about order in our lives as we prepare for next week:

1. What is the state of my divine order? Do I try to organize myself and others? Do I give orders, or am I suggestive? Am I rigid and over-controlled, or do I allow myself to be spontaneous.
2. Do I try to control order, or am I willing to surrender to God's divine order which is beyond my control and understanding? Can I afford to be spontaneous since God is in charge?
3. Do I try to organize God within the limits of my understandings? Am I open to seemingly unorganized direction if it is God's will for me?
4. Am I driven by a desire to be in control or a desire to give service?

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

THE NINTH TRADITION:

“A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.”

Homework: Writing Inventory on the Ninth Tradition
By Dennis F.

To the world, a tradition that tells us not to be organized looks foolish. Yet, this tradition has led A.A. to be “a society without organization, animated only by the spirit of service – a true fellowship.” (“12 & 12”, Ninth Tradition, p. 175)

I had never encountered a true fellowship before I encountered A.A. meetings. People come to an A.A. meeting to help other people without wanting anything back. The idea that the only way we can have a true fellowship is without organization is a startling idea.

How does this principle, which shows us how to love each other, translate from the A.A. group to the rest of our relationships in life?

If I am willing not to organize myself and others, but to let God do the organizing, I have a chance of developing good relationships.

The two words that describe this tradition to me are “divine order”.

I have been thirsting all my life to be in “divine order”. It is what I really sought when I drank.

The first nine steps delivered us from the bondage of our past experiences with alcohol. We finally arrived at the place where we could say to ourselves, “I have totally faced my past. And there is nothing left in my past that I’m ashamed of. There’s nothing left that hurts anymore. There’s nothing left in my past that’s painful. There’s nothing left in my past I need to forgive or need to be forgiven for. I’m at total oneness and peace with my past.” Well, that’s a tremendous statement to be able to say. That’s an enormous statement for any person to be able to say about their life. And that’s what the first nine steps give us.

Similarly, the first nine traditions deliver me from the bondage of poor relationships with others to a state of divine order with God and you.

Let us recap our growth in carrying out the first nine traditions in all our relationships. Tradition one taught me not to be a loner; I couldn’t survive sober if I did. Tradition two taught me that sanity is seeing God as a loving God; sanity is seeing you as trustworthy, and sanity is seeing myself as a trusted servant. I gave up being hostile to groups. I had to trust

the group conscience to survive. Tradition three taught me that to get a long in my life, the only requirement I had to meet was a desire to stay sober. I had to surrender all other demands on God and others to be happy. Tradition four taught me to seek God's approval and to consult others about decisions affecting them. I gave up people pleasing. Tradition five introduced me to my primary purpose in life: service to the sick and suffering alcoholic is my bond of love with humanity. The sixth tradition taught me to avoid detours from my primary purpose brought about by my pursuit of money, property and prestige. The seventh tradition taught me to be spiritually self-supporting instead with God and my financial needs would be taken care of. The eighth tradition taught me that centered in God; I could have the zeal of a dedicated amateur in carrying the message.

And the ninth tradition assures me that once my ninth step amends have been made, I will be led to that profound place of peace I have always sought in my life: divine order.

The ninth tradition not only contains the secret of divine order but also contains the personal principle that will keep an alcoholic like me in divine order. It is so simple. I give up control. I stop organizing myself. I stop trying to organize God into my limited ideas of order.

The degree of my willingness to let go of organizing life is the degree that God grants me divine order. I can have as much divine order happen to me, as I am willing to stop organizing. After we have the spiritual awakening to function on an intuitive level in our relationship with God, we learn to let go of our ironclad plans and follow the ones our Higher Power gives us.

When I stop fighting the flow of the river, I won't go into the rocks. When I let go, I drift with the divine flow. Life becomes a joy not a struggle.

The degree of my willingness to let go is the degree of opportunity I give to God to place me in divine order. When I am in divine order, I am free to enjoy life. God gets me in divine order, if I am willing to be unorganized.

This does not mean that I don't plan. Being unorganized is not being disorganized. It means that I am able to follow God's plans because I let go of myself. I make long range plans (see the "Ninth Concept of Service") but I only execute them a day at a time.

When I am led by divine order, I don't undertake more than I can handle without undue stress and strain. Nor do I go to the other extreme and avoid my responsibilities in life. I am able to handle challenging assignments God gives me with ease.

I find that when I am following God's order, I stop giving orders. I am suggestive to others just like A.A. is suggestive to me. I can afford to let you make mistakes because I'm not in charge. You have your own Higher Power looking out for you. I give up being rigid and over-controlled and allow myself to be spontaneous to God's will and others.

I find that I am open to seemingly unorganized direction as I surrender to the direction of my Higher Power. My limited ideas of organization open up to the Divine Plan.

The most beautiful blessing that come to me from living in divine order is the freedom I have to be spontaneous because I am not the organizer anymore.

This doesn't mean that A.A. members or groups are irresponsible. We are obedient as only the dying can be: "Unless each A.A. member follows to the best of his ability our Twelve Steps to recovery, he almost certainly signs his own death warrant. His drunkenness and dissolution are not penalties inflicted by people in authority; they result from his personal disobedience to spiritual principles. The same stern threat applies to the group itself. Unless there is approximate conformity to A.A.'s Twelve Traditions, the group, too, can deteriorate and die. So we of A.A. do obey spiritual principles, first because we must, and ultimately because we love the kind of life such obedience brings. Great suffering and great love re A.A.'s disciplinarians: we need no others."¹

It is true that great suffering and great love are our disciplinarians. We need no others. I've often heard the statement made that the only way that we grow is to suffer. That is not true. The way I first became motivated to grow was through suffering from my alcoholism. The actual growth took place through discipline, not through suffering. Suffering led me to make a decision to work a disciplined program so my life would improve.

When this passage talks about personal obedience and personal disobedience, it's talking about discipline. It's saying that when I hurt badly enough I will finally let go of my organized ideas for my happiness and follow A.A.'s ideas to see if they will work for me.

So we get disciplined through writing inventory and making amends and through the rest of the steps, traditions and concepts of service.

Suffering is what gets us to work a disciplines program.

But that is not the only way that we stay surrendered. The way I try to stay surrendered is through love. I become motivated to change out of love in order to carry a better message to the alcoholic who is sick and suffering. God not only loves a cheerful giver, I think he loves a cheerful surrender. Eventually, all of our growth begins to come out of love and none of it comes from suffering, unless we backtrack.

We stop suffering when we obey spiritual principles. There is no longer suffering in my life. Only rarely do I encounter is and that is when I go against something that I know to be right. I'll suffer and then I'll change. But most of my growth is not out of suffering; it's out of being obedient to a loving intuition that comes from a desire to be in divine order.

I find that I become aware of divine order or the lack of it in all areas of my life. I found that there is a divine weight for which God created my body. I can best give service and be an example of divine order when I carry the message if I am also one with my divine weight.

¹ "12 & 12", Ninth Tradition, p. 174

I differentiate between ego weight and divine weight. If vanity is my motive for being this, and if I become thinner than what is right for my body, then I am seeking ego weight. The group conscience begins to speak to me by saying I am looking too thin. I find that I cannot maintain the weight I seek because I crash dieted and did nothing about my spiritual defect of gluttony that lay behind my weight.

I need to admit that my eating life is unmanageable and I am powerless over it (first step), seek sanity by asking a higher power to teach me moderation (second step), and make a decision to turn my weight life and undisciplined will over to the love of God (third step).

I needed to write inventory on my weight defects (fourth step), read it to a spiritually understanding person (fifth step), admit that I can't lose weight by myself (sixth step), humbly ask God to remove my weight and become willing to pray for a spirit of moderation when tempted with gluttony (seventh step), become willing to make amends to God for my self-indulgence (eighth step), and make amends to God for abusing my body and become reconciled to my Maker's plan of divine weight for me (ninth step).

I need to write nightly inventory on difficulties in overeating (tenth step), pray and meditate by visualizing how I can approach my divine weight (eleventh step), and carry this message to other overeaters (twelfth step).

The proper motive in seeking my divine weight is to carry a message of health in sobriety. The proper attitude while losing weight is to be anonymous. I don't take credit for my weight loss but now that is results from the power of my prayer to be one with the divine weight God assigned to me.

I found that I could not become comfortable with my weight until I practiced discipline and moderation in my eating habits and eliminated certain harmful foods from my diet.

Six years ago, I was advised by my doctor that I was a hypoglycemic (most alcoholics are said to be hypoglycemic) and that I should stop smoking, caffeine, white sugar, white flour and not add salt to my food. I had smoked two packs a day for twenty-four years and drank ten to fifteen cups of coffee a day during that time.

I humbly asked God to remove these defects in a seventh step, and He did so. I take no credit. My body was restored to divine order because I worked the steps on these additions.

I was given all the power I needed to withstand the rigors of withdrawal. Withdrawal is a time of getting closer to God – a holy time. It is a time of bonding. I am totally dependent on Him for the strength to endure withdrawal rather than become dependent again on my addictions. It is a time of "Be still and know that I am God." (Ps 46:10)

Lack of power was no longer my dilemma. God gave me, and still gives me all the power I need a day at a time, to practice principles over appetites.

I found that my hypoglycemic condition did not allow me to eat much honey or other sugar substitutes. I could not overeat fruits with heavy natural sugar such as bananas, raisins, grapes and apples. Alcohol is 100 percent sugar, and I had become a sugar addict.

When these eating changes took place in me, I no longer suffered from the sugar induced hangovers that I had in the first two years of sobriety. I found that the depressions I had in those first two years were brought about by coffee and smoking during meetings followed by binging on hot fudge sundaes after meetings.

I recommend to the newcomer that he bring his own herbal tea bags (mild herbal teas don't contain tannin) to meetings and eat fruits rather than white sugar. I don't recommend that the newcomer give up smoking until he gets to his sixth and seventh steps in the program. The newcomer will probably be unable to stop anyway until his program advances to that point.

For further information regarding hypoglycemia, I recommend the paperback, "Hypoglycemia: the disease your doctor won't treat" by Jeraldine Saunders and Dr. Harvey M. Ross, published in 1980 by Pinnacle Books, Inc.

The symptoms of hypoglycemia that I had which are overcome by eating are "confusion and the inability to think straight or to make up one's mind" ("Hypoglycemia" p.38) hunger, craving starchy foods, tremulousness, weakness and fainting.

The symptoms that are longer lasting and are not immediately relieved by eating, which I also had, are fatigue, irritability, depression and withdrawal, and low self-esteem.

I particularly recommend reading Chapter 13 of this book since it is entitled, "The Alcohol Addict". It states that "most alcoholics have a hypoglycemia condition (p. 139).

"Take a tour of almost any facility where alcoholics are 'treated'. There, you will always see a large coffee urn with synthetic cream and refined sugar ever ready to jolt the patients' blood sugar into a false life, only to have it sink again and again and again." (p. 146)

The chapter comments enthusiastically on the work of A.A. but notes that "their members still suffer the pangs of alcoholism even though they are sober because the problem of diet has been neglected. Coffee and doughnuts are usually available at their meetings." (p. 146)

I found that my sense of divine order began with the outer (my appetites) and worked to the inner (lack of patience, tolerance, understanding and love – see p. 188 of the "Big Book").

I no longer need to protect myself from the fear of failure because I don't rely on myself to succeed anymore. I'm not rigid and over prepared. Success in doing God's will is part of God's plan of divine order for me!

Success for me is doing God's will a day at a time. Success is not \$100,000 in the bank. Success is doing God's will. So I have a different definition of success today than I used to have.

Just as we pitch A.A. and don't know what we are going to say until God gives us the words, so we live each moment trusting a divine order to show us what to do.

I can remember thinking in my early years of sobriety in A.A. when asked to pitch, "How can I get up there and talk for a half hour?" I was terrified. Then my sponsor pointed out that nervousness was ego. I was concerned about me and not about carrying the message. A sense of excitement was good though if I prayed to be a tool in what I said. This prayer has always worked for me.

At one meeting I was asked to talk for an hour and a half. The meeting was that long and they wanted me to talk the whole time. So I talked an hour and a half. I had no trouble at all filling up the time. And at the beginning, I thought, "How can I possibly do this? No notes, no nothing." It came from being open to the spirit. I was unorganized so that God could organize me. And it is the same in our relationships with each other. I don't need to plan what I'm going to say to you in order to protect myself from what you might say to me. I can let go of all those games because I'm not the organizer. I can be spontaneous so that I can hear God's voice and mine.

I can have divine order if I am willing to pray for it and surrender to the answer. My best days are the ones when I pray from activity to activity to have my sense of order be one with divine order.

The second half of the ninth tradition tells me that I am directly responsible to those I serve. I don't give orders or organize those I serve. I give up my desire to be in control for a desire to serve. I don't give orders or organize those I serve. I give up my desire to be in control for a desire to serve. I seek a true fellowship in life being directed not by an organized life but by a spirit of service.

How does this ninth tradition relate to the ninth step? My life gets unimpeded flow of divine love in a triangle consisting of you, myself and God.

Whenever the divine order of that relationship is disturbed, I can restore order by making the unmade amend that put my life out of order. The ninth step poses the question, "After making amends, how do I stay reconciled with you today?" The ninth tradition answers that question by implying that I remain in the divine order by not organizing you, myself or God and spontaneously being of service to you and God.

Before we stop now for our three-minute meditation period, I would suggest we examine these ideas. Am I willing to surrender my concept of human order right now for God's divine order? Am I willing to let go of the controls? Am I willing to acknowledge that I have limitations to my understanding of order that don't even approach God's understanding?

You know if God told me eighteen years ago that the only way that I could stay sober and find happiness was by relating with other alcoholics, alanons, overeaters, drug addicts,

gamblers, and neurotics, I would have thought that was one of the weirdest ideas I have ever heard. It can't possibly be true. But here it is eighteen years later, and it is true. It shows me what my super ideas of organization are worth and what God's ideas are worth.

So, am I willing to give up my human understanding of order for God's plan of order? Am I willing to respect my neighbor's pace in his sense of divine order? You have a sense of divine order from your Higher Power. And your pace is different from mine. Am I willing to respect it? Will stop trying to control you? Will I surrender by old ideas and risk new ideas? Will I stop trying to organize my relationships with God, soul mates, and fellow workers? Will I risk just letting it happen?

I want to pray that the ninth tradition becomes a part of my life. My prayer is that I want to trust God more that I may be more spontaneous in following His directions with a loving sense of service. I would like to risk more spontaneity in my life. I would like to be open to spontaneity in my prayer life, especially my prayers of praise, of gratitude. When I'm not holding on or trying to protect any of my plans, then I become open inside to pray and to give praise. I just pray spontaneously. What I want to praise God for is bringing divine order into my life through sobriety. Let us stop now for three minutes of meditation.

(Pause for three minutes of meditation.)

Working a step, tradition, or concept to me means that I am willing to write inventory and allow it to surrender something within me. Let us examine the state of our divine order in our relationships with God, A.A. at home and at work.

HOMEWORK WRITING INVENTORY

1. GOD and A.A.: Am I willing to surrender my concept of human order God's divine order?

Inventory Example – (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: Although I don't say no to an A.A. request I too often have a negative reaction to other requests that are not convenient for me.
- b) What did I do wrong? I control my time too rigidly.
- c) What would God have me do instead the next time? Pray to be more open to hear his voice when others request my help.

2. HOME: Am I willing to respect my neighbors pace and sense of divine order?

Inventory Example – (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: When things aren't just so at home, I get disturbed.
- b) What did I do wrong? I expect my wife to conform to my ideas and order without delay.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray to release to her sense of divine order at her own divine pace.

3. WORK AND OTHER TALENTS (arts, sports, etc.): Will I surrender old rigid ideas and accept new spontaneous ones? Will I stop trying to organize fellow workers into my idea of their order?

Inventory Example – (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I hung on to my old ideas of business solutions because I was afraid to risk my financial welfare behind a new idea.
- b) What did I do wrong? I tried to control my business with an idea.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Dedicate my business to service and surrender to the divine order of God's financial plan, whatever the risk!