

What Is a Psychic Change or Spiritual Transformation?

Entering the Fourth Dimension of Existence

Varieties of Religious Experience by William James:

“To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, **in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.**”

AA Big Book (There Is a Solution):

“Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found much of heaven and **we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of experience of which we had not even dreamed.**”

Transformation by Robert Johnson:

“For most people, the transition from three dimensional to four-dimensional consciousness is exceedingly painful. Medieval Christianity called it the dark night of the soul; Dante called it the journey through hell; it was forty days and forty nights in the desert for Jesus; it was a journey in the belly of the fish for many a hero.

“For a modern man it is midlife crisis or, worse, a nervous breakdown; or still worse, physical suicide. The process can be summed up in one sentence: ***it is the relocating of the center of the personality from the ego to a center greater than one’s self.*** This super-personal center has been variously called the Self, the Christ nature, the Buddha nature, super-consciousness, cosmic consciousness, satori, and samadhi. This relocation appears to be death when viewed from the perspective of the ego. Zen masters observe that satori (their term for a non-personal center of consciousness) can be viewed by the ego as nothing but total disaster. And death it is! The ego loses its supremacy and goes through a short time of violent suffering.

“When someone threatens suicide at this time, I caution him that he must be very careful to do it without harming his body. The relocation of the center of the personality is a form of suicide, and its best done by the ego. ... a Zen master in Los Angeles, once said (to his client) *‘Why don’t you die now and enjoy the rest of your life?’*”

“... When the dark night begins to lift, one morning there is an unaccountable touch of joy in the air....this is the first contact with the four-dimensional consciousness, and one can begin to live from that source of energy. Something of the subtle inner world becomes your center of gravity: poetry, music, a new perceptiveness when you are jogging... Less worthy channels for this new energy are fanaticism, dictatorial religious beliefs, and ego inflations of all kinds. If the new energy flows into such channels, you are quickly sent back...for further boiling in the oil of transformation.”

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HOW TO LISTEN TO GOD

(Reprint of an original Oxford Group Pamphlet from the 1930s that circulated in Akron, Ohio.)

These are a few simple suggestions for people who are willing to make an experiment. You can discover for yourself the most important and practical thing any human being can ever learn-how to be in touch with God.

All that is needed is the willingness to try it honestly. Every person who has done this consistently and sincerely has found that it really works.

Before you begin, look over these fundamental points. They are true and are based on the experience of thousands of people.

1. God is alive. He always has been and He always will be.
2. God knows everything.
3. God can do anything.
4. God can be everywhere-all at the same time. (These are the important differences between God and us human beings.)
5. God is invisible-we can't see Him or touch Him - but God is here. He is with you now. He is beside you. He surrounds you. He fills the room or the whole place where you are now. He is in you now. He is in your heart.
6. God cares very much for you. He is interested in you. He has a plan for your life. He has an answer for every need and problem you face.
7. God will tell you all that you need to know. He will not always tell you all that you want to know.
8. God will help you do anything that He asks you to do.
9. Anyone can be in touch with God, anywhere and at any time, *if the conditions are obeyed*.

These are the conditions:

- To be quiet and still
- To listen
- To be honest about every thought that comes
- To test the thoughts to be sure that they come from God
- To obey

So, with these basic elements as a background, here are specific suggestions on how to listen to God:

1. ***Take Time***

Find some place and time where you can be alone, quiet and undisturbed. Most people have found that the early morning is the best time. Have with you some paper and pen or pencil.

2. ***Relax***

Sit in a comfortable position. Consciously relax all your muscles. Be loose. There is no hurry. There needs to be no strain during these minutes. God cannot get through to us if we are tense and anxious about later responsibilities.

3. ***Tune In***

Open your heart to God. Either silently or aloud, just say to God in a natural way that you would like to find His plan for your life—you want His answer to the problem or situation that you are facing just now. Be definite and specific in your request.

4. ***Listen***

Just be still, quiet, relaxed and open. Let your mind go "loose." Let God do the talking. Thoughts, ideas, and impressions will begin to come into your mind and heart. Be alert and aware and open to everyone.

5. ***Write!***

Here is the important key to the whole process. Write down everything that comes into your mind. ***Everything***. Writing is simply a means of recording so that you can remember later. ***Don't*** sort out or edit your thoughts at this point.

Don't say to yourself:

This thought isn't important;
This is just an ordinary thought;
This can't be guidance;
This isn't nice;
This can't be from God;
This is just me thinking, etc.

Write down everything that passes through your mind:

Names of people;
Things to do;
Things to say;
Things that are wrong and need to be made right.

Write down everything:

Good thoughts - bad thoughts;
Comfortable thoughts - uncomfortable thoughts;
"Holy" thoughts - "unholy" thoughts;
Sensible thoughts - "crazy" thoughts.

Be honest! Write down **everything!** A thought comes quickly, and it escapes even more quickly unless it is captured and put down.

6. *Test*

When the flow of thoughts slows down, stop. Take a good look at what you have written. **Not every thought we have comes from God.** So we need to test our thoughts. Here is where the written record helps us to be able to look at them.

- a) Are these thoughts completely ***honest, pure, unselfish and loving?***
- b) Are these thoughts in line with our duties - to our family- to our country?
- c) Are these thoughts in line with our understanding of the teachings found in our spiritual literature?

7. *Check*

When in doubt and when it is important, what does another person who is living two-way prayer think about this thought or action? More light comes in through two windows than one. Someone else who also wants God's plan for our lives may help us to see more clearly.

Talk over together what you have written. Many people do this. They tell each other what guidance has come. This is the secret of unity. There are always three sides to every question- your side, my side, and the right side. Guidance shows us which is the right side-not who is right, but what is right.

8. *Obey*

Carry out the thoughts that have come. You will only be sure of guidance as you go through it. A rudder will not guide a boat until the boat is moving. As you obey, very often the results will convince you that you are on the right track.

9. *Blocks?*

What if I don't seem to get any definite thoughts? Guidance is as freely available as the air we breathe. If I am not receiving thoughts when I listen, the fault is not God's.

Usually it is because there is something ***I will not do:***

- something wrong in my life that I will not face and make right;
- a habit or indulgence I will not give up.
- a person I will not forgive;
- a wrong relationship in my life I will not give up;
- a restitution I will not make;
- something God has already told me to do that I will not obey.

Check these points and be honest. Then try listening again.

10. *Mistakes*

Supposing I make a mistake and do something in the name of God that isn't right? Of course we make mistakes? We are humans with many faults. However, **God will always honor our sincerity.**

He will work around and through every honest mistake we make. He will help us make it right. **But remember this!** sometimes when we do obey God, someone else may not like it or agree with it. So when there is opposition, it doesn't always mean you have made a mistake. It can mean that the other person doesn't want to know or to do what is right.

Supposing I fail to do something that I have been told and the opportunity to do it passes? There is only one thing to do. Put it right with God. Tell Him you're sorry. Ask Him to forgive you, then accept His forgiveness and begin again. God is our Father-He is not an impersonal computer. He understands us far better than we do.

11. *Results*

We never know what swimming is like until we get down into the water and try. We will never know what it is like until we sincerely try it.

Every person who has tried this honestly finds a wisdom, not their own, comes into their minds and that a Power greater than human power begins to operate in their lives. It is an endless adventure.

There is a way of life, for everyone, everywhere. Anyone can be in touch with the living God, anywhere, anytime, **if we fulfill His conditions.**

*When man listens, God speaks.
When man obeys, God acts.*

This is the law of prayer.

God's plan for this world goes forward through the lives of ordinary people who are willing to be governed by Him.

John E. Batterson

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~ How to Practice Two Way Prayer ~

Preparation:

- **Commit** to practicing a Quiet Time for a minimum of 10 to 20 minutes daily for 30 days.
- **Practice** it each morning. (*Get up earlier if need be. If for any reason you miss a morning, that's OK, simply begin counting the 30-day period over again! If you will do this for 30 days in a row, you'll likely make it a practice for the rest of your life.*)
- **Choose** a sacred space - a quiet place where you can be alone. It should be comfortable and inviting. Reserve it only for prayer, if at all possible.
- **Buy** a notebook to write down your thoughts - have it ready when you begin.

Start:

- **Sit** in a comfortable, upright posture. Remember into whose *Presence* you are entering.
- **Read** a short passage from a source of literature that is sacred to you. Dr. Bob and early A.A. members recommended and began with: the **Sermon on the Mount** found in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, **First Corinthians, Chapter 13** that's known as "The Love Chapter," and finally the **Letter of James**. (*So much of the A.A. program came from this short section of the Bible that A.A. was almost named, "The James Club!"*)
- **Breathe** deeply 2 or 3 times - let go of all tension and worry with each outward breath. (Add any other relaxation techniques, prayers, petitions or practices you find helpful.)
- **Write** a question. **A very honest question that captures your real need.** If you have a problem that's troubling you where you really need God's guidance, briefly write it and ask. *Here are some examples:*
 1. **God**, I've tried getting clean and sober before – please tell me what I need to do that's different this time. (*If you're already sober, look at other addictions or behaviors in your life that have you stuck and ask for guidance with them.*)
 2. **Heavenly Father**, I feel so alone and separated from you and from others, please help me feel your presence.
 3. **Father or Mother God**, I'm withdrawing / isolating again - moving further away from my spouse (or my child). Please tell me what to do.
 4. **Lord Jesus (or Spirit, or My Creator)**, I need your guidance today as I face _____. Please show me the way so I can do your will.
(*Notice the different names being used for God. Choose the name that feels right for you. If you are struggling to find a name, start with "Unknown God" or "God, if you exist."*)
- **Now, write a term of endearment:** "My child" or "My precious" or some other term of endearment that a loving Father-Mother God might use when speaking to their beloved.
- **Listen** for God's Voice. If the connection isn't immediate and words do not come into your mind, use your active imagination, especially when you're first making conscious contact: Say to yourself, "If God were to speak to me this is what God, or Love, or Divine Wisdom might say:" _____
- **Write** the words that come into your mind. Try not to edit them. Only listen and write.
- (*If thoughts come that you think are not from God write them down anyway. Put them in brackets if you like and try to re-focus on listening for God's Voice. In time, you will come to distinguish God's Voice more clearly from the raucous voices of the ego.*)
- **Stop** writing when it becomes strained.
- **Feel** the closeness of God as you experience **conscious contact**.

Following your Guidance:

- **Share** your writings weekly with a sponsor or with another individual who is also doing Two Way Prayer. You may find that their writings contain some particular spiritual guidance for you or yours may for them.
- **Check** your guidance. Does it pass the test? Is it Honest, Pure, Unselfish and Loving?
- **Act** on your guidance – but only if it passes the test – and if it is a major move, check with others who are also listening to God.

SOME HISTORICAL REFERENCES:

- **Dr. Bob and the Good Old-Timers** tells of the 1938 report written by Frank Amos and sent to John D. Rockefeller after he studied the new recovery movement. Amos reported “*The A.A. members of that time did not consider meetings necessary to maintain sobriety. They were simply ‘desirable.’ Morning devotion and ‘quiet time,’ however, were musts.*” (*Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers p.136*)
- Bill Wilson: “*I sort of always felt that something was lost from A.A. when we stopped emphasizing the morning meditation.*” *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers (p. 178)*
- In **Dr. Bob’s last major talk in Detroit, Michigan** in 1948, he identified some of the spiritual principles that kept him and other A.A. Pioneers sober:
“We were convinced that the answer to our problems was in the Good Book. To some of us older ones, the parts that we found absolutely essential were the Sermon on the Mount, the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and the Book of James. ... The Four Absolutes, as we called them, were the only yardsticks we had in the early days, before the Steps. **I think the Absolutes still hold good and can be extremely helpful.** I have found at times that a question arises, and I want to do the right thing, but the answer is not obvious; almost always, if I measure my decision carefully by the yardsticks of *absolute honesty, absolute unselfishness, absolute purity, and absolute love*, and it checks up pretty well with those four, then my answer can't be very far out of the way....”

The Big Book 11th Step instructions encourages us to, “...ask God to direct our thinking” and that “we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought....What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We will come to rely upon it.” (*Big Book p. 87*)

A FINAL NOTE FROM Fr. Bill W.

Sometimes people ask me, “*How do you know it’s really God’s Voice you’re hearing? How do you know it’s not just you?*” My answer is *I really don’t know - and in the end, it really doesn’t matter. If it’s me, it’s the best part of me I’ve ever found and it’s the part I need to start listening to more and more.* It’s the small, still Voice that quiets the raucous “ego voices” of guilt and shame, anger and fear, addiction and self-destruction. Those are voices I’ve known and listened to all of my life. At 20 years sober, it was time for a major change to my program and not just a little tweaking around its edges. What I discovered through Two Way Prayer was yet another Promise of the Big Book coming true: “***When we drew near to Him He discloses Himself to us!***” (*Big Book p. 57*)

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The Four Absolutes in Twelve-Step Recovery - by Fr. Bill W.

History of the Absolutes

A study of AA history reveals that many of its principles and practices came directly from the Oxford Group and especially from the Group's Four Standards of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness, and Love. As AA Co-founder Dr. Bob remarked, "*The Four Absolutes, as we called them, were the only yardsticks we had in the early days, before the Steps.*" He was quick to add, "*I think the Absolutes still hold good and can be extremely helpful. I have found at times that a question arises, and I want to do the right thing, but the answer is not obvious. Almost always, if I measure my decision carefully by the yardsticks of absolute honesty, absolute unselfishness, absolute purity, and absolute love, and it checks up pretty well with those four, then my answer can't be very far out of the way.*" (AA Pamphlet-53, The Co-Founders, p 17.)

AA's Co-founders, along with many of its Pioneer members, found their sobriety within the Oxford Group and Bill Wilson credited the Group with no fewer than ten of the twelve principles and practices he later codified into the famous 12 Steps:

"Where did we learn about moral inventory, amends for harm done, turning our wills and our lives over to God? Where did we learn about meditation and prayer and all the rest of it? The spiritual substance of our remaining ten Steps came straight from Dr. Bob's and my own early association with the Oxford Groups...." (Bill Wilson, The Language of the Heart, p. 298.)

The Four Absolutes first appear in the work of Robert E. Speer, a Presbyterian missionary and scholar who studied the life and teachings of Jesus. Speer concluded that Jesus' own life reflected a set of absolute moral standards that could effectively serve to guide us in determining the course and content of our thoughts, decisions, and actions. Speer grouped these moral guidelines under the headings of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love and they later formed the foundation of the Oxford Group program. When Bill Wilson was asked where the Absolutes could be found in his 12-Step formula, he replied, "*I put them in Steps Six and Seven.*"

(Ernest Kurtz, Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 242-43.)

The Absolutes never became a recognized part of the AA program. In part, this was because AA didn't want to be identified as an off-shoot of the Oxford Group and because Bill Wilson, unlike Dr. Bob, feared the Absolutes would scare off alcoholics by presenting them with unachievably high moral standards they might not be ready to accept. Instead, the Big Book authors chose to focus on the opposites of these standards cautioning us to watch carefully for "*selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear.*"

Understanding the Absolutes

Since Dr. Bob and many of the Akron and Cleveland area Pioneers continued practicing the Absolutes throughout their lives, it might be helpful to examine briefly each of these Four Moral Standards.

- **Absolute Honesty:** "*No lying, no cheating, no stealing; in a word, in all your affairs, simply and absolutely no falsehood.*" This is how one Pioneer based group (Tom Power's All Addicts Anonymous) arrived at a working definition of honesty. "*Is it true or is it false,*" was the question asked in an early pamphlet on the Absolutes commissioned by Dr. Bob and still published by the Cleveland AA Central Office. This moral standard transitioned into the Big Book as our need to practice "*rigorous honesty.*"
- **Absolute Purity:** "*Purity of mind, purity of body, purity of the emotions, purity of heart, sexual purity.*" This Standard rests on an honest examination of our lives in all their dimensions. Regarding motives, decisions, thoughts, and actions, AA Pioneers asked the question, "*Is it right, or is it wrong?*" The Group rarely prohibited particular behaviors; rather, they asked members to consult their own

conscience and follow God's will and guidance for themselves. The founder of the Oxford Group is quoted as saying, ***“Do anything God lets you.”*** (A.J. Russell, *For Sinners Only: The Book of the Oxford Groups*, p.66.)

- **Absolute Unselfishness:** ***“Seeking what is right and true ahead of what I want in every situation.”*** Here the Pioneers asked, ***“How will this affect the other fellow?”*** A.J. Russell, one of the Groups major authors, listed the many destructive forms of self: ***“self-importance,” “self-interest,” “self-pity,” “self-seeking,” “self-consciousness,” “self-indulgence,” “self-centeredness,” “self-sufficiency,” “self-will.”*** The Group proposed a radical but simple solution: Shift from being self-centered to becoming ***“God-centered”*** while being of maximal service to others.
- **Absolute Love:** ***“Loving God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength – loving your neighbor as yourself.”*** In their pamphlet the Pioneers asked, ***“Is it ugly or is it beautiful?”*** They stated, ***“...we have tasted a little, and we are hungry for more.”*** As alcoholics and addicts, we, like the Pioneers, need more of the only thing our souls find satisfying enough to bring meaning, wholeness, and purpose in life we crave. That thing is love, and we have come to know truly that ***“God is love.”***

Using the Absolutes Today

Those of us who have followed in Dr. Bob's footsteps incorporating the Absolutes into our 12-Step Programs, have found these simple Standards to be helpful guides for both simplifying and enriching our Step work while also deepening our intimacy with God and with one another. Like the Pioneers, we make no claims of attaining them, rather, we use them as guideposts toward which we strive for living new lives free from the things that lie at the core of our addictions. For us, they have become powerful transformers of our consciousness, our character, and our conduct. We hope they may be so for you as well. ***Here are just a few of their applications we have found:***

- **Steps Four & Five:** The Pioneers didn't have the set of Big Book instructions for taking inventory. They were simply given four sheets of paper with one Absolute written atop of each as their guide. They were to ask God to show them where they were blocking his presence from entering their lives. They then listened, they wrote, and they shared.
- **Steps Six and Seven:** Focusing on these Four Standards we have built more solid foundations for our 12-Step programs. Knowing that this is where Bill Wilson put the Absolutes has given many of us a wholly new perspective on these two Steps.
- **Step Ten:** We use these Standards to ***“watch”*** our thoughts and actions as we grow daily in mindful awareness. Falling short as we do, we bring our need for strength, direction, and power to God in prayer. As one Pioneer wisely remarked, ***“If we don't watch – we won't know what to pray for.”***
- **Step Eleven:** Through the practice of Two Way Prayer we grow in intimacy with God as we receive our daily Guidance. We record these thoughts in our journals and check them by the test of the Four Standards. If they are not honest, pure, unselfish, and loving, we know they cannot be from God.
- **Step Twelve:** As we grow through an intimate experience of God's love, we lose many of our fears and undergo the deeper psychic change the Big Book says is necessary to overcome addiction. Dr. Bob said, ***“Keep It Simple”*** and we believe applying the Absolutes to our Programs can help us do exactly that.

(For more information visit: www.TwoWayPrayer.org or contact us at: TwoWayPrayer@gmail.com/)