

LivingIntegrated®

FIFTEEN PRACTICES FOR LIVING THE LIFE YOU WANT

11 SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER

IN THIS PRACTICE:

- Why is Spirituality Part of Your Recovery?
- Prayer and How We Think About God
- Learning to Pray
- Practice Eleven Assignment

Go to <https://youtu.be/5NSzArljXcl> now and watch the introductory video for this Practice.

There are an enormous number of books and a great deal of other resources on spirituality and prayer, so the thoughts conveyed in this Practice are not meant to be exhaustive.

The purpose of this Practice, then, is to convey the absolute importance of spirituality and prayer for healthy recovery, offer a few practical ideas and hopefully give you some encouragement toward commitment to growing in this area.

WHY IS SPIRITUALITY A PART OF YOUR RECOVERY?

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Addiction is a disease of the mind and the heart.

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Addiction roots and flourishes in your mind because it utilizes thinking patterns that are flawed, repeated and reinforced. At the same time, it utilizes neurochemical activity that creates a buffering and reward effect. *Sex addiction is a brain disorder.*

Addiction roots and flourishes in your heart as well. You have inadvertently become disconnected from your true identity. You've unintentionally sought to fill that loss with a mal-attachment to your sexuality. *Sex addiction is a spiritual disorder, too.*

Your sexuality is an inherently good thing. But it's designed to play a certain role in your life, and when you or I use it for something other than what it's intended for, no matter what short-term gratification we get from it, it will never fulfill us, never satisfy our deepest needs.

Healthy attachment is meant to help you develop security, identity, acceptance, comfort and the ability to handle the ups and downs of feelings. Ideally healthy attachment comes from being part of a healthy family, and then ultimately in a meaningfully mutual relationship with your Creator.

However, life isn't ideal. For many of us we don't develop healthy attachment. We need help. And a significant part of that help is developing our spirituality. Healthy spirituality helps us correct our unhealthy attachments, false securities and false sense of who we are.

Healthy spirituality helps us form an appropriately genuine identity, develop a secure connection with our Creator and equips us for loving, being loved and serving others. *This is spiritual transformation.*

Healthy spirituality is about you developing your personal relationship with the Source of your life, who is personal, intentional and loving. Healthy recovery from compulsivity is ultimately founded upon and nurtured by your relationship with God.

So in developing the Practice of spirituality, there are three particular disciplines you need to make a part of your ongoing recovery. They are essential to a healthy spirituality and a recovering life of usefulness. They are *prayer, mindfulness and meditation.*

In this Practice we will take up the first of these three, prayer. In the following two Practices we will look at mindfulness and meditation.

PRAYER AND HOW WE THINK ABOUT GOD

Prayer is ongoing conversation with your Father in Heaven over matters of mutual concern.

Let's think about how we talk about God. I just used a very traditional term for our Creator: Father. I don't think there is any language, label or theological system, though, that can adequately express who and what the Divine Being is.

God is a profound mystery. The older we get—if we're half paying attention—the more inscrutable God is. The further down the road of faith we travel, we experience a dual dynamic: we draw closer to God in genuine intimacy and we become increasingly aware of how Other God is.

Stare at the sky on a cloudless night away from the lights of civilization. Ponder the immense array of lights in the night sky. How did this all come about? To Whom does this stunning expanse belong? Is it not overwhelming?

And the same sense of awesomeness can be experienced by scenes of nature on Earth, looking at a great piece of art, falling in love, laughing with a good friend.

The very gifts God gives us are hints that God is so beyond our ability to grasp.

And yet, the Gospel of Jesus tells us that this God invites us to interpersonal intimacy.

Prayer is a profound mystery. It's a conversation in that there is an Entity that is waiting, listening for what you have to say.

And there is a receptor in you that receives—not in the way of human ears do, but listens still.

You may have a very developed pattern of praying. On the other hand, you may be a complete novice, disinterested even. In any case, developing and utilizing prayer in recovery is very important.

LEARNING TO PRAY

Prayer is simple. And yet it's one of the hardest things we learn to do well.

Prayer is using our thinking and voicing to express our best understanding of what's in our heart to the One we recognize as the Source of our heart.

It's an ongoing conversation. It does something in us as we practice it. The conversation of prayer is between us and our Creator and at the same time a mysterious conversation within ourselves as well.

Prayer can be formatted in different ways. There is a nearly inexhaustible amount of writing on how to pray and finding good sources to read about prayer will be helpful. But reading about praying is not the same as doing it, working at it, staying with it.

Set time aside each day to pray. Find a time of day that works best for you and your schedule. Stick with it.

Use texts of scripture to help you think about what to say when you pray. Various psalms, like Psalms 23, 62, and 139, the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:9-13; Lk. 11:2-4), and the prayers in Ephesians 1:16-19 and 3:14-19 are especially helpful models to use to help you to pray.

There are also several prayers in the Recovery movement that I recommend you use. I've found it strategically helpful to memorize the Step Three prayer, the Step Seven prayer and the (entire) Serenity Prayer. The Step prayers are from the Big Book of AA. The Serenity prayer was written by Reinhold Niebuhr in 1932-33, spread rapidly and was popularized through Alcoholics Anonymous and the recovery movement.

These are very useful prayers to help you align your thoughts and your spirit with the goals of recovery and authentic spirituality. Having them memorized makes them available in the moments of life when we're troubled, feeling uncertain or needing to voice what we need.

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*There is no one perfect way to pray. Keep working at it.
Find what works for you.*

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You want, in the words of Step Eleven, to continually develop your “conscious contact” with God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for you and the power to carry that out.

ASSIGNMENT FOR ENGAGING THE ELEVENTH PRACTICE— SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER

1. Read Matthew 6:5-15 and 6:25-7:11; read and re-read and use Christ's teaching on prayer to develop both the form of prayer you use and the content of your praying.
2. Read pp. 154-155 in *Ashamed No More*, "We Do Life with the Spirit."
3. Read Ephesians 1:16-19 and 3:14-19; look at what Paul prays for and use these thoughts to guide how you form some of your own prayers, both for yourself and for others.
4. One approach to prayer many have found helpful is Centering Prayer; spend some time doing an internet search on Centering Prayer and read some entries; try one or two approaches.
5. Look over your schedule and think about your routine; find the best time of day and throughout your week to carve out time to pray .
6. If you're beginning a new routine of praying, start with a manageable time and increase it slowly and methodically until it becomes an essential practice you look forward to.
7. Share with a friend or sponsor what your plan for praying is and periodically tell them how you're doing; keep this up until your daily praying is as natural, routine and life-giving as the other most important things in your life.
8. Read and re-read the three prayers below; consider committing them to memory.
9. I recommend you pray one or all of them every day.

STEP THREE PRAYER

God, I offer myself to you—to build with me and do with me as You will. Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your power, Your love and Your way of life. May I do your will always. Amen.

STEP SEVEN PRAYER

My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray you now remove from me every single defect of character that stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.

THE SERENITY PRAYER

*God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
taking, as Jesus did,
this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it;
trusting that You will make all things right
if I surrender to Your will;
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with You
forever in the next. Amen.*

THREE BIBLE TEXTS FOR SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER

“And he [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.”
Luke 18:1

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

Romans 8:26-27

“And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”

Revelation 5:8

IN THE NEXT PRACTICE,

we will look at mindfulness.

