

Preliminary to the Life on Earth Course

Throughout the Sixth Step¹ we are considering the events of our life in the light of the new awareness we have gained in the discussions about our point of view in the 5th Step. We are exploring all the ways in which thinking makes us behave. Each of us experiment, trying to remove our point of view on our own.

We begin this phase with a vague sense that it *may* be important to take up this practice. We are beginning to see that thinking is not at all who we really are and we are looking at the entire make-up of our old character as false. We are recognizing the origin of harm both to others and to ourselves in our life.

We, who have been sharing this Form, have been for a number of years steadfastly working around a little insidious wrinkle that has turned up in the apparent chronology of this Form. The problem on the surface looks as though it is just semantics or nomenclature, but the resultant outcome is much deeper than semantics.

Now there are groups that are established and meeting weekly to support one another in this segment of the Form. Many call themselves 5th Step Review Groups, but in some of these groups there has been an unyielding insistence to call them "Sixth Step Groups." The net result of this choice of nomenclature is that people misunderstand the *Life on Earth Course* as optional. In reality, a Sixth Step Group is actually attendance at the *Life on Earth Course*.

Being in what they call a "Sixth Step Group," numerically looks correct. We have Five, Six, Seven, etc. If we were to call these groups by their proper name, that of calling the *Life on Earth Course* the Sixth Step Group, then we would have an obvious hole in the progression of the Form when someone missed the course. It would be very difficult to jump from a 5th Step Review Group, to the 7th Step, not having attended the *Life on Earth Course*.

During this point in the Twelve Steps we are becoming aware of our old character as a false character and that it is actually distinct from who we really are. Control is the underlying issue of this persona. The upper most issue of the false character is, "Whose gonna control me?"

¹The Twelve Steps, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, First edition, p. 71, 72

We are contemplating life without the old strategies, replaced by whatever God deems to be necessary for us. The disappearance of the old character, and not having it to use any longer is the work to be done in the next step. The outcome of the 7th Step is the faith that our Creator will provide all the next moments of our life in an appropriate way and to live seeing the perfection of the moment.

If we are truly going to leave our life in the care of God, we will not have more of the same personality coming through dressed with a finer polish. We are going to have to assume a new stance. This stance is characterized by the *willingness* to investigate both our false character, and any new ideas and attitudes.

During this time we become willing to watch our reactions to life and we become alert to what we think. Life from this point is watching the point of view that comes to us first, and deciding the appropriate behavior and point of view.

Our old beliefs are threatened by everything. The idea of living life run by a Higher Power is certainly threatening enough by itself, but the old thinking will be threatened by other people and groups as well.

Remaining in control is the ultimate coup of the point of view, even fooling those of us who profess a deep belief in God. Professing this God belief to ourselves and those around us, and still staying in control *is* prominent to the false character. If we have a very tight fist grip on the oar of the canoe to make sure life works the way we want, the ego, or false character, stays in control.

One can profess love for God, but the proof is in how we live the moments of our life. Whose hand is gripped tightly on the "control" oar? If we are still trying to run the show, then we are really not in God's hands, are we?

Ultimately what our false character is doing is absorbing all the information that we are given. It wants to look good to those around us. It doesn't want any trouble. It just prefers to stay in control.

Before now, the idea of being ready to have God intervene on our point of view is utterly absurd. The false character figures it'll work it out. It's smart. It pays attention. It uses everything. It charms us and unceasingly trains everybody around us, usually with success.

"Does a person have to commit to being at the *ALife on Earth Course*® for the full 15 weeks?" This is a question that is often asked. We sometimes wonder what motivates this question. We suspect this motivation to be the old character itself, but let us take a further look.

Commitment is not entrapment. Commitment is used throughout this Form as a tool. Sometimes our commitment gets us to actually carry through each phase of the Twelve Steps. We use it in our 4th Step, in the event writing as an important way to discover our thinking. The use of commitment is different as we progress in the Form. Giving our word and the way we operate, having given our word, is always a measure of integrity. In this phase of the Form we use commitment

again to express our intention and to make it work for us.

Commitment for a 16-week course, is understandably a bit difficult for anyone to do. We have our dreams and our life to live. You may not know where you are going to be sixteen weeks from now. Maybe you will be on vacation with your grandmother.

Your commitment to this course is so that you can tell in advance, "Yes. I want to get the material of this course. One way or another, I'm gonna to do it. If granny calls me during the third week and invites me to Wisconsin for the 8th Week, I can make that work too. I go to the course and tell them I'm going to be visiting my grandmother for four weeks and I'll stay in communication and I'm going to listen to tapes of the course or read the material. When I come back I'll be up to speed with the rest of the course.@"

In this course we look at the mischief we bring to commitment. The definition of commitment is usually entrapment, or *loss of control*. Remember, "The Big C," the word ~~>Control~~ for the Sixth Step.

So, here we have hoards of potential course attendees sometimes agonizing over commitment. The course hasn't even started yet. Each of us does this mind wrangling in our own personal style.

This mischief or any mischief is perfectly in line with anything we commit ourselves to. Therefore, it usually comes as a prelude to the course. In the first week we look at the premise, "We have a character that brings an *enormous* amount of mischief to *everything* we commit ourselves to." So, we begin to see just what the word "enormous" means.

We do not use commitment as a police measure, patrolling people. We are becoming responsible now. It is important for people to be developing a sensitivity on their own to their own integrity at this point in the Form. It is important for each of us to be listening to right and wrong as our heart speaks.

No place in the *Life on Earth* Course do we say that you *HAVE TO* actually be there to fulfill this sixteen-week "commitment." That is another element of mischief that has been brought to the course. Life happens, and our sneaky false character happens too. At the level of becoming ready for our false character to go, we begin to notice the difference between life and our sneaky thinking. From here on out in life, we are developing a greater ability to be watching our life and our character with prudent attention. We are developing the ability to choose the most esteem-able behavior. We are choosing the best that we can be. This is life on earth lived at the level of enlightenment.

When we are sneaky, we correct our behavior. If we do not correct our behavior with a little time, our guide, or the people around us, are there noticing what we are doing.

Use your commitment, your word, in any way you can to get through these steps. The most important thing is to continue to progress through the steps. Commitment is a wonderful tool. It weights things we want on the side of our

integrity.

Commitment is like praying out loud. It is stating our intention specifically so that others can hear it and so we can hear it ourselves. Giving our word is not just for the times that we might forget our commitment, but also a detector of our false character, when we get especially slippery. Use it in your attendance of the *Life on Earth* Course. Use it in getting your reviewing done.

Further on, amends are an area where you can use commitment to make them happen. No matter where you are at in this form, commitment is a wonderful tool.

The two books you will need access to for this course are *Being And Time*, by Martin Heidegger, and *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, by Albert Camus.

This course is available to buy on diskette. The total is \$75 plus shipping. Allow 2-4 weeks for delivery. Proceeds go toward sharing our experience of the Twelve Steps using the Step Group Form.

Tuition for this course is \$75 per person. If necessary, you may pay \$5.00 per week, and pay any balance to pay your total of \$75 before the 16 weeks are complete. This money supports furthering the work of The Step Group Form. It is the single most support for this work. By the time you get to the Sixth Step in this Form we feel it is healthy to begin to support that which has supported you.

We ask you to appoint a Treasurer now, at this session, who will collect either the total tuition or the weekly sum from each of you, and keep an accurate record of how much each person has paid and is willing to collect what is owed. This person will send any money collected to the international office weekly. Please take time to do select this person now.

If you need to pay rent for your room, or have printing costs of any kind, please pass a separate collection basket for that specific purpose.

Finally, here is a ten minute exercise we would like you to try right now to demonstrate one of the premises we will cover in our first session: If you are reading this alone, find a place to sit for ten minutes without any interruption. If you are here now, sit quietly and close your eyes. This is only ten minutes, and well worth the effort. Do not do anything else until you have done this simple exercise:

Quiet yourself and relax. Relax your shoulders, your face, all your body parts, and your mind. Free your mind of contemplation, dreams, worry, stress, tension and thoughts. Do not make any plans and do not fall asleep. Now, just let yourself be carried along for the next ten minutes.

Do not read on or do anything else until you have done this. Now, go ahead and do this exercise.

Take a moment to do this and then return to this text.

Did you do it?

OK. Now, look at what you experienced.

We want you to look at the distractions and noise you found inside your head during this small period of time. Look at the directions, suggestions, or commentary. Look at rationalizations, instructions on behavior, judgments about people, or judgments about this exercise. One minute your head is telling you to sit quietly, and the next minute it is saying, get up and do something. The next moment it is telling you this is so difficult. The next moment it is focusing on a body sensation. If you are doing this alone, perhaps you didn't even make it the full ten minutes.

In our first session of the course we will present two premises for your consideration. One of them is:

Who we are is totally filled by what we know already.

All that noise and clamoring you found in your head during that ten minute exercise is what is running your life. It is always running your life.

The outcome of all this work is freedom. We want to be clear about this freedom. We are talking about freedom from this stuff. Freedom from being engulfed, overwhelmed and full of that which we already know.

We want you to think about your experience during this simple exercise in relation to this premise.

Our commitment is that no one find the 12-Steps, walk away and die. They can find the life-transforming miracle they are looking for through the beauty of the Twelve Steps. This is the principle the International Step Foundation stands upon as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) public educational charity.

We serve two categories of people: those in 12-Step programs wishing a clearer understanding of the Twelve Steps as an enhancement to their 12-Step program, and those people who are sincerely interested in changing their life and altering their current course of existence. For both groups we offer clear and understandable input and suggestions for embracing the Twelve Steps as a way of life.

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