

A spiritual path through survivorship

All of us have had those turning points in our lives; there was the time when my father asked me if I had ever considered becoming a minister.

There was the moment when Rita accepted my proposal for marriage.

There was the day when Dr. Leipold told me that I was hired. (He was the founder of Valley Hope.)

Then there was the day after I had been diagnosed when Dr. Hartley said, "Preacher you had better practice what you preach."

I knew what I preached but I was not really sure what I believed.

I asked myself 2 questions"

1. What do I believe—*Really!*?

2. Why do I believe it?

I really believe in the first 3 Steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous program.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and that our lives had become unmanageable.

2. We came to believe that a Power Greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to God as we understood him.

These 3 Steps form the spiritual foundation for recovery from alcoholism and other addictions. Cancer is not an addiction.

On the other hand I am certainly powerless over cancer and I was certainly no longer managing my own life. I was no longer "in charge."

Wm. James, in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, recounts many different religious experiences. The religious experiences, though many and varied, have one thing in common. They all begin with crisis.

My life was in crisis. My back was to the wall. I needed a Greater Power and that Power was for me God.

I made the conscious choice to turn my will and life over to God. And each day after that I made the conscious choice to turn my will and life over to the care of God for that day.

These 3 Steps can be short handed

1. I can't.
2. God can.
3. I'll let Him.

The first 3 Steps, I can't, God can, I'll let Him have to do with surrender.

In order to fully understand this notion of surrender we need to take a moment and look at what happens to an alcoholic or addict when he or she recovers.

Dr. Harry Tiebout was a psychiatrist who investigated recovery from alcoholism in the mid 1950s. He discovered that some alcoholics who attend A. A.

The 12 Steps

Bob Speer

recover from alcoholism while others who attend A.A. do not. He questioned the difference between alcoholics who recover and alcoholics who do not. He found that the alcoholics who recovered had surrendered while those who did not recover had not surrendered.

In the mid 1990s as a part of a Master's Degree I did further research on this idea of surrender and I found that alcoholics who recovered surrendered to being an alcoholic, surrendered to God, and surrendered to life on life's terms.

If I was going to follow the spiritual path of the 12 Steps through survivorship it seemed to me that the first thing I would have to do was to surrender. All the literature I read told me that if I wanted to survive I would have to *fight the cancer*. My intuition and all that I had learned from the A. A. program, told me that I would have to surrender.

I talked with many recovering people about surrender. I had done research on it but I was not sure that I really understood what it meant.

I discovered that surrender and giving up are not the same thing. In fact surrender is the opposite of giving up.

When one surrenders to cancer he or she *accepts* the cancer.

He or she makes the decision daily to do everything that can be done to recover from the cancer.

I was talking about this with a patient. I was trying to explain surrender to her. She said "It sounds to me like you *embrace* the disease."

I was to have a portion of my colon removed. That surgery took place here in this hospital. Dr. Ben did the surgery. For reasons which I am not sure that I fully understand I became convinced that I would not live through the surgery. In fact I believed I would die.

It was at this point that I began to understand what it means to surrender to God. It was my decision to have the surgery. It was His decision whether I would live or die. When I turned that decision over to Him, I began to experience peace and I began to understand that the Spiritual Path through Recovery, is the path of peace. When I was really able to "let go" I was able to live peacefully.

The third kind of surrender is surrender to life on life's terms. I found that the way I make myself miserable is by wanting life to be different than it is and by wanting more than I have. When I quit fighting the cancer and accepted that I already have what I need I learned I could live in peace.

Step 4, We took a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step 5, We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another person the exact nature of our wrongs.

Step 6; We were entirely ready to have God remove our defects of character

Step 7; We humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

I sat down and made a list of all the things I had done that I was guilty about. This list was not long but it was potent.

I decided that the one person in town whom I trusted to hear my Fifth Step was Father Vince, the Catholic priest. I shared with him everything that I had done that I felt guilty about. When I finished he took my hands, looked me in the eye and said "You are forgiven." For perhaps the first time in my life, I know what it meant to be forgiven.

Step 7; We made a list of all the people we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

I went to my wife and to each of my children and made amends. Perhaps the most difficult was with my son, our youngest child. At the time he was in the Coast Guard and stationed in California. We flew out there. On the appointed day he was graduating from a school. He looked very sharp in his Coast Guard Uniform.

I made the amends and when I was done he responded. I heard him say, "There is nothing that can be done." I was devastated. I tried to make amends and he did not accept my effort. Years later I told Rita about the pain I experienced over that. She told me that I had misunderstood him. He said there was nothing that NEEDED to be done.

Step 10: We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Cancer has taught me that procrastination is deadly. When I made a mistake I go to the individual and I tell them.

Step 11: We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.

There is not a day goes by that I am not aware of cancer. I am in remission but I am not cured. I am more aware of my total dependence on God today than I have ever been. I work the first 3 Steps every morning. I thank God that I woke up every day.

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

I found in the 12 Steps a way of life that works. I am sure that I am here today in large measure because of the 12 Steps. My own attempt to carry the message is in this group. I had to give something back.

In order to follow the 12 Steps, Dr. Bob, one of the founders of A. A. suggested that we must do 3 things:

1. Trust God
2. Clean House
3. Help Others

(Bob Speer is a resident of Norton)

Damage

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the Norton Correctional Facility. Karolyn Kingham, nine miles northwest of Norton, reported 1.20 inches of rain with pea sized hail, "maybe even nickel size." She said damage was limited.

In Norton, one and three-quarter inch sized hail hit at 7:26 p.m. and at 7:50 p.m.

American Family Customer Service Representative Stan McEvoy said hail damage was reported on homes, but most reports have

been for vehicles, boats and campers.

"The phones have been busy," he said.

He said it was too early to tell how many claims will be reported.

State Farm Secretary Sandy Schultz said there have been an estimated 20 car claims and an estimated 20 house claims. She said someone reported cracked concrete from hail damage.

David Davis, Boxler Insurance

agent, said he has had an estimated 25 claims, mostly from people who were at the lake or golf course during the storm.

Insurance adjusters will be coming out to review damage, he said.

There were also 70 mile-per-hour winds nine miles east of Edmond at 8:34 p.m.

No tornados were reported in Norton County, but two tornados were reported 13 miles southeast of Gove.

Big dollars for college at Colby

Colby Community College President Lynn Kreider said the college has been awarded a nearly \$2 million grant from the United States Department of Education. Over the next five years, Colby Community College will receive \$1,971,695 for the purpose of increasing enrollment by developing a distance learning network for rural, place-bound students.

"Being awarded the Title III grant signals the U.S. Department of Education's belief that Colby Community College is essential to the economic well-being of northwest Kansas," said Kreider.

"The grant will assist in achieving our goals of improving and strengthening academic quality, institutional management and fiscal stability of the college. I would like to thank Senator Sam Brownback, Washington staff member LaRochelle Young, and Dennis Mesa, regional director for the Senator, for their assistance in securing this significant grant."

Colby Community College has been actively pursuing the Title III grant funds to address three institutional challenges. Those identified include demographic declining enrollment that threat-

ens institutional stability; limited resources that prohibit expansion to accommodate distance delivery of coursework; and inadequate revenue sources for the development and expansion of distance delivery technology and support services. With the grant, Colby Community College will initiate the development of distance delivery coursework in high-demand courses and programs, create online student support services, strengthen infrastructure to accommodate increased volume of distance courses, and faculty/staff development.



Hays Medical Center Introduces Nephrology Center of Western Kansas

Johanna L. McCullagh, MD

Johanna L. McCullagh, MD Dr. McCullagh completed her medical education at The University of Kansas School of Medicine in Kansas City, KS. She completed her fellowship in Nephrology and Hypertension and residency in Internal Medicine both at the University of Kansas Medical Center.

The Nephrology Center will provide services locally for patients with:

- Kidney Failure
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HaysMedicalCenter

Idol

(Continued from Page 1)

Mr. Leiker said he works as a quality control technician for Mill Tech. He said he loves his job and is enjoying living in Norton.

"I've fallen in love with the pace of Norton," Mr. Leiker said.

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