

Steps for Spiritual Growth Book of James

In Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, we read a story about “a man we'll call ‘Victor’, a former mayor of Akron, and a lady we'll call ‘Lil’, who was the first woman to seek help. Together, Victor and Lil started out to write the "thirteenth step," long before the first twelve were ever thought of. What is more, they say it began in Dr. Bob's office, on his examination table, while he was at the City Club engaged in his Monday-night bridge game”. (If you need further explanation, ask Pastor Gene) Dr. Bob was leery of anything to do with women alcoholics for a long time thereafter, although he still tried to help as best he could with any who came along. And Bill Wilson, speaking with Sue Windows in the 1950's, recalled how they all were scandalized by the episode (referring to the events with Lil and Victor). "As drunks, I don't know why we should have been," Bill said. "But we felt that the performance of some of those early people coming in would disrupt us entirely. -- ["Lil"], I guess, was absolutely the first woman we ever dealt with." Bill thought Lil never made it, but Sue said that she straightened out after a few years, got married, and had children. Only it wasn't in the A.A. program that Lil recovered. That was a lesson, too: A.A. isn't the answer for everyone. (Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, pg# 97-98)

On pg# 128-131, in Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, we read about the program Dr. Bob had developed and implemented in the Akron group before the 12 Steps had been put together. These were forerunners of the 12 Steps. The 3rd principle of his program reads,

“Not only must he want to stop drinking permanently, he must remove from his life other sins, such as hatred, adultery, and others which frequently accompany alcoholism.”

This sounds a lot like Step 4, 5, 6, and 7, which read...

Step 4 - Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step 5 - Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Step 6 - Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Step 7 - Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

In James 2:8-11, we read...

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁽⁹⁾ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ⁽¹⁰⁾ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ⁽¹¹⁾ For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

James is dealing with obeying God's Word in all the areas of your life. Of loving others, doing what is right and now showing favoritism. He uses the illustration of adultery and murder to get his point across. In vs.11, when James says, “for he who said”, he is referring to God. God said in the Ten Commandments do not commit adultery and do not murder (Exodus 20).

Tonight we will deal with the concept of **Removing Sinful Behavior From Our Lives.**

Remember principle 3 of Dr. Bob's early program was ... “Not only must he want to stop drinking permanently, he must remove from his life other sins, such as hatred, adultery, and others which frequently accompany alcoholism.” And, Steps 4, 5, 6, and 7, deal with taking a fearless moral inventory, admitting the exact nature of our wrongs, being ready and asking God to remove our defects of character and shortcomings.

The passages we will look at tonight will deal with our responsibility in removing sinful behavior from our lives. We work in cooperation with God to see this work in our lives.

Matthew 7:1-5 (NIV)

^(7:1) "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ⁽²⁾ For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ⁽³⁾ "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁽⁴⁾ How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁽⁵⁾ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Ephesians 4:29-32 (NIV)

^(4:29) Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ⁽³⁰⁾ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ⁽³¹⁾ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ⁽³²⁾ Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 5:3-5 (NIV)

^(5:3) But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁽⁴⁾ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁽⁵⁾ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Galatians 5:19-21 (NIV)

^(5:19) The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ⁽²⁰⁾ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ⁽²¹⁾ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Colossians 3:5-10 (NIV)

^(3:5) Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁽⁶⁾ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁽⁷⁾ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁽⁸⁾ But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁽⁹⁾ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ⁽¹⁰⁾ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

James 1:19-21 (NIV)

^(1:19) My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ⁽²⁰⁾ for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. ⁽²¹⁾ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

^(12:1) Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ⁽²⁾ Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ⁽³⁾ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.