

The U.S.A. and the Twelve Steps

9/11/01, 7:00 am - phone call from my daughter, "Dad, I just got a call from Steph! Could this be the end? Turn on your TV, they just blew up the World Trade Towers in New York!" I had a ton of questions, but sat stunned at what I was watching: not one hijacking, but four; not one massive act of terrorism against the United States, but three - just unbelievable! Just watching on TV was painfully unbelievable to a point that I can't even imagine what it would have been like to be there - sights, smells, sounds that boggle the mind. I watched like most of the world all that day and night, prayed so much that by the next day I felt emotionally drained and prayerfully spent. Day Two, I watched a little more, heard the astounding statistics, and left the TV on just in case there was more news I needed to hear. I started to pray, when something in my spirit clicked, and I started to meditate on the whole picture, and visualized the Twelve Steps of Recovery. Pretty bizarre - I think so!

Step 1 - We admitted we were powerless--that our lives had become unmanageable. When I turned on the TV after the call from my daughter, I don't believe I have ever felt so powerless. I could not stop what had already happened, and could not even reach out and give a hug or a word of encouragement. As much as that hurt, I still had to check out my emotions (as most of you know, I am a pretty emotional man), but somehow by the second day I had some real peace and clarity. I knew that was from the Lord, because I could not afford to be overly emotional, as the phones would be ringing, and I would need every ounce of composure and wisdom from Him as I sought to comfort troubled souls. Here come the Twelve Steps again - I had to examine myself to see if this kind of empty feeling was that word we know so well, "denial"? After some precious searching with God, then came Step 2 -- Step 2 - Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. I was not in denial! I was not confused or disillusioned about anything. What I had observed was no less than total INSANITY perpetrated on an unsuspecting people, an absolutely unconscionable act! My finite mind could not sort it all out at the time, so I decided to trust that my Higher Power Jesus Christ could make this insanity sane!

Step 3 - Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God. Step Three just seemed to fall in place as I gathered all my loose thoughts, rage, bitterness, brokenness, hate, anger and confusion, and made a decision to turn my will and emotions over to the care of God. Oh, how I thank Him that He is always there to comfort His saints when we allow Him to do so (that takes surrender - complete surrender to God). Since I had committed my entire mind, will and emotions (soul) into His hands, He was able to speak to my spirit and soul and broaden the horizon, if you will. Oh, no! Here comes Step Four --

Step 4 - Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. The broadened horizon had me thinking of the United States of America, and I wondered how long it has been since our country has made a searching and fearless moral inventory of itself? In recovery, when we examine why something might be going wrong in our lives, we admit it could be because of the chastening of the Lord (i.e., a "trip to the woodshed" or a "God shot"). Could this be just that for the USA? Could it be that the USA has become complacent, not even holding its morals in check, and tolerating every kind of perversion? Most of our Founding Fathers were God-fearing (reverencing) men, and even if not all of them were Christians, I believe God has truly "shed His grace" on the USA, and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. I truly believe that if the United States takes a thorough moral inventory, it will find, just as we did, places of shame, pain and where it must take blame.

Step 5 - Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. It is also extremely important that the free people of the United States cry out to God for forgiveness. We have become a people who worship the creation more than the

Creator. If we as a people will examine ourselves, then God will not have to judge us as guilty. In doing the 4th Step inventory and confessing it in the 5th Step, we must confess to all known sins of commission and omission: being prideful or arrogant, taking prayer out of our schools, and so on. We as a nation have thrown out God with the trash! We have allowed the ACLU (Anti-Christ Lunatic Union?) to take to court every godly issue, and to remove all reminders of God, Christ and His commandments from our public buildings and property. These are all huge mountains to overcome, and that bring us to Steps Six and Seven --

Steps 6 & 7 - Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. As we look at our character defects that have come up in the inventory, as Christians we must do all we can to make a stand for what is right by committing ourselves to the Father and His word. It will take absolute honesty and humility to admit our character defects and be willing for God to remove them. By seeking God's wisdom in what we do, and looking at things that are not so pleasing to Him, we come to Steps Eight and Nine --

Steps 8 & 9 - Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. In our making amends, this would include ways we have voted (or not voted), or issues we have supported which might be contrary to the Lord's wishes. In making direct amends, the Number One person on our list should be God Himself! We must come to our heavenly Father with an attitude of repentance and a commitment to listen to His Holy Spirit, read His word, and talk to Him before making any major decisions concerning our government, morals, and freedom. Remember, the Bible admonishes us to "abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thess. 5:22).

Step 10 - Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. We as well as the United States must continue to take personal inventory, and when we, or we as a nation, are wrong, promptly admit it. Yes, Christian, it is time to stand up for what is right, having on the whole armor of God, and standing as a soldier for Christ! We as a people cannot afford to be the silent majority any longer. Time is running out - "soon this life will be past, and only what's done for Christ will last"!

Step 11 - Sought Through Prayer and Meditation to Improve Our Conscious Contact with God, Praying Only for Knowledge of His Will for Us and the Power to Carry That Out. Now for the sweetest Step of all, Step Eleven. We need to pray, pray, pray for our country! Our conscious contact with God is having an attitude of prayer at all times (pray without ceasing, I Thess. 5:17). This allows a path between the Holy Spirit and our soul (mind, will and emotions), and a communication line by which we can know the mind and will of God. Of course, we must feed on His word for nutrients, strength, and power to march forward as a soldier of Jesus Christ. Remember, we must keep moving forward, so that we are not an easy prey for our enemy (I Peter 5:8, "...the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Also, II Timothy 2:4 says "No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who enlisted him as a soldier." My beloved, one of the ploys of Satan is to get us so wrapped up in things of this world, that we forget about laying up our treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21). We are in the world, but not belonging to this world. Our destination is a supernatural world, because since conversion to Christ, we are a supernatural creation through the new birth. Thank You, Lord! Well now, my brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, we come to the diamond or precious stone of the Twelve Steps, and that is Step 12.

Step 12 - Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs. We must be clean as individuals and as a nation if we are going to carry any kind of message of hope to others. As Christians, we must be "always ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with humility and reverence" (I Peter 3:15). The good news that we want to share with a hurting world is "For God so LOVED the world that He

gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not PERISH but have EVERLASTING LIFE. For God did NOT send His Son into the world to CONDEMN the world, but that the world through Him might be SAVED." (John 3:16-17). How about shouting that message throughout this nation, and insisting that this nation shout it to the world? Oh, I know, this people and nation do more than any other on earth, but this is personal -- what has been your part, have you done all you can?

Our gracious God does not change - His word stays the same forever. But as I said earlier, this is my meditation on the events of 9/11/01, as seen one day later, 9/12/01, and that somehow it led me through the Twelve Steps. The weird thing is that I thought of the steps not so much as they applied to us as individuals, but for us as a nation. God tells us so clearly in His word, II Chronicles 7:14, "If My people, who are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." Wow! What a God, and how He loves His people. Yes, the Creator of heaven and earth gave to us and our nation a promise in 971-931 BC, during the reign of King Solomon. Solomon is also speaking in I Kings 9:3-7, and though we know these Old Testament promises were made to Israel, the principles apply to us as well. As I mentioned earlier, we Christians are in a battle, and we must know that it is close to "zero hour" and the devil knows his time is running out. God's word says in Ephesians 6:10-13, "Finally, my brethren, be STRONG in the LORD, and in the power of His MIGHT. Put on the whole ARMOR of God, that you may be able to STAND AGAINST the wiles (tricks) of the DEVIL. For we do NOT wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (demonic forces in the atmosphere). Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having DONE ALL, to stand."

Finally, if you are reading this, and you don't know for sure where you stand in all this, you can know today. John 1:12 says, "But as many as **RECEIVED Him (Jesus)** , to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to those who believe in His name." Matthew 7:21-23 says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonderful works in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" Don't rely on religion or membership in a church, but **be absolutely sure that you KNOW Jesus Christ** personally, and have received Him as your Savior. I John 5:13, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God; that you may KNOW that you HAVE ETERNAL LIFE."