Today we come to the end of our series on Spiritual Recovery. I hope that it has been made clear to you that these steps are not easy passed through and accomplished. The 12 steps of Spiritual Recovery are to be repeated over and over again. Even if today we stand in this room at the height of our spiritual experience and understanding, there will be a day for each of us in which we find ourselves powerless and our life has become unmanageable. It might be in the hospital room, it might be at your workplace, in might be right after that phone call that has rocked you to your very core. It is at these times that we need to to believe that there is a power greater than us to lead us into sanity. It is in those dark valleys that we need to make the decision, once again, to turn our lives and our wills over to the care of God. And as our heads are lifted up, we need to take stock and remember who we are and whose we are.

We admit our wrongs where we need to and we make amends to whom we can. We do not do this haphazardly, but intentionally. Working for clarity about our own actions and, with honesty and respect, we strive to live in genuine and authentic ways with other people.

This is not a side project, it is a lifelong goal of growing into a better, more emotionally and spiritually healthy person. We do this by continuing to take personal inventory and admit our wrongs when we are wrong. We do this by seeking God’s will and maintaining a close relationship with God.

We do this by working the 12th step:

Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we try to carry this message to others and practice these principles in all our affairs.

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Someone asked once, “How do I know when I really have faith?” The answer: “When it costs you something.”

All along the twelve steps the costs of health and honesty begin to ramp up. Yet even as we make amends with people and strive to behave well, the real costs are found in step 12. This is where the real test is. We cannot begin to share what God has done with us unless God has actually done something with us. This is the outward sign of an inward change. Are we ready to share this message with others?

A word of advice from the AA community: carry the message, don't carry the body. if we were to try to rescue every drunk we came across we would find that in our ‘rescuing’ we were actually harming. Someone who has their bills paid, their anger placated, and their slanderous talk attended to does not have to experience powerlessness and therefore is deprived of working the first step.

We are called to carry the message to others. As Christians this is important to remember, especially in light of the way some Christians have chosen to engage in evangelism. We are not called to force our faith on anyone. We are not called to think too highly of ourselves and look down upon people who do not believe or act like us. We are to become genuine and authentic people in Christ and develop genuine and authentic relationships with others. With relationships like these we can naturally and safely share who we are with people. We are not co-dependently carrying people, we are carrying the message.

The message is the Gospel and that can be shared in many ways. As Christians we need to work at developing our proclamation in as many ways as we can. Here are three specific ways.

We carry the message by sharing ideas.

Theology and spiritual thinking is worthy of sharing. In fact, it is necessary for anyone to have meaningful spiritual growth. But without other ways to buttresses this method we can very easily stifle the Spirit in young believer’s lives. In any theological conversation we need to be open to hearing as much and speaking. We need to have a gracious attitude. We also need to be willing to say, I don’t know, and be honest with our own journey.

We carry the message by serving the world.

Many of us latch on to this easily enough. It is good to share some of what we have and to work toward making other people’s lives better. This is very good. However, Jesus said that we will always have the poor. There will always be another mouth to feed. We need to find ways to feed mouths and hearts. This is a the core of carrying the body versus carrying the message. We want to bring life, that means we proclaim the gospel by serving others and we are able to clearly articulate why we serve.

We carry the message by sharing our story.

This carry method is different from the other two. It is not simply sharing ideas. It is not simply sharing bread. It is being genuine and authentic with another in such a way that Jesus becomes real to them. This happens best when we incorporate our theology and our service with our experience. We know who God is and what he is all about, we listen to the Spirit and serve and we walk daily with Jesus.

Have you ever wondered why our church is named First Presbyterian Church of Fenton? This is the most popular name for Presbyterian Churches of our denomination in the country. It could be thought that we use this name because we were the first Presbyterians to arrive in any particular town. This is not true. The reason that we use the title ‘First’ is because we should be working at building the Second Presbyterian Church of Fenton and the third and the fourth. If we are to grow up in Christ, we need to discover how we might carry this message to others who need to hear it, so that they might experience the same new life and joy that we do.

How do we do this? Work the steps. Which step are you on? It might be that you don’t know yourself to be powerless and you don’t believe that God can restore us to sanity. If that is the case, you are excused from working the 12th step. You aren’t there yet and that is ok. However don’t sell yourself short. Take stock and discover where you are and work the step you are on.

But I’m stuck, how do I get my spiritual life kicked into gear? How do I grow in my faith? One thing that I have learned from the AA community about the 12th step is that it is the very act of working with drunks that keeps many folks sober for 30 years. Showing up to meetings, serving in small and big ways, being there for people when they need you, intentionally mentoring people are all things that remind us of what we were and inspire us to grow in our own recovery.

If you are feel stuck in your spiritual life. If you feel lost, speak to someone about the Gospel. Learn something, go to a class, read a good book. Fill your mind with truth. If you feel purposeless and useless, serve someone. Give a little away of what you have be it time, treasure or talent and make someone else’s day a little brighter. If you feel insignificant or worn out, tell your story to someone. Share how God has loved you. No matter what step you are on, working the 12th step in what ever way you can will help you to grow.

This is who we are called to be as Christians:

The Spirit of God, the Master, is on you

    because God anointed you.

He sends you to preach good news to the poor,

    heal the heartbroken,

Announce freedom to all captives,

    pardon all prisoners.

God sends you to announce the year of his grace—

    a celebration of God’s destruction of our enemies—

    and to comfort all who mourn,

To care for the needs of all who mourn in Zion,

    give them bouquets of roses instead of ashes,

Messages of joy instead of news of doom,

    a praising heart instead of a languid spirit.

You are to rebuild the old ruins,

    raise a new city out of the wreckage.

To start over on the ruined cities,

    take the rubble left behind and make it new.