

Lesson 23

GIVE

Principle 8: Yield myself to God to be used to bring this Good News to others, both by my example and by my words.

“Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires.” (Matthew 1:10)

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

*“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”
(Galatians 6:1)*

Introduction

I think that if God had to choose his favorite principle, He would choose Principle 8: “Yield myself to God to be used to bring this Good News to others, both by my example and by my words.”

Why do I think Principle 8 is God’s favorite? Because it is putting our faith into action. God’s Word tells us in James 2:17, “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” Active faith is important to God!

Don’t get me wrong, works are not going to save you. Only faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior can do that. It is through our actions, however, that we demonstrate to God and others the commitment we have to our faith in Jesus Christ.

So tonight, we are going to begin to work on Principle 8. In AA they call the corresponding step, Step 12, the “carrying the message” step, the “giving back” step.

What is “giving back” all about? What does it truly mean to give?

To answer that question, I did a word study on the meaning of “give” or “giving.” In the New Testament, the word “give” has seventeen different Greek words with seventeen different meanings. So tonight, I thought you would find it

interesting for me to do a thirty-minute lecture on each of the uses of the word “give.” Just kidding!

Perhaps we’ll take a more practical look at the meaning of the word “give” as it relates to Principle 8, since that’s what this principle is really all about.

Principle 8 does not tell us to give in unhealthy ways, ways that would hurt us or cause us to relapse into our codependent behaviors. No, Principle 8 is talking about healthy, non-codependent giving of oneself without the slightest trace of expecting to receive back. Remember, no person has ever been honored for what they have received. Honor has always been a reward for what someone gave.

Matthew 10:8 sums up Principle 8: “Freely you have received, freely give.”

In Principle 8, we *yield* ourselves to be used by God to bring this good news to others, both by our example and our words.

Give

It is in Principle 8 we learn what it means to truly GIVE.

God first.

I becomes we.

Victories shared.

Example of your actions.

The *G* stands for GOD first.

When you place God first in your life, you realize that everything you have is a gift from Him. You realize that your recovery is not dependent or based on material things, it is built upon your faith and your desire to follow Jesus Christ’s direction.

Romans 8:32 (GNB) says that God “did not even keep back his own Son, but offered him for us all! He gave us his Son—will he not also freely give us all things?”

We are never more like God than when we give—not just money or things but our very selves. That’s what Jesus did for us. He gave us the greatest gift of all—Himself.

The second letter in give is *I*. When we give, the *I* becomes we.

None of the steps or principles begin with the word *I*. The very first word in Step 1 is *we*. In fact, the word *we* appears in the 12 Steps fourteen times. The word *I* never appears even once in any of the 12 Steps. The road to recovery is not meant to be traveled alone. This is not a program to be worked in isolation.

Jesus said, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37–39).

When you have reached this step in your recovery and someone asks you to be a sponsor or to be an accountability partner, do it! The rewards are great, and being a sponsor or accountability partner is one way to carry the message!

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 (GNT) makes this concept of giving very clear: “Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone ... there is no one there to help him.... Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one man alone.”

The third letter stands for VICTORIES shared.

God never, never, never, ever wastes a hurt! He can take our hurts and use them to help others. Principle 8 gives us the opportunity to share our experiences, victories, and hopes with one another.

Deuteronomy 11:2 tells us to remember what we’ve learned about the Lord through our experiences with Him. We start off by saying, “This is how it was for me; this is the *experience* of what happened to me. This is how I gained the *strength* to begin my recovery, and there’s hope for you.”

Second Corinthians 1:3–4 (GNT) encourages us to “give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes! He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God.”

All the pain, all the hurt that my twenty years of abusing alcohol caused, all the destruction that I caused to myself and those I loved, finally made sense when I got to Principle 8. I finally understood Romans 8:28 (TLB): “We know that all that happens to us is working for our good if we love God and are fitting into his plans.”

He called me according to His plans, and because I answered God’s call, I can stand here as an example that God works all things for good according to His purpose.

To God be the glory!

I want to spend the rest of my life doing recovery work. You know, though, it’s not really work. It’s service, a service of pleasure.

This thought leads us to the last letter in give: EXAMPLE of your actions.

You all know that your actions speak louder than your words. Good intentions die unless they are executed.

In James 1:22 we are exhorted to be “doers of the word.” But, in order to be of help to another, we are to “bring the Good News to others.”

That's what Step 12 says. It doesn't say to bring a little good news or to bring good news only to others who are in recovery.

You have all heard the term "Sunday Christians." Let us not become just "Friday night recovery buffs."

Works – actions, not words – are proof of your love for God and another person. Faith without works is like a car without gasoline. First John 3:18 (NEB) says, "My children, love must not be a matter of words or talk; it must be genuine, and show itself in action."

Giving and serving is a thermometer of your love. You can give without loving. That's what we sometimes do in a codependent relationship. Or we give because we feel we have to. You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving.

Wrap-Up

The Lord spreads His message through the eight principles and the 12 Steps. We are the instruments for delivering the Good News. The way we live will show others our commitment to our program, to our Lord, and to them!

You have all heard the divine paradox, "You can't keep it unless you give it away!" That's Principle 8.

I would like to leave you with Luke 8:16 from *The Message*: "No one lights a lamp and then covers it with a washtub or shoves it under the bed. No, you set it up on a lamp stand so those who enter the room can see their way."

We're not hiding things; we're bringing everything out into the open. So be careful that you don't become misers ... generosity begets generosity. Bring the Good News with joy!