

**SESSION  
THIRTY-TWO**

## **Spirituality and Personality**

### **Introduction**

Welcome to the Spirituality and Personality session of the *Living in Balance* program. This session deals with spirituality and its role in changing a person's personality. The session looks at some steps you can take in recovery to make positive changes in your personality and become a more spiritual person. Topics discussed include surrendering, making a commitment, learning acceptance, and making restitution. The session also discusses, in more depth, the use of meditation as a way of promoting spiritual growth.

### ***What is in this session?***

This session has three major parts: (1) Spirituality and Personality Change, (2) How Change Occurs, and (3) Meditation.

- ✓ After participating in part 1, you will be able to
  - Understand how spirituality relates to personality change
  - Consider how your own personality has changed since you've gotten sober



**SESSION 32 HAS  
THREE MAJOR PARTS:**

1. Spirituality and Personality Change
2. How Change Occurs
3. Meditation

- ✓ After participating in part 2, you will be able to
  - Understand some of the ways in which personality change occurs
  - Understand what you can do to make positive personality changes and grow spiritually.
- ✓ After participating in part 3, you will be able to
  - Understand the role of meditation in promoting spiritual change
  - Understand the different types of meditation and some basic information about how to meditate

***What will be asked of you?***

You will be asked to look carefully at your personality traits when you were in addiction and now that you are in recovery. You will also be asked to think about some of the tasks you need to undertake in sobriety in order to change your personality and stay sober—you will need to consider both the problems you have with these changes and the benefits of making them. Finally, you will look at the practice of meditation and try a simple meditation on some words of your choice.





## Part 1: Spirituality and Personality Change

When you stop using alcohol and other drugs, you learn how similar your thoughts and behaviors were to those of other alcoholics and addicts. You find that you shared a powerful compulsion to use and a loss of control over your behavior in spite of the bad effects of your use.

Alcohol and other drugs were stronger than your personality in many ways. As a result, one of two things happened: (1) a healthy personality became unhealthy, or (2) a personality that had not fully formed was not allowed to develop.

Some people had healthy personalities before using alcohol and other drugs, but that changed with addiction. For instance, they may have been outgoing and sociable before using drugs, but became isolated and self-centered while using drugs.

There are also many people who began to use alcohol and other drugs early in life when their personalities were still developing. These people may have had very few sober days as an adult. They may have never experienced their own personality in a sober condition.

In many ways, people's personalities reflect their spiritual lives. Drugs, by altering the personality, prevent a person from developing spiritually.

In recovery, your values shift as a result of spiritual and/or personality growth. With a longer time in recovery, you can expect to see many behavior and attitude changes. Even in early recovery you may see new personality traits that reflect spiritual growth.

Before you can actively work on personality change, you need to identify the personality characteristics you had in your addiction that you would want to change, and how you think your personality has changed so far in recovery. The two written exercises that follow will help you assess your personality.



### LEARNER OBJECTIVES FOR PART 1:

You will

- Understand how spirituality relates to personality change
- Consider how your own personality has changed since you've gotten sober

**Drugs prevent a person from developing spiritually.**

## Personality in Addiction



### EXERCISE 1

*Below are a number of personal qualities, feelings, and behaviors. For each item on the left, there is an opposite quality on the right. For each pair, place a check next to the word that describes what you felt during your active drug use.*

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agitation      | <input type="checkbox"/> Serenity        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alienation     | <input type="checkbox"/> Fellowship      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger          | <input type="checkbox"/> Kindness        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blame          | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgiveness     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coldness       | <input type="checkbox"/> Tenderness      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contempt       | <input type="checkbox"/> Respect         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Controlling    | <input type="checkbox"/> Letting go      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Denial         | <input type="checkbox"/> Admission       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Despair        | <input type="checkbox"/> Hope            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doubt          | <input type="checkbox"/> Faith           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear           | <input type="checkbox"/> Confidence      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt          | <input type="checkbox"/> Innocence       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hate           | <input type="checkbox"/> Love            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hurting        | <input type="checkbox"/> Helping         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impatience     | <input type="checkbox"/> Tolerance       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insanity       | <input type="checkbox"/> Sanity          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Misery         | <input type="checkbox"/> Happiness       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pain           | <input type="checkbox"/> Relief          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paranoia       | <input type="checkbox"/> Trust           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rebelliousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Loyalty         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rejection      | <input type="checkbox"/> Acceptance      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-obsession | <input type="checkbox"/> Care for others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-pity      | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-worth      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-pride     | <input type="checkbox"/> Humility        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shame          | <input type="checkbox"/> Pride           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slavery        | <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Solitude       | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taking         | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ungrateful     | <input type="checkbox"/> Gratitude       |

## Personality in Recovery



### EXERCISE 2

Below are a number of personal qualities, feelings, and behaviors. For each item on the left, there is an opposite quality on the right. For each pair, place a check next to the word that describes what you feel at this point in your recovery.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Agitation      | <input type="checkbox"/> Serenity        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alienation     | <input type="checkbox"/> Fellowship      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger          | <input type="checkbox"/> Kindness        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blame          | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgiveness     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coldness       | <input type="checkbox"/> Tenderness      |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Rejection      | <input type="checkbox"/> Acceptance      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-obsession | <input type="checkbox"/> Care for others |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-pride     | <input type="checkbox"/> Humility        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shame          | <input type="checkbox"/> Pride           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slavery        | <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Solitude       | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taking         | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ungrateful     | <input type="checkbox"/> Gratitude       |

**Personality and Values**

Another reflection of your personality is the values that you live by. Often, during drug or alcohol use, your values change and you forget about some of the things that are most important to you. Think about some of the values that you would like to have in your life—values such as honesty, integrity, loyalty, kindness, acceptance, respect, freedom, equality, fairness, caring, self-discipline, and generosity. Are these values that you have? Do you live by these values?



**EXERCISE 3**

*Please answer the following questions:*

List three values that are most important to you. Do you practice these values in your daily life? What could you do to make these values more a part of your personality and your recovery?



**Often, during drug or alcohol use, your values change and you forget about some of the things that are most important to you.**

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## Part 2: How Change Occurs

As you might be able to see from exercise 2, just getting sober will make positive changes in your personality. In fact, you may not notice all of these changes. Sometimes they occur slowly, and sometimes it is just difficult to see changes in yourself. But they do occur. However, lasting change also requires effort. There are a number of steps you can take to make positive changes in your personality.

### Surrendering Control

During your addiction, you may have developed some rigid defenses to keep others from getting too close. Other people were a possible threat because they might try to stop you from getting and using alcohol and other drugs. You may not have wanted to hear other people's advice about your drinking and other drug use. Instead, maybe you needed to believe that you knew best.

In recovery, you are asked to surrender your will and drop your defenses. You are asked to admit that you may not know what's best, and that if you follow your instincts, you might end up using again. In Twelve Step programs, this is referred to as surrendering your will. You can surrender to a self-help group, a treatment program, or a Higher Power, but the process is pretty much the same.

Surrendering is a spiritual activity, because it is an admission that you aren't the center of the world and that you can't fix your problems by yourself. Surrendering is the beginning of humility. It doesn't mean that you quit or that you're a failure. It also does not mean that you don't have a will of your own. It just means that you recognize your limitations and are willing to take direction from someone else or another source.

**Surrendering is the beginning of humility.**



#### LEARNER OBJECTIVES FOR PART 2:

You will

- Understand some of the ways in which personality change occurs
- Understand what you can do to make positive personality changes and grow spiritually

**When you stop drinking, your personality may greatly improve.**



**EXERCISE 4**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. What do you think is gained by surrendering your control when it comes to your alcohol and drug use?

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2. What makes it difficult to surrender control? What do you think you gain by trying to convince yourself that you can control your alcohol and drug use?

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**Letting Go**

Recovery from addiction is a process of letting go. Letting go means more than surrendering. It requires that one let go of the addiction and replace it with more positive and healthy things.

During active addiction, alcohol or other drugs became the most important thing in your life, replacing friends, family, and lovers. It also filled many important needs in your life by making you feel good, confident, and strong. Your drugs never rejected, abandoned, or ignored you. At least that's the way it may have seemed at the time.



So when addicts or alcoholics reach the point where they want to give up their addiction, it is not a matter of trying to control it. It is a matter of letting it go. The more one tries to control the addiction, the more it “fights back.” The only way to defeat it is to walk away from the fight—to let it go. Because it has been so important in a person’s life, it will be difficult and maybe even frightening to really let it go. But it is the only way to recovery.

Often, there are other things connected with your alcohol and other drug use that you also need to let go. For example, in active addiction, many people learn to control and manipulate others in order to get and continue using alcohol or other drugs. This behavior is destructive to relationships as well as to the spiritual well-being of the person doing the manipulation. Therefore, in recovery, you also need to learn to let go of trying to control others.



### EXERCISE 5

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. What progress have you made in letting go of your addiction? What problems do you still have with it?

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2. What do you think happens if you hold on to your addiction and refuse to let go?

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3. Why do you think it is difficult to let go of an addiction?

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4. In what ways can holding on hurt your recovery? In what ways can letting go be a positive part of your recovery?

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**Commitment requires courage and a willingness to do whatever is necessary to help your progress in recovery.**

### **Making a Commitment**

Each person has to find the path to recovery that is right for himself or herself. But to be successful in recovery, people must make a commitment to whatever path they've chosen. They must be determined to stick with it, because it will not always be easy. There will be ups and downs along the way, and perhaps serious setbacks or even relapses. When those problems occur, you need to be committed to getting back on the path and trying again.

This commitment requires courage and a willingness to do whatever is necessary to help your progress in recovery. It will also require continual attention and work—sobriety is not something you just get and then don't have to worry about anymore. It is a path that you will follow as best you can.

Making a commitment to recovery can be very difficult, but it is not something that you have to do alone. A lot of help is available, and all you need to do is ask for and accept it. There are self-help groups, professional counselors, and caring family and friends who can help. You may also find a Higher Power that you can rely on for aid. With all this help, you can accomplish almost anything.

Making a commitment requires some faith that if you do what is necessary, things will get better. You may have faith in yourself, in a Higher Power, in a group of other recovering people, or just in the advice you've been given. If you have trouble having faith, just try to believe that someday faith will come, and when you believe that, you will have it.



### EXERCISE 6

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. What kind of commitment have you made to your recovery? Are there things or people that interfere with your making this commitment? How can you overcome these obstacles?

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2. Do you have faith in yourself, in others, or in a Higher Power?

Yes     No

What might help you to increase your faith?

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3. In what ways can having a commitment hurt your recovery?

In what ways can making a commitment be a positive part of your recovery?

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## Learning Acceptance

While personality change requires action on your part, it also requires that you are willing to accept that certain things are out of your control and that nothing you do can change them.

The first thing that you need to accept in recovery is that you are an addict and/or alcoholic. That means that you can't use alcohol or other drugs without starting the cycle of addiction again. You will also need to accept and take responsibility for your behavior when you were using. You may be suffering from addiction, but you are still responsible for your actions.

When you were using, you were probably very willing to find excuses for what you did while you were high. You may have made excuses for the things you had to do in order to get alcohol or other drugs. In sobriety, you can change that by accepting responsibility for what you do, as well as for what you have done in the past. You can accept the past and realize that nothing will change what happened, but also accept that you are a different and more responsible person in sobriety.

Acceptance also involves not obsessing over what you want or what you expect to happen. Again, this doesn't mean you don't have to take action—quite the opposite. It means that you do what you need to do without worrying about the outcome. It means that if things don't go the way you want them to, you can accept it without getting frustrated or resentful, and the next time, you can try harder to get a better result.



### EXERCISE 7

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. What role does acceptance have in your recovery? In what ways can avoiding accepting things hurt your recovery?

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**Acceptance involves not obsessing over what you want or what you expect to happen.**

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2. Are there certain things that you have particular trouble accepting?

Yes     No

What are they and how does not accepting them help you?

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3. In what ways can not having acceptance hurt your recovery?  
In what ways can acceptance be a positive part of your recovery?

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## Restitution and Doing Service

Part of accepting responsibility for your actions means doing what you can to make up for the mistakes of the past. This may involve giving *restitution* or *making amends*—which basically means doing, saying, or giving something to make up for the harm you caused.

By giving restitution or making amends, you show others that you are a different person than you were when you were using. Other people can, in turn, help reinforce those changes in your personality resulting from sobriety. Making amends also helps you get over the guilt and regret you feel for things you've done.

You can't right every wrong you ever did during your addiction—you may not even remember them all. You can, though, do the right thing for the people around you today. One way of doing this is by being of service to others who need help in their recovery. By sharing your experience and supporting others, you return a favor that was given to you and, in the process, help strengthen your own sobriety.

When you were using, you probably had very little to be grateful for. In early sobriety, it may still seem that there are a lot of problems in your life. However, if you stay sober, you will find that things will improve. After a time, you will feel gratitude and want to give back to others some of the help that was given to you.



### EXERCISE 8

Please answer the following questions:

1. Are there things that you think you will have a very hard time making restitution for?

Yes     No

Are there some small steps you can take to make restitution an easier task?

Yes     No



#### DEFINITION OF RESTITUTION:

Doing, saying, or giving something to make up for the harm you caused. Also known as *making amends*.

If restitution is impossible, what do you think you should do instead?

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2. What benefits have you found already from making amends?

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3. What benefits have you found already from service to other recovering people? If you haven't done any service yet, what has kept you back?

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4. In what ways can not making restitution hurt your recovery?  
 In what ways can restitution be a positive part of your recovery?

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### Part 3: Meditation

One of the best techniques for working on spiritual growth and personality change is meditation. Along with prayer, which was discussed in session 6, meditation is a way of focusing your concentration on spiritual matters.

#### What Is Meditation?

Step Eleven of the Twelve Steps recommends both prayer and meditation to “improve our conscious contact with God *as we understand Him*.” Some say that just as prayer is asking for God’s help, *meditation is listening for the answer*.

It is hard to listen to another person when there are noise and confusion around us. During meditation, it is essential to turn off mental noise and confusion as well.

Meditation involves making your mind quiet and stopping the flow of thoughts. Since our minds are often full of worries and concerns, even in dreams, meditation gives people a period of mental rest. By making the mind quiet and still, it is possible to feel a few moments of inner peace. This peace can bring some people into contact with a Higher Power or give them a new perspective on life.



#### LEARNER OBJECTIVES FOR PART 3:

You will

- Understand the role of meditation in promoting spiritual change
- Understand the different types of meditation and some basic information about how to meditate

**Just as prayer is asking for God’s help, meditation is listening for the answer.**

Many people find that after meditation they have an increase in mental and emotional strength that can help them handle whatever problems they have to deal with.



**EXERCISE 9**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. Have you ever tried to meditate?

- Yes     No

If so, what happened?

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2. Even if you don't pray because you don't believe in a God or Higher Power, you may still find meditation helpful. What benefits might you gain from meditation?

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3. In what ways can meditation be a positive part of your recovery?

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## Types of Meditation

Many different religious traditions practice meditation. While the goal of meditation is almost always to quiet the mind, there are different approaches to doing this. Your religious tradition may offer one method for meditation, which you can use, or you can try different methods to find which one is best for you.

There are two major types of meditation: (1) concentration meditation and (2) mindful meditation.

Concentration meditation involves concentrating on something in particular. This may be one's breathing, a lit candle, or a word or group of words. A common form of concentration meditation in the Christian tradition is to meditate on a word or passage from the Bible. The words can be read over and over, or kept in one's memory and repeated. In the Hindu tradition, it is also common to meditate on a particular word or a short phrase. Or some people may choose to just select a word like *peace* or *love* that has positive associations for them.

Mindful meditation is a way of focusing on the present moment and what your mind and body are feeling. It differs from concentration meditation in that the person doesn't focus on a single thing (such as a word) but instead tries to be aware of everything that is going on. The person tries to be aware of what thoughts and feelings arise without judging them or trying to get rid of them. The idea is to become fully aware of the present moment. Often, a person will concentrate on a particular aspect of what's going on, such as his or her breathing. Other techniques have the person focus on a simple activity like sipping a cup of tea. This is one type of meditation practiced in the Buddhist tradition.

Meditation will probably work best for you if you do it in a quiet place where there are no distractions, and with your body in a comfortable position. While meditation can be done anywhere, it is best to start trying to meditate in a quiet place where you feel comfortable. You should try to sit or kneel. Lying down is usually not recommended because it may be too relaxing, and you might fall asleep.

**Concentration meditation involves concentrating on something in particular.**



**Mindful meditation is a way of focusing on the present moment and what your mind and body are feeling.**

While most meditation requires stillness, there are also some meditative practices that incorporate physical exercise with a mental focus. Yoga is perhaps the best example, but other techniques such as Tai Chi or even simple walking can be used with meditation.



**EXERCISE 10**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. How do you feel about doing a daily meditation?

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2. For some people, going to a nice, quiet area such as a lake or a park is a way for them to clear their thoughts and meditate. Others may go to a church, or they may prefer a spot in their home. Where would be a good place for you to meditate?

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3. What sort of meditation do you think would work best for you?

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## Practicing Meditation

One of the easiest types of meditation to try is to concentrate on a particular word or words that have some positive meaning for you. You can either sit and read a meaningful passage over and over again, or you can select a sentence, phrase, or word from it that strikes you. Simply repeat it to yourself. If you want, you can repeat it aloud.

You can try meditating on a favorite quote or passage from a religious or philosophical book, a book of daily meditations, some literature from a self-help group, or a poem that has special meaning. Of course, you shouldn't select something you associate with alcohol or drug use.

If you can't think of a written passage that appeals to you, you can select from one of the examples provided at the end of this session.

Find a quiet place where you aren't likely to be distracted. Try to relax—you may want to do a few minutes of stretching before you begin the meditation. You can either sit or kneel on the floor or, if you prefer, sit at a table or desk. Take a few deep breaths, holding each breath for five or ten seconds. Try meditating on the text for a half hour without interruption. When you are finished, please answer the following questions.



### EXERCISE 11

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. How did you feel after a half hour of this meditation?

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2. What thoughts arose while and after you meditated? Were any of them positive insights?

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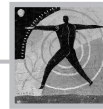
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### **Session 32 Summary**

In this session you have learned about spirituality and its role in changing a person's personality. The session looked at how you can make positive changes in your personality and become a more spiritual person by practicing some simple principles. Although simple, some of these tasks, such as surrendering control and making a commitment, are not always easy and may require a great effort, but they will pay off with positive results and an improved sobriety.



## Sample Meditations

### Just for Today

Just for today I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle all of my life problems at once. I can do something for twelve hours that would appall me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

Just for today I will be happy. This assumes to be true what Abraham Lincoln said: “Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.”

Just for today I will adjust myself to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my “luck” as it comes, and fit myself to it.

Just for today I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study; I will learn something useful; I will not be a mental loafer; I will read something that requires effort, thought, and concentration.

Just for today I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn, and not get found out; if anybody knows of it, it will not count. I will do at least two things I don’t want to do—just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today I will not show it.

Just for today I will be agreeable. I will look as good as I can, dress becomingly, talk low, act courteously, criticize not one bit, not find fault with anything, and not try to improve or regulate anybody but myself.

Just for today I will have a program. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests: hurry and indecision.

Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself, and relax. During this half hour, sometime, I will try to get a better perspective on my life.

Just for today I will be unafraid. I will enjoy that which is beautiful, and will believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

## **Footprints**

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to him and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it. "Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."

The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

## **Serenity Prayer**

God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change,  
The courage to change the things I can,  
And the wisdom to know the difference.



**The Prayer of St. Francis**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.