

## Lesson 35: The Power to Change Things

Most everyone is familiar with the Serenity Prayer in which we petition God to grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can change and to have the wisdom to know the difference. But what if we are accepting that we cannot change things based on our thoughts, beliefs and perceptions? Thus accepting the things we cannot change is to imply that we lack the power to affect and manifest change which goes against the principles of universal laws that empower us to affect and manifest change in things that otherwise seem unattainable. For this we do not need serenity but rather we need to be educated as to how and why we limit our ability to effectively change things. The only limitations in affecting and manifesting change in things are the ones we place upon ourselves that we then petition God to grant us the serenity to accept but which is a request that is actually backwards in terms of our thinking, our beliefs and our perceptions. There are no things that cannot be changed in some fashion when the reality of changing things is put in its proper perspective. In the course of this lesson I wish to challenge our acceptance of the Serenity Prayer at face value as it applies to what we think, believe or perceive as being the things we cannot change as opposed to actually possessing the power to change the things we may erroneously believe we cannot change and having the courage and wisdom to do so.

While such challenging thoughts may sound heretical in terms of what has become a widely accepted prayer that was adopted by AA and other Twelve-step programs and is one that is used by so many people on an individual basis, nonetheless there is contained in this prayer a potentially misleading conception that when taken at face value suggests we are powerless to change or alter certain things based on personal precepts. I realize that presenting such information may be challenging to your thinking just as it was to mine initially, however, if you will commit to keeping an open mind you will see how this prayer does invoke a sense of powerlessness that goes against the fundamentals of the power of now and the principles of manifestation. Before we begin to examine the fundamentals and principles that will help us to understand how it is that we do have the power to change the things we think, believe or perceive we cannot change we will first take note of the history of this prayer only for the sake of establishing its origins which many people are generally not aware of.

The history of the Serenity Prayer according to records appears to have its origins in a sermon given by the theologian Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr back in 1943 who then published the prayer in one of his magazine columns in 1951. When interviewed on numerous occasions, Dr. Niebuhr stated that he wrote the prayer as a tag line to a sermon he gave on Practical Christianity. With Dr. Niebuhr's permission the prayer was included in a Federal Council of Churches book for army chaplains and servicemen in 1944, WWII, through the U.S.O. A 2008 Yale investigation into the true authorship of this prayer indicated that as early as 1936 improvised versions were already in circulation and were

used by women in volunteer and educational activities. However, in 2009 a Duke researcher found a variant of the prayer attributed to Niebuhr in a 1937 Christian student publication as follows:

*"Father, give us courage to change what must be altered, serenity to accept what cannot be helped, and the insight to know the one from the other."*

The history of the Serenity Prayer indicates that it had gone through a number of improvisations in spite of the fact that no one really knows for sure if Dr. Niebuhr is the author and for that matter neither did he because when interviewed he was quoted as saying, "Of course, it may have been spooking around for years, even centuries, but I don't think so. I honestly do believe that I wrote it myself." Ultimately the version most widely accepted today is the one that was adopted by AA in 1941 as well as other Twelve-step programs as:

*"God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference."*

Other credits attributed to the authorship of the prayer have been given to its possible variant appearances in the ancient Sanskrit texts, to the Roman orator Cicero, to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, St Thomas of Aquinas, St Augustine and a host of others.

As you can see there is quite a difference between what has become the accepted version of the Serenity Prayer and the example of the version used in 1937. You will notice that the earlier version petitions God to give us courage to change what *must* be altered as opposed to requesting serenity to accept what we believe we cannot change. The question then is why are we so quick to abandon the hope of changing things by the acceptance of a belief that certain things cannot be changed as opposed to seeking the courage to change those things anyway. There are many things in life that have the appearance of being unattainable or are things that we believe cannot be changed for one reason or another when in fact they can be changed except when to do so threatens to harm ourselves, others or something and even then nothing is entirely out of our reach but can be safely altered when it is necessary to do so. If we are to stand on the Biblical principle that Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly, the scripture in no way insinuates that there are limitations involved nor are we required to accept things that can in fact not be changed or altered as the case may be.

The Serenity Prayer begs the question, what message is the prayer really conveying as it relates to possessing the power to change what we think, believe and perceive we cannot change or should not change and then being expected to have the wisdom to know the difference. The prayer suggests that in reality there are only certain things we can or should change and things that we cannot or should not in reality change. The operative word is "reality" which then begs the question in what and whose perception of reality

can we not change things and by what fundamentals or principles does this prayer abide by. It is at this point where we should begin to see that there is a gaping hole in the philosophy of this prayer which in actuality threatens to limit our ability to affect and manifest desired changes or at the very least alterations which in turn limits our thinking that in turn limits our present and future experiences, thus diminishing our point of power. So when one thinks in terms of cause and effect it becomes clear that the Serenity Prayer can potentially create a cause in the form of limited thinking, believing and perceiving, which in turn creates limiting effects that might actually be to the benefit of an individual as well as being a benefit collectively speaking. If the limitations of accepting the things we cannot change were altered to accepting the fact that we have the power to change all things, life would be very fulfilling, enriching and rewarding. Imagine if you will having the power to heal each other on the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical planes through the energetic force of intended thought. At this time in our evolution such a task as this appears to be monumental and totally out of reach yet is truthfully within our reach if only we could stop believing that we are bound by the erroneous perceptions of having to accept a belief that tells us there are things we cannot change and that we need God's serenity to do so.

As we dig further into the matter of what we cannot change we find that there are fundamentals and principles that say otherwise which do, in fact, abide by the governance of natural universal laws. As we begin to explore these fundamentals and principles we must be reminded of the words of Eckhart Tolle that he used to describe the limitations we place on ourselves. Tolle stated that the identification of our minds creates an opaque screen of concepts, labels, images, words, judgments, and definitions that blocks all true relationship. That, "It comes between you and yourself, between you and your fellow man and woman, between you and nature, between you and God." He said that it is this screen of thought that creates the illusion of separateness, the illusion there is you and a totally separate "other." He then goes on to say that we forget the essential fact that underneath the level of physical appearances and separate forms, we are one with all that is.

The notion that we are one with all that is clearly indicates the existence of a powerful force of energy given that everything which exists in the universe both animate and inanimate is comprised of energy that includes the act of thinking. Energy in the form of thought through intent transmits signals that travel along vibrational frequencies that will eventually produce a result in compliance with the universal laws of operation. Thus a change occurs to something that otherwise was thought to not be possible. So it stands to reason that we do possess the power to change what we think we cannot change in spite of any unfounded beliefs or perceptions that states otherwise. Generally speaking the idea of making changes usually applies to ourselves individually long before it applies to us collectively. We cannot expect to make changes collectively or

globally without first having made the necessary changes we need to make that begins from within and then manifests externally where others see the evidence of the change.

Holding the belief that we possess the ability to change those things we think we cannot change is to understand that we can affect and effect change by utilizing our point of power which exists only in the here and now – at this present moment. This point of power can affect change in past and future circumstances from the position of our present circumstances which is where change must occur first. When you change your position in terms of how you perceive your current circumstances you become empowered to change past and future circumstances that others may have told you cannot be changed or that you believed you could not change. Such a belief is an erroneous perception and you owe it to yourself to investigate the root cause of your belief so that you can affect and manifest changes in the things of life such as the quality of your experiences in terms of what you hope to achieve, your health and your well-being; all of which are compromised when such disabling beliefs are acted on.

The act of accepting the things we cannot change translates into not only being limited in terms of what we can and cannot change as being possible or feasible but such a belief also translates into the loss of hope of what appears on the surface as not being possible to change which then requires a measure of serenity to cope with the loss. Such a condition is surely not God's will for you or anyone because to say this is true is to defy his will for us to have an abundant life. In this respect then it becomes necessary to challenge whether or not it is possible to alchemically change water into wine as Jesus did at the wedding he was attending anymore than it was for him to heal the sick or to raise the dead. And did Jesus not tell us that we are capable of doing so much more than he did? Hence again it begs us to question accepting the things we cannot change at face value when in fact Jesus himself set forth for us examples of just how we too are empowered when by intent through the power of our beliefs we can change what on the surface appears to be things we are not otherwise empowered to change. So then, why do we insist on limiting ourselves to accepting such limiting thoughts and disabling beliefs that are based on perceptions – ours or others?

To ask God to grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change is to place limitations upon ourselves in many forms as it relates to the perceptions of our realities. The way in which we view the circumstances that make up what we believe are our true realities may not actually be our true reality but rather is a perceived reality that is always subject to change in accordance with our thoughts, feelings and beliefs. So to say that something cannot be changed is to dig ourselves into a rut in which we will continue to experience more of the same undesirable reality simply because we believe we cannot change certain things that will alter those realities and bring them more in line with what is our desired reality. If we bear in mind that the realities we create really are an illusion as Einstein so eloquently stated that “life is an illusion, albeit it a rather

persistent one” we can accept the fact that we have the power to change the illusion to something that better enhances our experiences. The problem is that we cannot change anything about our realities if we hold fast to the belief that we must accept what we think, believe or perceive we cannot change. So then how are we to know how to make a distinction between what we can and cannot change if we are of the belief that we have to accept at face value the things we are told or believe cannot be changed with only the courage to change what we can. How limiting is that?

The truth is that we are never bound to the things we think or believe we cannot change anymore than we are bound to only accepting what we can change. We don't need courage to change what can easily be changed but rather we need courage to change what cannot easily be changed because after all change is difficult to embrace. So it's not so much that we cannot change things as it is that it is just so difficult to affect and manifest changes. We like the comfort of living in familiarity vs sticking our necks out just a little more to see what lies beyond the parameters of our boxes; to test the waters to see whether we will sink or swim or to risk taking a chance in the event we should fail. To petition God to help us to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can and the wisdom to know the difference is to request God to limit our possibilities because in God all things are possible. Either we believe this to be true or we do not. The question we have to ask ourselves is which is it? If we say we believe that all things are possible in God then we have no need to cancel out that belief by requesting that he give us the serenity we need to accept that all things are not possible in God but that only certain things are possible and furthermore that we need the wisdom to know the difference. I hope this was as hard for you to read as it was for me to put it in writing given how paradoxical such thinking really is.

We hope that through the course of this lesson you will come away with an entirely different perspective in your beliefs of what things you can and cannot change and the reasons why. Please know that we were not launching an attack on the merit or validity of the Serenity Prayer but only that you would see the paradox contained in this essence of this prayer. The choice of course is always yours to determine for yourselves what you choose to believe or not believe. In the end the litmus will always be the proof-positive. You have the right through the action of your free will to choose your experiences, to change only what you believe and perceive you can change and leave all the other possibilities to fall by the wayside. The courage and the wisdom you ask God for will be needed to accept the possibilities that represent the things you do not think or believe can be changed, not for the changes you are willing to make.

Many blessings to you and yours,

Linda, Z and the Collective We

**Resources:**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serenity\\_Prayer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serenity_Prayer)

<http://www.barefootsworld.net/aaserenityprayerorig.html>

Roberts, Jane. The Nature of Personal Reality. A Seth Book.

Tolle, Eckhart. The Power of Now.