

Reinhold Neibuhr, wrote the Serenity Prayer in the early 1930's. Although there are debates about its date and if it was influenced or paraphrased from earlier theologians and saints including Freidrich Oettinger and Boethius most people accept that Neibuhr wrote the version which most folks recognize. It is a prayer regularly used in 12 step groups that follow the Alcoholics Anonymous model. The abbreviated version can be found sewn into pillows, and on bumper stickers, in posters, and as signatures to emails.

You may recognize it :

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 extended version of the prayer includes this next section:

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.
Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is,
 Not as I would have it.
Trusting that He will make all things right
 if I surrender to His will.
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.
Amen.

This week you are invited to pray this, perhaps in the morning before you begin your day. Print it off and post it over your coffee pot, on your bedside table, or the bathroom mirror.

In times of crisis, often prayer becomes petitions for answers, clarity, strength, patience, peace, calm, etc. However, a few years ago when I was experiencing a crisis in my own life. I lamented to my spiritual director that I felt weak and powerless, and scared. She reminded me I have all of the things I need and recommended I begin my day with the serenity prayer. This wasn't meant as the Hallmark understanding that God doesn't give you more than you can handle platitude. God certainly gives us more than we can handle alone. But we are also giving communities and relationships where we can go for support, help, and advice. Even when we live alone, even when we are by ourselves, we are surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses who inspire, support, and lead us through times of trial and tribulation.

This is exactly what Reinhold Neiber did by the Holy Spirit when he wrote this prayer. In so doing influencing the likes of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King Jr, and so many folks who are in recovery. And all of us.

Today and this week we remember to turn to God and answer the call that God has put upon us daily. We can and will attain serenity, wisdom, courage, life, joy, acceptance, peace, trust, surrender, and happiness one day at a time. So long as we remember that God is with us, and we are not alone.