

PC 18 Serenity Prayer

By Angie Rebert and Christopher Osander



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"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you."

Isaiah 26:3

This month I would like to share one of my "go to" prayers, which many people know as the Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr. This is the short version of the prayer. The full prayer appears at the end of this article.

"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. "

This is also a much used prayer by my friend Christopher Osander, who shares his thoughts with us.

Angie

Thoughts by Christopher Osander

A Centering Prayer

First and foremost, the Serenity Prayer is, for me, a centering prayer. I use it frequently and fervently. It never wears out and is always effective. “God”, the first word of the prayer, stops me in my tracks and allows me to reorient myself around His presence and transcend whatever overwhelms me. He is my confidant, and yes, He is my friend. When I ask Him to grant me serenity, I need not beat around the bush. I make no bones. Sometimes it is a mild request, while other times the need is one of quiet desperation. Whatever the measure of the need, the Serenity Prayer answers a very real spiritual situation.

Acceptance is the goal of the first section, calming the wayward spirit, and becoming peaceful. Accepting what we cannot change is difficult but necessary. By identifying what it is we cannot change, we place ourselves in a position to deal directly with reality, allowing us to deal effectively with whatever circumstances emerge.

Courage

The second section of the prayer begins with the word “courage.” To many of us, this concept presents a challenge. Surely courage comes from within, and when we look within, we see nothing but fear and trembling. But let us look further: the prayer invites us to confront the things we **can** control and make necessary changes within our power.

When we shine a light on our present circumstances, we see, not what needs to be done about the world’s problems, but only what is the next right thing to do. This is what we mean when we say “think globally, act locally.”

Knowing the Difference

Lest we become confused by our spiritual options, Reinhold Niebuhr, the author of the original prayer, gives us a gentle challenge with his prayerful phrase: “And the wisdom to know the difference.” We only need to be able to discern the difference between the things within our grasp and those beyond our reach. It is a problem only of near and far. If we find ourselves in the wilderness, we need only cry out—no, we need only whisper—to our Lord who helps us decide what is possible and what is not.

Let us not forget, this is still a prayer! It is an invocation, a holy petition to the Almighty, asking for simple guidance regarding our daily affairs. Even so, we may find ourselves confused as we try to apply the prayer in our lives. Not to worry, our minds are so much less disturbed as we say the prayer than if we did not have the prayer at all. Sometimes the busy chatter in our brains feels like schizophrenia, but if we follow the simple instructions, we will find ourselves placated and in an internal atmosphere of peace. Remember: sometimes you feel like a nut, sometimes you don’t. The serenity prayer provides the most practical method I know, for addressing our most pressing problems. I heartily recommend the serenity prayer for those who’ve never tried it. For those who are practiced in the art of discernment, I urge you to continue the process.

Original 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.

Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time;

Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;

Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is; not as I would have it;

Trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to your will.

So that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with you forever in the next.

Amen

Song

Listen to Serenity (The Serenity Prayer Song) by Jack Bielan on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/Wonpb0NSu3M>