

Serenity prayer

**God, grant me the Serenity
To accept the things I cannot change...**

*Courage to change the things I can,
And Wisdom to know the difference.*

**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.**

Acknowledgement:

A Prayer for Serenity, Trevor Hudson, Struik Christian Media.

MONDAY

Courage to change the things I can



Romans 12: 1-2 (NIV): *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — His good, pleasing and perfect will.*

We are often – again now during 'lockdown' stages - overwhelmed by the major problems and issues of the day that we observe around us or hear so much of: economic hardship, inequality, GBV, racism, corruption, bias and more. We often feel: what can I as a mere individual do to help overcome these problems? Or personally, we may be overcome by regrets, self-doubt and insecurity, to such an extent that we can hardly live with ourselves and others – again feeling that we can make no positive contribution. So where does 'courage' come in?

The focus in this part of the series and Rev Trevor Hudson's book, *A Prayer for Serenity*, is indeed

more on one's self and not so much the bigger issues. The second suggestion made by the Serenity Prayer is to ask for the courage to change the things **we can**. All of us have so-called 'character defects' which spoil our lives and our relationships – they need to be transformed. When they are, we also water and nourish the seed of peace in our relationships at home, our workplaces and in our communities.

How do we achieve such inner changes? We need to identify and admit what needs to change. When we do, we are on the road to recovery.

Lord, grant me the courage to change the things I can.



Prayer: Heavenly Father I so often struggle with self-doubt and acceptance of who I am. Grant me the wisdom and courage to know where I need to change so that I can grow more like You each day. AMEN

TUESDAY

Admit what needs to change



2 Cor 5: 17 (NIV) *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

What needs to change is usually something that robs us of our serenity. Something that has become a source of discontent and conflict in relationships or adds to the tension in and around us: a short temper, long-held resentments, untruths and prejudices. It is not easy to face up to such issues; often we deny them, blame others and avoid facing what needs to be changed in ourselves.

“Until we overcome our deep-seated tendency to deny things and begin to own the less attractive parts of our lives, we will not experience inner change” (Trevor Hudson).

Can we only do this by means of the many ‘life-skills’ programmes we can find out there? No, for the Christian it’s more important to know that **spiritual progress requires** of us to grow in knowledge of ourselves.

Trevor Hudson in “A Prayer for Serenity” suggests that our journey to self-honesty starts when we take a few simple steps, of which three are quoted here:

- “We can take some time to be quiet on a regular basis, just by ourselves, and ask God to search our hearts.
- We can seek in ourselves what we criticize in others.
- We can ask some friends who know us well to give us feedback on how they experience us. It is easy to deceive ourselves.” (This latter one overlaps with the Wesleyan tradition of accountability.)

Getting honest with myself and admitting what needs to change does **not** make me unacceptable to God, nor does it make me feel far from Him. Instead, it opens my life to the incredible depths of God’s love and acceptance and mercy.

Lord, grant me the courage to change the things I can.



Prayer: Almighty God grant me the peace that only You can bring into my life. Help me to love myself the way that You love me.
AMEN

WEDNESDAY

Let God do the changing



2 Corinthians 3: 18 (NIV) *And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

Inner change is not a do-it-yourself job through our own willpower.

Ultimately, we fail at it. Dependence on our own strength seems to block real spiritual change and growth. We need a power that comes from beyond ourselves. As an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) slogan puts it: *'We can't, God can, let Him'*.

The good news is that we don't have to do it on our own. There is a good, loving and competent God who wants to help us become different and closer to Him. That is why we pray the Serenity Prayer.

As Trevor Hudson puts it: *"Inner change takes place in that hidden area of our lives which only God can reach and which we cannot see without His help. It is God's*

Spirit alone who can bring about the change of heart that is our deepest need. When we truly realize this, it is like a heavy load lifted from our back."

It is not a coward who turns to God for this help – it takes, and God gives, true courage. All of this does not mean we do nothing; it takes effort on our part, as long as we do not try to do God's work. Try to see and admit what needs to change and express to God your desire for these character defects to be removed. One way to do this is to pray the Serenity Prayer – and really mean it!

When we face the truth in our lives, and allow the Spirit of God to change us, we slowly grow into the person God wants us to be. We realise that God is in the process of changing us.

Lord, grant me the courage to change the things I can.



Prayer: Lord help me to stop trying to do everything in my own strength. Help me to allow Your Spirit to mould me into the person You want me to be so that I may serve You.
AMEN

THURSDAY

Wisdom to know the difference



James 1: 5 (NIV) *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

Even when we pray the Serenity Prayer, we will soon encounter some difficult dilemmas which can rob us of serenity and peace. We are often torn between two choices – accept what we are facing or try to change it. There are many such examples in all our lives: do we accept an unethical work culture or try to change it?

Wisdom is also more than mere knowledge. While it is unlikely that we can be wise without some learning, knowledge by itself is not enough to meet life's challenges and problems – we need wisdom. **Wisdom is knowing how to use wisely what we know.** With wisdom, we are more able to distinguish between several options and can make better choices. We live more at peace with ourselves, others and God – we discover life at its fullest.

The Serenity Prayer reminds us that true wisdom is a gift that comes from God and we need to

pray for it, as in the scripture above. It cannot be bought, earned or invented – it is given by God and must be asked for. This does not mean that we will always get crystal-clear or easy answers. We can also not expect God to do everything – there are also some things we need to do.

The guidance we need usually comes gradually. “*God gives us just enough light for us to keep walking*” (Trevor Hudson). We proceed step by step, at times accepting what cannot be changed (at least not by me), at other times trying to change what we can. Always trusting that God walks with us in love.

Lord, grant me the courage to change
the things I can;
And the wisdom to know the
difference.



Prayer: *Dear God, I need Your wisdom. Please speak to me, through my friends, through the Bible and whatever else I may read, through the experiences I go through today, and circumstances.* (Trevor Hudson)

AMEN

FRIDAY

Listen to your thoughts and feelings, then make a decision



Psalm 32: 8 (NIV) *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.*

Once we have asked God for wisdom to help us decide between acceptance of - or trying to change - a situation, we get on with our lives and action, first moving into a 'listening mode'. Pay attention to what goes on in your life, mind and heart.

There may still be many differing emotions, desires and options within us. Try to write them down in order to reflect on them some more. God's divine voice in us will often take the shape of one of these inner promptings. Listen carefully to what is happening within you, so as not to miss the whisperings of the Spirit.

Don't get alarmed if nothing stands out. It may well be a silent warning to reconsider and even to 'let go and let God'. Continue listening, while trusting God. *"Don't ... try to force God's hand into giving us some direction or we will probably end up doing our will and not God's. ...If God has something to share with us, He*

will share it in a way that we understand." (Trevor Hudson)

It will also be helpful to discuss the whole situation with trusted friends – one of the reasons we need companions on our spiritual journey; not only to help us, but for us to help them too.

An approach to making decisions is to first check whether the matter at hand is not dealt with by the clear teaching of the Bible. Then, having made a decision in principle, 'mind-map' it. Try to think through what the effects of **accepting** something, i.e. doing nothing, may be. Then consider the opposite, **doing** something: what will its effects be? The Quakers believed that a deeper peace – serenity - would rest on the decision God wants us to make. However, we must not make unhelpful claims like 'God told me', but accept personal responsibility for our decisions - in humility accepting that we may be wrong. God will not condemn you for that!



Prayer: Heavenly Father, I long for the inner peace that only You can give. May I have eyes to see You, ears open to hear Your voice and a willing heart to do Your will in my life.

AMEN