

The Biblical Roots Of The 12 Steps

It has often been assumed that the 12 Steps are original ideas brought to humanity through the thought and speech of Bill Wilson. The fact that Wilson attributes them to Rev. Sam Shoemaker has never stopped the membership of A.A. or other 12 Steps from "idolizing" Bill Wilson's role in revolutionizing addiction recovery in the 20th Century.

The Sam Shoemaker Connection

The idea for the 12 Steps came to Bill Wilson early in his religious self discovery. In 1933 Bill Wilson had hit rock bottom. His alcohol addiction had destroyed his once promising Wall Street career, leaving he and his wife lived in poverty. It was at this time that Bill Wilson began to attend Oxford Group meetings at Calvary Church. It was at Calvary Church where he met his mentor Rev. Sam Shoemaker.

Shoemaker was the rector of Calvary Church and the head of The Oxford Groups in America. Although Shoemaker's connection to Frank Buchman has clouded his immense impact, Wilson credited him time and again on the inspiration for the 12 Steps. It was in those early years at Calvary Church that Wilson gained the spiritual strength and inspiration to write the 12 Steps. In fact Bill Wilson originally wanted Sam Shoemaker to write the steps, but Shoemaker convinced Wilson that he in fact was the most suited to write them.

Out of the Bible

Although Sam Shoemaker's contributions to the 12 Steps like self surrender, taking a personal inventory, and righting wrongs are clearly drawn from his own writings, their sources go much farther back into the Bible itself. Many of Sam's teachings are sourced in famous passages in the "New Testament" like the Sermon on the Mount. Yet, it is clear whether conscious or not of a connection with more Biblical ideas. Psalms are replete with affirmation of surrender and cleaving to G-D from King David. "Oh G-d, you are my G-d, I seek You. Thirsts for You does my soul, longs for you does my flesh; in a land parched and weary with no water," David says in Psalm 63, Verse 2. Proverbs is filled with affirmations about proper character building. In fact the entire book is said to be written with this understanding in mind. The first four verses of the book state: "The proverbs of Shelomo the son of David, king of Yisraél; to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion." Later Proverbs states: "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life. Do not enter into the path of the wicked, and do not go in the way of evil men."

Perhaps the biggest indication that the 12 Steps are more clearly rooted in Biblical verses can be seen in one of the more famous commandments that G-d espouses to Moses and the Nation of Israel. "The Lord shall establish thee a holy people to himself, as he has sworn to thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy G-D, and walk in his ways." The commandment to walk in his ways, to act as G-D would act in a particular situation, is perhaps one of the most integral concepts not only in Judaism, but in the entire religious outlook of ethical monotheism, which not only Judaism falls under, but Christianity as well. If one thing can be said for the Twelve Steps it is that the thrust of the program itself is surrender to the infinite leads to a cleansing of character. This cleansing of a person's character can be likened to digging a hole or creating a void, yet no hole or void remains empty and this is where those addicts connected to the 12 Steps and really all of us find themselves. What are we going to fill the void and hole up with? The answer is: "... walk in his ways." This is the joint message of the Bible and 12 Steps and this is the message that has helped addicts recover and most of mankind aspire to a higher sense of purpose and morality.

About the Author

David Mark writes for numerous websites that focus on spreading information that is important for humanity. Learn more about the [Biblical Roots of the 12 Steps](#).

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