

## INTRODUCTION

J. Golden Kimball was one of the most colorful characters of the early frontier days in Utah. One day he commented, “All you have to do to live a long and fruitful life is just get yourself an incurable disease – and then take care of it.”

After chuckling over that comment for a while, I began to wonder why it seemed so true. Was it that age inevitably brings us all to one ailment or another? That must be it.

It also seems true that humans do better when something forces them to a conscious surrender – when some “unfortunate circumstance” moves them out of willful, self-centered choices and brings them to a steady, disciplined, more humble way of life.

It is my assumption that everybody who picks up this book has run into a giant somewhere along the way. If you are like me, you have slung lots of rocks at it, and maybe even returned to work or home thinking somebody would crown you king for such heroic deeds against “Goliath.” Only, this giant never really fell, never went away. And though in time we may have learned that life is still possible, or even better than before, we also have discovered that this giant will *never* really go away, never sleep, never promise to leave us alone. A few careless moves and we will be in big trouble again, probably bigger than before – very possibly too big.

So we have our incurable disease, our nemesis. Life cannot be our way or on our terms anymore. Many of us have discovered, to our amazement, that these “unfortunate circumstances” (or whatever we call our *dis-ease*) have also been the necessary ingredients for getting us onto a spiritual path. We know, at last, that we need help. It is the First Step. It is the First Beatitude. Knowing this, we also discover that there is more help available than we had ever imagined, and from more than human sources.

Another surprise for many of us is that spiritual paths have been all around us all of our lives, only they were camouflaged. People call them funny names, like “church” or “temple.” Even the people in and around such places do not always realize that they are “fronts” for a spiritual path. We finally get on a spiritual path because we are

desperate for help, and then we begin to discover incredible connections with those familiar places we have known since our youth.

Several years ago, my congregation was informed one Sunday morning that I would not be there to preach for a few weeks because I was in an alcoholic treatment center. The last thing I wanted to do, when I came out of that hospital, was to stand in a pulpit and say anything to anybody!

But there was no other plan running, and I certainly had not had a chance to devise one. So Sunday came and there I was. There seemed to be nothing for it but to continue doing what I had been doing, at least until we all had a chance to regroup. I assumed that meant the church would find a new minister and I would find a new vocation.

Sunday morning came, and it was as strange and painful as I had imagined it would be. But the days after came swiftly, and other things began to happen. I was going to twelve-step meetings and church meetings and Bible Study groups. Rather quickly, people came to counsel with me again, only now some of them talked even more freely than before. Soon all of these things kept getting mixed up together until it was hard to tell where church left off and the twelve-step program began; where helping others left off and getting help myself began; where sharing in a meeting left off and preaching began.

As the weeks passed and nobody asked for my resignation, I found less and less opportunity to plan or look for my next career. It also seemed to me that the precepts of the Christian Faith were getting clearer and more personal and more practical than ever.

I had to be careful not to mention the twelve-step program too much in the church – or the church too much in twelve-step meetings. While the two seemed ever more closely related to me, there were those in the church who resented or feared the twelve-step program. And there were numerous people in the twelve-step program who feared, resented or were angry toward the church. (Very interesting, and for many interesting reasons, but we will not get into that.)

Eventually some church members discovered that twelve-step programs were a lifesaver. Eventually some twelve-step friends discovered that the church was the source, and an endless resource, of the wisdom and power that flow in the twelve-step program.

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It has been particularly fascinating for me to find myself on both sides of the fence – trying to recover and trying to preach – and finding a similar “Path” being spoken of in both places and in both “Big Books.”

I write the thoughts in these pages as straightforward musings about the Christian Way, yet with the “giant” dogging my steps – and “The Program” ringing in one ear, even as the Scriptures of another “Program” ring in the other. Whatever your giant, whatever your program of recovery, I hope you will find connections in these pages that will seem as encouraging and exciting to you as they do to me.

I would also like to thank Pat Moriarty and Steve White for envisioning and encouraging this book. Pat has worked on it almost as hard as I have.