

A Tattoo That Helps to Find Peace: The Serenity Prayer



Some of us get tattoos for pure aesthetics, for the love art, because we like to exclaim ourselves, or maybe because we need a permanent reminder. I was inspired to write this piece from a tattoo I saw on my friend, Matt Krul, who I hadn't seen in a while. He recently got it in October and I could tell because it had that sharp, fresh look about it. It was done really well even though it was placed in the very sensitive spot on the inside of the upper arm.

Luckily I had my camera on me and forced him to talk about his latest and greatest. Matt was raised in a pretty strict Catholic home and attended Catholic school during his formative years. Not only did he practice the Serenity Prayer at school but also at home where both his Mother and Grandmother said it every night before bedtime.

Then one year his Sicilian roots brought about a commonality with a complete stranger he happened to meet in Miami. He was frequenting a restaurant and randomly chatting it up with a gentleman who happened to be from the same region as Matt in Italy. Even funnier, they ended up being 3rd cousins from his Mom's side, the DiPasquale family. It was this newfound friend who translated the Serenity Prayer for him in Sicilian and on his 29th birthday, Matt got his living mantra inked on his arm.

God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change
Courage to change the things I can
And the wisdom to know the difference

These words have special meaning to those who are often 'looking for peace' at a time of turmoil, despair, or uncertainty in their lives. It also offers strength and calm in pursuit of a more stable life. The utterance of these words mean that we are acknowledging God's existence and recognizing that He is truly the only one who can bring about inner peace regardless of chaotic circumstances.

The prayer goes on to speak of accepting courage and wisdom. It all comes down to asking and allowing God to give us these things, or in other words, surrendering to Him. The second part reminds us that our trust needs to be in God to work things out and recognize that we usually don't have any real control over hardships in this world or the actions of others.

The exact origin of the prayer has really been quite a mystery. Some say it came from the early Greeks; others think it was from the pen of an anonymous English poet; and others have claimed an American Naval officer wrote it. What is undisputed is the claim of authorship by the theologian Dr. Rheinbold Niebuhr who had written the prayer as a tag line to a sermon he had delivered on Practical Christianity.

The prayer has been adopted by Alcoholic Anonymous and other twelve-step programs. An A.A. member brought to Bill W., founder of A.A., a caption from the New York Herald Tribune obituary that had the Serenity Prayer. Never had he seen so much A.A. in so few words. He had the prayer printed on small, wallet-sized cards to be included in every piece of outgoing mail and is now regularly repeated during every meeting.

From the Bible, Peter 4:12 says, "...don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you." Through out life we will go through many trials and hardships and going through the experiences is what makes us stronger. For many religious individuals, or even those who aren't specifically associated with a religion, but still believe in a God, turn to Him during times of weaknesses and trust that He will help us out of our situation and bring us to a place of peace. We can do this through meditation or prayer, and that one such prayer that can bring us closer with God is the Serenity Prayer. Thank you Matt for your inspiration!