

5 MOMENTS: SPIRITUAL DIRECTION FOR ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

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I want to start by acknowledging some of the criticisms of the Adult Children of Alcoholics literature and movement if you will. Firstly, some people see this as a way of blaming your parents for everything and not looking into yourself. This can happen if the process stops halfway and one does not deal effectively with their anger. ACOAs need to grieve about what has happened to them.

Secondly, alcoholism counselors sometimes feel that this takes away from the task at hand, which is to stop drinking. Yes, this can also happen, but part of maintaining quality sobriety may include working through ACOA issues. I have heard many people in AA, who were stuck, become reopened in ACOA groups.

Thirdly, many psychologists and psychiatrists pass off codependency and ACOA as compulsive personalities or borderline personalities. This is true, but only part of the dynamic. Codependent people are compulsive, but so what? What can be done to help them? The ACOA 12-step groups seem to be helping many. That is the bottom line. What can be done to help adult children of alcoholics? There are many of them in our seminaries and religious formation communities and many who are ordained ministers.

This year at SML we have had an ACOA group which has a solid 15 people attending weekly, with another 10 who have attended once or twice or have gone to an outside group. Out of this group, 5 have entered a 28-day treatment program for their own alcoholism. There is a message here and some breakthroughs are being made with much grace. I want to focus on how these breakthroughs go through a process. I am offering some ideas on a way people can learn more about themselves, their family, the impact of their family, and be converted in their heart to a belief in God. This is not the only way or the final word, but it is a way that adult children of alcoholics find recovering through the grace of God, a mentor person, professional help possibly, and group meetings.

This is an opportunity that I would like to present that has been found helpful. I will present the dynamics of the codependency as the current literature does. Then I will look at the accompanying spiritual dimensions which have not been widely written about. These insights will come from my own experience of recovery and that of others I have come into contact with. I will try to let the literature dialogue with my experience.

It is important to define terms, so the definition of codependency that I will work from is that of Robert Subby in *Lost in the Shuffle*: "Codependency is the denial or repression of the real self. It is based on the wrong belief that love, acceptance, security, success, closeness, and salvation are all dependent upon one's ability to do 'the right thing.'" Taken from this one can see that there is no real self, because it is tied up in how much other people like me or do not like me. One's image of God is also tied up in what I do for other people, which is a tireless act of trying to do the right thing as I perceive it. Codependents have a perverted sense of the relationship of God, self, and other. Most of the ACOAs in formation for ministry today are heroes or lost children (Sean Sammon).

The hero is a compulsive giver, who has tried to make things work for their parents, better known as Mr. or Mrs. Fix-it. Vocations invite these people in their roles, because the emphasis of their lives has been the service of taking care of others (so they can feel good about themselves). The hero was the one in the family that took care of everything in the family and probably was "parent" to the parent, so never got the chance to be a child. This one usually burns out in a hurry from overwork. This one always looks real good, so it is hard to detect. After all, the church tends to reward good ministers with more work and that is how people become known and rise to coveted positions.

The lost child is the one who runs from the conflict in the family to read a book or put the headphones on to listen to the stereo, becoming very introspective. These people at one time could hide out very well in religious life or ordained ministry. It is harder today. There are also a few mascots, who are the jokers or ones to use humor to divert attention from the alcohol dependency. This is the one in ministry who shifts the focus away from problems to reduce the tension of the group. One can see that this looks attractive these days when things can get so unbearably serious. I like to think of the hero as the doer, the lost child as the thinker, and the mascot as the one who tells jokes about what the doer and the thinker are saying. The core issues for ACOAs are: (Cermak, Brow from Gravitz and Bowden)

1. Control
2. Trust
3. Avoidance or denial of feelings
4. Over responsibility
5. Ignoring one's own needs
6. Functioning in the extremes
7. Accustomed to crisis
8. Low sense of self-esteem (What other people think is of much more importance than what I think.)

It is crucial for people working with ACOAs to realize that 3 situations trigger these core issues:
(Cermak et al.)

1. Intimate Relationships
2. Transitions
3. Unexpected Events

These are vulnerable times for us all, and ACOAs have trouble with vulnerability. It is in transition that intimate relationships can suffer as proximity changes and one tends to form new intimate relationships that are prized so much for one to be healthy today. This can be compounded for those in seminaries or houses of formation if this is the first experience of living with all males or all females. It is important to note that the ACOA journey is not a different journey, but is an intensification of the journey all people go through (Lou Camelli). Unexpected events are key times of intensification or openings for those in ministry, with all the pressures and surprises existing in this time of transition for the Church as schools are closing and ministry becomes more collaborative.

Throughout the process of recovery it is important for the ACOA to feel accepted and loved for who they are and where they are at and then to be called forward to courage to feel the grace of God as they trust in the process. The person needs to remember that they cannot do this alone. It is essential to go to meetings and I feel that for many, a mentor person is necessary for someone to be walking through this with, preferably who has already walked this path before. It is helpful to remember that fear is the core feeling that makes an ACOA react the way he/she does. The ACOA is afraid that no one will like them if they really know who they are, so if someone accepts them it is like opening a can to allow the person to become more vulnerable and transparent.

There are several images that are helpful in understanding this process. The obvious religious image is that of Jesus dying and rising as an ACOA dies to the self he/she perceives others to have, to form one of his/her own. Another image which is helpful is (Robert Subby) the image of a car that has a body repaired with all kinds of spots of bondo. People are scarred and run through life with patched up feelings. We never become fully recovered or perfect. Another analogy I like is like taking off the armor of a soldier or the pads off a football player or the costume off an actor to see who is really under there. The ACOA self-concept can be summed up by saying: "If you are what you do and you don't, then you aren't" (Robert Subby). There also often is an analogy to dancing (Birmingham and Connolly).

At first a person is nervous to ask another to dance as they are afraid to be rejected or not liked as they are. If the other says no, then the person will never come back or will divert their attention elsewhere. If the answer is "Yes," then the people will get to know each other a little better. This is how it is in a relationship with a spiritual director or mentor person. If the ACOA is accepted, then he/she will risk to become vulnerable.

Finally, there is an analogy to the retina of the eye. The eye can only see so much light as the retina can allow in. The eye can only handle so much at one time, so it has to let a little in at a time. An ACOA also has to take it slow and uncover a little at a time. Once the ACOA accepts in his/her heart something about his/her codependency, then he/she is ready to move on and open up wider. For the ACOA to look at their own issues is like walking into a lighted room from pitch black.

I want to present five moments of recovering spiritually that Father Tom Hickey, Director of Personal Development, Associate Dean of Formation, and Spiritual Director at Mundelein Seminary has created through his experience of working with ACOAs in spiritual direction and formation. Father Hickey created these moments, and both of us have fleshed them out in dialogue with each other as we presented these to the spiritual directors at Mundelein Seminary. This is a continual process of trying to get from the head to the

heart or going from intellectual awareness to gut-level acceptance. It is usually articulated as, "I believe it in my head, but now I believe it in my heart" or "I always knew it, but now I can live it." I want to emphasize that this can only serve as a guide, not as an absolute, but it does arise from working through painful experience.

MOMENT 1 — Totally Unaware or Flaming Codependency The totally unaware or untreated codependent ACOA is in total denial of the effects of the alcoholism of his/her family on him/her. This person is extremely frustrating to deal with, because the denial is so unconscious and the defense mechanisms that keep that denial intact are so sophisticated and socialized in that person.

There are many well known characteristics, but I would like to point to some key ones:

1. Preoccupied.
2. Trying to look good externally.
3. Do not always really hear, because of not listening.
4. Learn the ins and outs of survival.
5. Uncomfortable with self.
6. DENIAL.
7. Low-grade depression.
8. Confusion — Know something is wrong, but not what or why.
9. Focus outward, avoid looking at self within.
10. Incredibly comfortable in crisis.

The ACOA looks incredibly good on the outside, yet there is a hint of never being satisfied or "happy" as culture would have it. There is a preoccupation with what others say about him/her and with how he/she is being perceived. It is like an apple without a core or a house without a foundation. It looks great on the outside, but is falling apart within. The person may sense something wrong, feeling lonely or depressed or down on themselves (these people are very self-critical), but cannot put this all together. It is a mysterious puzzle at this stage. If you ask this person how they are, the response will be what they have done, for example, "Yes, I'm fine. I've gotten all kinds of things done today and I am looking forward to a break." Thus, the person is tied up in function and role, so it is no wonder that she/he could burn out fast.

A. Self The view of self in an untreated ACOA is very unsatisfied with relationships. He/she always focuses outward instead of inward where all the real action is. There is a lot of guilt felt within, especially if I cannot fix the situation at home or wherever. There is an emotional dependence on others, which allows for no self to be realized.

B. Relationship This person cannot see him/herself without being in relation to another. There is a perverse sense of what it is to relate to God, self, and other. There is not a self as such, and there is no God in the sense of being accepted in the heart. In actuality, the person is playing God because he/she tries to take care of it all him/herself. The ACOA sees relating to God as taking care of another; it is like doing something for God.

C. Significant Other The significant other, friend, spiritual director, formation advisor, authority or whoever deals with an ACOA in an intimate or gut-level way can be very helpful. This person can let the ACOA fall and not enable his/her behavior. It is key that this person invite the ACOA to pursue their history. It may be good to ask about key time, events, or people. The guide can help the ACOA to focus inward on his/her own feelings and deflect the focus from all that is going on with thousands of others that this ACOA is taking care of or who cannot live without him/her.

D. Image of God The ACOA often sees God as taskmaster or one who is always challenging him/her to be better, not being satisfied with what is, much like a coach would. It would be very tough to see God as loving and nurturing if the mother was alcoholic and as protector and father if the father were alcoholic. It is difficult for the ACOA to find an image of God, since he/she is playing that role him/ herself.

E. Prayer Prayer for this ACOA is often about the others he/she takes care of or thinks about or tries to avoid. Prayer is actually very reflective and meditative, since it is often talking to oneself. The expected prayer, such as Mass, will be done or the motions gone through because he/she has to look good. The prayer that would be helpful would be, "That I may better know myself to know Thee."

F. Scripture Since the ACOA has a troubled notion of love for God, self, and other it would be good to reflect on: Matthew 22:37-39 "Jesus said to him: 'You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it:

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” It would be helpful to see how this has been socialized in the family history of an ACOA until it has become the rule he/she lives by and suffers anxiety by as she/he becomes burned out.

MOMENT 2 — Incipient Awareness or Discovery This is the person who just went to a seminar on alcoholism and heard something on ACOA, saw the characteristics and thought, “Wow, that’s me!” This is also the person who read “It Will Never Happen to Me,” or one of the foundational books of ACOA. At this stage, there is an initial excitement, because this book or these characteristics were written as if they knew who I am and it puts some of the pieces to the puzzle together. This stage is the point of intellectual discovery. The ACOA believes it in his/her head, but it will take his/her heart a while to accept it, so this may take some time. The ACOA wants to talk about this stuff he/she is learning, like a kid in front of the Christmas trees excited about all the new toys to play with. However, the ACOA does not have the ability to talk about a lot of it, so often the growth can stop at the intellectual level and “I can handle it myself.”

A. Self The ACOA starts to learn that there is not a “self” within him/her. There is some relief and fear but also some frustration, because even though she/he realizes all this, it does not help the pain go away. In fact, this might be a time that there is pain that has not been realized before. The ACOA is always reporting new discoveries. Often at this stage the person engages in an increased amount of activity to reduce the pain of all this discovery. This is the one who has no time to eat or sleep because she/he is too busy doing all these “good things.” This person is dangerous, because she/he knows the language, so she/he can sound together, but is not.

B. Relationship This person realizes that he/she is taking care of others for less than altruistic reasons, but cannot stop doing it anyway. The motivation is discovered yet she/he cannot change the way she/he relates to others because it is so much a part of him/her. This is a time that an ACOA starts to really resent his/her parents and probably blames them for all this or she/he may not believe they could be this sick, especially the non-drinking codependent parent. Also, like tends to hang around like, so many of his/her friends are probably also ACOAs, so he/she is probably buying out the bookstore on “It Will Never Happen to Me” for all his/her friends, making life very tense. This is a time that a hero starts to resent all the people she/he has been caretaker for. The relationship of God, self, and other does not change, but it is realized a little.

C. Significant Other The key person here is very crucial if the ACOA is to go to the next stage. The significant other needs to allow the ACOA the literature to discover, but must encourage the person to go beyond the head and to talk about these discoveries. An ACOA needs to talk about this to be accepted, so she/he will have the courage to get to the gut-level. The ACOA may feel ashamed or embarrassed by his/her family, but through acceptance from another, an ACOA can be freed of these feelings. The significant person needs to allow the ACOA the opportunity to focus on his/her gut and not allow them to focus on the intellectualization or the exterior issues, because when the gut starts to feel the pain then things really happen. The guide can reassure the ACOA when she/he gets impatient or discouraged that there is no instant recovery, then call him/her to patience and courage. This is the time for gentle confrontation or not buying into the rationalizations. This significant person can also help the ACOA to deal with the major fear or ambivalence in going from his/her head to the heart. This is the major frustration for people working with ACOAs.

D. Image of God She/he might be very angry at God, or angry that she/he is not really God. The issue of control is the heart of it all. God might be the one who put me through all this. How could God do this? This could cause some trembling in the vocation of an ACOA with God coming into the ballgame. The notion of God’s power can be felt.

E. Prayer This is a stage of going through the motions in prayer. There might be some good attempts at trying some new and more profound prayer, but it is like Lent in that there is always an excuse not to do it. This could be a time that she/he asks, “God, what do I do with all this crap?”

F. Scripture The psalms might become appealing, but this passage might be helpful to realize the way people relate to God, self and other: I Corinthians 3:6, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.” This is said to ministers to make them realize their role in ministry. The idea is to reflect and realize how the ACOA has tried to plant seed and water it and then get all upset if it does not grow. Somewhere God has to be let into the picture for growth to take place. The ACOA can be analogous to the seed growing or in their ministry he/she can try to identify the role of Apollos.

MOMENT 3 — Anger and Depression or Sitting in Your Own Mess There is a real ambivalence that precedes this stage like none of the others. This is a period of real darkness and depression like that of Good

Friday, but this might also be the major period of grace and growth. It must be working because it feels so lousy. This is where an ACOA finally allows him/herself to feel the depths of their feelings, which is major anger and depression. This is when she/he faces his/her own life history at a gut-level, moving out of the intellectualization of the previous stage. The anger and depression outweigh the fear that has frozen him/her keeping him/her from feeling anything but numb. This is a time when she/he is most vulnerable and out of control. Imagine what it is like to feel all those years of fear, anger, and depression all at once for the first time. It is like the Mr. Potato Head toy with all its parts scattered all over the ground. It is at this time that there is no choice, but to go in a new direction, because she/he is truly powerless and broken. This can be the time of tremendous breakthrough. This is when vivid old memories come haunting back like they were yesterday. This might also take a long time to work through.

A. Self The picture of the ACOA self at this stage is one of real brokenness and powerlessness. He/she fears becoming totally unglued, so it is a good time to lay low in the background. He/she realizes the role he/she has played as caretaker, comedian, or one who runs from his/her own pain. She/he finds a boundary between self and everything else. There really is a self, but it hurts like crazy. It is like a car that has not been well maintained, so is falling apart. The self-concept gets some real priority at this time. There might be a pendulum swing from valuing others utmost to coveting self. This is a time when it is real tough just to get out of bed, because she/he feels like a worn-out dish rag. The song, "Sounds of Silence," by Simon and Garfunkel captures the feeling very well.

B. Relationship As mentioned, self comes to the forefront, but God might be the most significant actor of all. God is usually very important to people who are totally broken and powerless. This is the time that the burden gets so cumbersome that the ACOA just lets God take it, because she/he obviously cannot handle it. As she/he realizes the roles involved and feels alone in his/her predicament, he/she wonders who really cares about him/her. His/her relationships are all called into question since many of them are with other codependents and it is at this time that he/she needs to stay away from those toxic relationships in order to be recovering.

C. Significant Other This is the time when a guide needs to be very reassuring and to affirm the ACOA of his/her own goodness. The ACOA feels awful and is concentrating on all the darkness, so someone has to point to the light or else it gets overwhelming. The significant other needs to listen to and accept that person in his/her brokenness, so he/she remains feeling free to share his/her own depression, which is the primary activity that must take place at this stage. It is also time to find appropriate means or settings to share this depression. The guide can encourage the ACOA into going to meetings if not already, but it is very important that the ACOA find good counseling if it is needed. I think that this is the time for counseling and people in ministry have usually benefitted from it. The counselor can help the ACOA put themselves back together and reconcile some of this baggage. An ACOA might also be more comfortable with someone who does not know him/her to share this embarrassing knowledge with. This is the time to find the best person to do a step 5 with, and it is helpful to have a professional to guide you through a step 4 to make it possible for a step 5. This is also a good time to put him/her in contact with someone who has gone through this experience, because it is easier to feel it is worthwhile to go through this if someone has modeled this direction. The mentor, counselor, and group can complement each other. The counselor will help uncover some pain and depression. The group will provide the forum to share this depression appropriately. Then the mentor can provide the support, encouragement, and call to courage to stick it out.

D. Image of God God is almighty and powerful at this stage. God needs to be seen as forgiving to pass through this darkness. God is truly powerful and the ACOA is truly powerless. This is a time that she/he might feel God's presence as never before. His/her faith in God (Higher Power) is what will get him/her through this mess. The Paschal Mystery is very much alive, and that promise of hope is what gives him/her the motivation to go through this along with seeing someone else who has walked before him/her. At this point God becomes more important and distinct from others. Actually, this is the moment that I truly converted to believing in God and quit trying to play God. This is the time that I was so powerless I had to turn to God for help.

E. Prayer This is a stage where there is much time spent in prayer, which is very much alive and full of feeling. This can be captured in the Psalms where the language is gut-level and paints a picture. Prayer is a real priority as God becomes all-important. F. Scripture Perhaps something from the account of Jesus' crucifixion would be helpful. In Jeremiah 20, his interior crisis pegs the feelings well. The Book of Psalms is popular to use to look for guidance. "Into your hands I hand over my life to you, Lord."

MOMENT 4 — Clarifying Core Issues or Breaking through in Recovery This is when he/she starts to get a healthy priority of a sense of self. There is a sense that he/she has a foundation, while realizing that she/he is powerless and might fall apart again if he/she does not take care of him/herself. The ACOA senses patterns of behavior and starts to change his/her response from the past. There is a general freeing up from the past and the power it had in numbing the ACOA's feelings. There is some healthy exhibitions of anger that were formerly held within, causing depression. This is a time when he/she starts to feel a sense of inner peace from the freedom. There is a noticeable difference in temperament from the previous stage as he/she goes from being very depressed, serious, and somber to being a little upbeat and having a positive outlook to life.

A. Self This is the time she/he realizes the importance of taking care of him/herself. She/he might carry it the other direction and get somewhat self-centered before balance is achieved, but she/he is no longer consumed with all this depression and anger. It takes the ACOA a while to feel comfortable with taking care of him/herself without feeling self-centered. She/he starts to accept the value of his/her own needs. The self-esteem comes from within, not from everyone else. It can also be discouraging to find out how easy it is to fall back into the old patterns.

B. Relationships There is massive change here as he/she begins to relate with others in more of a mutual way. She/he will become more vulnerable and transparent around others as the fear lessens, but never goes away. She/he begins to resolve some of the more messed up relationships and abandon the relationships that really were not friendships at all. She/he realizes that she/he has changed and that others may react differently to that change, causing some loss or damage to some relationships formerly held in high esteem. This might be the Christmas that she/he spends alone, because his/her family is too sick to be around as they endanger his/her recovery. Some boundaries are set up and he/she no longer seeks needy relationships.

C. Significant Other The guide needs to point out all these areas of growth and breakthrough. The guide's role lessens in importance, but is still necessary to keep well-grounded, just as it is necessary to go to meetings. The guide will hear stories of healing and reconciliation and can celebrate the new awareness of the ACOA's heart.

D. Image of God This is the time that I feel that the ACOA feels truly converted in his/her heart to God. His/her head and heart live out that faith, so he/she does not have to talk a good game; his/her example says it all. Forgiveness is a major theme as he/she has felt the healing presence of God. The image of God takes a sharp shift to that of acceptance, forgiveness, healing, and unconditional love, which she/he has experienced in this process.

E. Prayer Prayer takes on a theme of gratefulness and thankfulness to God. The image of being God's instrument of peace in the Prayer of St. Francis becomes very real. He/she realizes the importance of turning her/his life over to God everyday to remind him/herself that God is in control. This is when I think of the part in the Mass, where the celebrant says, "May the Lord be with you." I think he should say, "The Lord is with you." After all, we believe in a God who is all loving and always presence. It is at this moment that we become present to God. This is when I stopped saying, "God, please be with me today" and started saying, "God, I'll try to be with you today." There is a subtle difference, but it is we who need to remember God. God already is aware of us.

F. Scripture He/she feels the experience of the woman at the well, when she lets go of her water jar to be free from it. This story is helpful to reflect upon throughout the entire process, but the freedom of the water jar is especially important here. Just as the ACOA is free of those unhealthy relationships and self-esteem, so is the woman forgiven and free from her past dependence on that water jar.

John 4: 4-42, 28-29

The woman then left her water jar and went off into the town. She said to the people: "Come and see someone who told me everything I ever did! Could this not be the Messiah?" This passage would be good for a step 5 reflection as the ACOA realizes that God knows and understand, so why hide it. This also shows an experience of God that I feel an ACOA has never had before this moment. I think that we really need an experience of feeling God, for us to believe in our hearts or truly be converted.

MOMENT 5 — Ongoing Recovery or The Long Haul This is the time where the weighty work has been done and now is the time to maintain and grow in recovery. The ACOA has freed him/herself from much of the past baggage and is fairly comfortable with his/her human weakness and imperfection, although the tendencies to be perfect are still there, but fought off much of the time. Problems are not incapacitating for him/her

now as they are more like hills than mountains. Honesty and authenticity are very important here. This is when he/she realizes and accepts recovery to be a life-long process.

A. Self She/he becomes much more honest with her/himself and sets limitations for themselves. His/her continued recovery is a major priority and meetings are valued, although she/he might be looking toward some 12-step work. She/he is more able to appreciate the beauty of him/herself and delight in that. She/he can enjoy things much more and take life a lot less seriously because things are lighter and nothing seems as heavy as it was before.

B. Relationship She/he looks for honesty in relationships with others and realizes that he cannot fool God. She/he recognizes games played and rationalizations made as she/he may point them out compassionately or leave them alone when he/she realizes the other is too sick to hear it. There is a real compassion for the imperfections of others and a patience with others. She/he might be more at peace with her/his family and their power in his life would be diminished. She/he will not try to change them, but they will notice a big difference in him/her, so his/her serenity may attract and motivate someone else to growth.

C. Significant Other This might be a sponsor or spiritual director or whoever was the one to walk with him/her through the dark days of recovering. That person reminds him/her and keeps him/her in touch with his/her roots. There is no longer the dependence on that other, but there is a priority to spend time with that person to remain healthy. A spiritual director is very important at this time, because the deeper people get into their spiritual journey, the more they need guidance.

D. Image of God God is a loving and forgiving parent. She/he has experienced this love and forgiveness, so now can accept that image in his/her heart. Life is a gift and he/she feels very grateful to God for the miracle in their life. God is now the one he/she relies on.

E. Prayer Prayer is the way he/she lives out that reliance on God. It is very important to spend time with God, since God is who he/she depends on. She/he seeks God's advice on things. The serenity prayer and prayer of St. Francis can be real staples at this time. Prayer is not an obligation, but is a privileged time that is revered. It is a time to be mindful of possible pitfalls and gain some perspective on life at that time.

F. Scripture Once again the woman at the well gives a good image for reflection. John 4: 4-42, 13-14 Jesus replied: "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I give will never be thirsty; no, the water I give shall become a fountain within him/her, leaping up to provide eternal life."

The ACOA at this point will feel that she/he has found the living water as long as she/he turns to God for a drink. No longer is there a roller coaster of emotion, but one of confidence in where God is leading him/her, although there are still the tendencies to go back to drinking from the well as that will never go away.

Conclusion Spirituality is a circular concept and there is always movement as people enter into their own journey. The above five moments present a journey of growth and acceptance along many paths or circles.

The main movement is from one trying to play God and be God to themselves and others, to one who believes in God and invites God into their lives. There is a shift from acting out of fear toward acting more out of love as the power of anger lessens. There is a willingness to open oneself up to God and one's feelings, where there formerly existed a willfulness to shut all that off. People go from having to pray to wanting to pray. Boundaries are established and people learn to say, "No I am not able to do this today" and not feel guilty about it. Relationships that were one-way drop off and mutual relationships have the opportunity to flourish. There becomes a sense of internal life inside oneself instead of only an external one. Actually what happens is that the fight between God and self becomes a surrender to God. Surrender to God is the primary struggle all of us face daily as Christians. Once we surrender we can feel again, instead of being constantly numb.

This movement in ACOAs is a real invitation and opportunity that can be offered to an estimated 28 million people in the U.S. who have grown up in alcoholic households. I have no concrete figures on seminar-ians, but I know that I have never been in any group of people, studying for ministry, where there are less than 50% of that given group whose families have been affected by alcoholism. Anytime that people can be offered an opportunity to surrender to God, I feel it is our place as ministers and believers to try to be open and willing to that invitation. There are many breakthroughs being made and much healing taking place.