

bread for the journey

Conversion

I don't particularly care about Tiger Woods' private life. What he does off the golf course is his business and neither mine nor yours.

What makes Tiger Woods special and newsworthy is the way he plays golf. He is simply the best there ever was to play the game. He has offered a public apology for his off-the-course, out-of-bounds behavior. His *mea culpa* was carried by nearly every media outlet. What stood out during his 13-minute speech was this one remark: "My wife told me she is not interested in hearing my words about how I am going to change; what interests her is that my behavior changes over time." Well said.

Tiger is talking about conversion. It is what I want to talk with you about today.

During treatment at Rosecrance, lots of discussion takes place. Stories are exchanged. Confessions march out of the closets. Secrets tumble out of mouths. Tears of repentance flow. Declarations of being "sick and tired of being sick and tired" are commonplace. Expressions of remorse and shame help connect the dots as we get to the bottom of our soul's deepest longings.

What we say is important and necessary for healing to take place. We need to speak, write, and pray the truth or we have no chance of getting well. Hiding behind a facade of pride or a wall of "I'm OK, Jack" makes recovery impossible. Failure to own up to how badly we feel about our behavior while under the influence is a prescription for failure. Rigorous honesty about our

past actions is risky and painful but it is the only clear path to recovery. Folks who communicate only in clichés and vague generalities go nowhere in recovery except to another relapse and a sorry continuation of their downward spiral. We urge specifics and tangibles. Nothing we have done comes as a surprise to anyone of us—and that includes all of us—who are certifiably insane, broken down sinners, or card-carrying addicts.

Why are we all here? Because, we're not all there. Honest. No one has cornered the market on failure and regret. Those who leave treatment successfully have spoken the truth and declared in no uncertain terms their stories of powerlessness and unmanageability. Honesty is what gets us out the door. Honesty is what turns on the lights.

Is that conversion? No. Conversion is repentance. The Greeks called it *metanoia* or change of mind. Talk—self disclosure of our deepest, darkest secrets and rigorous honesty—is not conversion. It tills the soil and plants the seed, which is essential to bring forth a crop, but it is not the crop. The crop is a change of behavior that erupts and blossoms over time. The Greeks had something. It does take a change of mind.

We know that a change of mind in recovery happens over time. It takes quite some time for the mind to reset and change. Anywhere from six months to two years. *Metanoia* or conversion happens over time. And the place you look for signs of a changed mind is not in your head but in your feet. Essentially, what Elin told Tiger was, "I don't believe a thing you say until I see where your feet take you." Put your feet on the ground and head in a new and certain direction.

We may have 1001 new insights by the time we leave treatment. *Terrific.*


We may have made a passel of new promises by discharge. *Great.*
(continued on back)

We may have seen the light of a new day and had a spiritual experience. *Wonderful.*
 We may leave Rosecrance full of gratitude, joy and hope. *Praise God. Treatment works. Life's waiting.*
 We may leave with new contacts and sober friends. *How promising.*
 We may carry a certificate that says, "Completed Treatment Successfully." *Super.*
 We may have renewed our conscious contact with God as we understand him. *Nice.*

But, the proof is in the puddin'. Listening to "sober talks" is important for recovery. It is not merely in the stories but in the testimony: "Hi, my name is Bobby Joe and I am an addict. I have been clean for seven years, and I did it one day at a time!" That's the puddin', my friends. Conversion is all about walking the talk and walking the walk.

Metanoia begins with an "about face." Treatment can do that. It takes us by the shoulders and helps us to make a 180-degree turn. This is essential in our recovery. But it is only a first step.

In fact, it is not a step at all; it is merely a turnaround. We haven't gone anywhere yet; we haven't proven anything to anyone. But at least we are pointed in a new direction. What steps we take from this point are completely on us. Watch your feet and see where they take you.

Some of us recently commemorated Ash Wednesday with ashes imprinted upon our foreheads. It is an ancient ritual to remind us we are dust and to dust we shall return. Between the moment of our birth and the moment of our death let us repent—be converted—and believe the good news. Good news? What good news? The good news that God has not given up on us nor will he ever give up on us, any one of us. So in the knowledge and encouragement of that good news, let us get on with the lifelong business of repentance. Let us put our feet on the ground and move in a new direction with our lives. 



The Rev. Dr. William Lenters, Chaplain

Rosecrance offers the best opportunity for lasting recovery for adolescents, adults and their families. If you know someone who needs help, please call us at 815.391.1000 or 888.9 AT LAST. www.rosecrance.org.

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is a bi-monthly news and views letter from Rev. Dr. William Lenters, Chaplain at Rosecrance Treatment Centers. Bread for the Journey is written on behalf of people who live with addictions. Together, and by God's grace, we will try to make a difference.

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