

September 2004

The Messenger

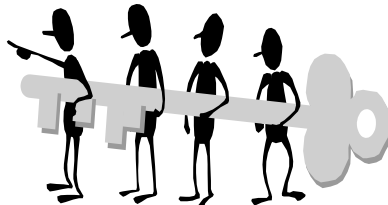
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SINGLENES OF PURPOSE

This article is being reprinted from Alcoholics Anonymous, A Newsletter For Professionals—Winter 2000-2001.

So Often in AA , everything old is new again. Today, for instance, many people suffering a variety of ailments other than alcoholism are steered to AA, causing confusion among members and the professional community alike. A new problem? Not at all. More than 40 years ago the Fellowship was faced with similar conflict, and Bill W.'s response cut to the heart of AA's reason for being, its singleness of purpose.

"Sobriety - Freedom from alcohol - through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps, is the sole purpose of an AA group," he wrote in the February 1958 issue of the AA Grapevine. "Groups have repeatedly tried other activities, and they have always failed. It has also been learned that there is no possible way to make non-alcoholics into AA members. We have to confine our membership to alcoholics, and we have to confine our AA groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to these principles, we shall almost certainly collapse. And if we collapse, we cannot help anyone."



'Identification is the Key to Recovery'

Additionally, points out AA member, Allan W., Southeast New York's delegate to AA's General Service Conference, that acts as the group conscience for AA in the US and Canada, and chairman of the 2002 Conference Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community (CPC), "Bill was convinced that the more AA 'tends to its own affairs and minds it own business,' the more unified, successful and respected we'll be. (*Alcoholics Anonymous Come of Age*, p. 233) Allan says. "We welcome people who share about things that might threaten their sobriety, but the common denominator must be alcoholism. Alcoholics may wrestle with several other addictions as well, but all addicts are not alcoholics; all overeaters or gamblers or drug-takers are not alcoholics. In hammering out AA's primary purpose - 'to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety' - this was the point our founders felt to be so vital to the long-term stability of the Fellowship."



STEP NINE PROMISES:

"If we are painstaking about the phase of our development,

- ◆ We will be amazed before we are half way through.
- ◆ We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
- ◆ We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
- ◆ We will comprehend the word Serenity and we will know peace.
- ◆ We will see how our experience can benefit others.
- ◆ That feeling of uselessness and self pity will disappear.
- ◆ We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
- ◆ Self seeking will slip away.
- ◆ Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
- ◆ Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
- ◆ We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
- ◆ We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us — sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

*Alcoholics Anonymous
Pages 83 & 84*

An Opportunity to be of Service

Santa-Barbara is a mecca of recovery and I consider myself fortunate to have gotten sober here. Although I love the myriad of meetings available to me I know meetings alone are not enough to keep me sober. I have a sponsor whom I love and respect and have found that every time I have taken his advice it has yielded positive results. He suggested that I find a home group and get a few commitments. At one of my groups a H & I rep put out the call saying that H & I is underrepresented in this area. Visions of the early Bill W., & Dr. Bob

came into my head and I was excited for the opportunity to get involved.

At my first H & I meeting I was unsure how I would fit in. It seemed like a typical board meeting complete with minutes and an agenda! People were making motions for things I later learned would shape the face of H & I in this area, but I still felt I was not much help here. I continued with my commitment the second Monday of each month, and reported back to my home group the need for people to take part of this critical area of our fellowship.

I did not realize at the time that simply by my presence and reporting that I would be inspiring

others to act if not today, at some time in their recovery. Also I now have the opportunity to volunteer in our H & I presence at the next local A.A. convention and deepen my feeling of belonging in this loving family, the fellowship of A.A. By simply showing up I am exposed to many different areas of participation. With absolutely no pressure to do so, I avail myself to opportunities that speak to my heart and the rewards I receive create a satisfying life for myself. If you would like to join in we would love to have you! Why not visit an H & I meeting this month and see what we can do for your program?

~ Dan F.

The Managers Corner

I attended an AA meeting in a prison last night. This is not something new for me, I have the privilege of being able to attend these type of meetings regularly. But this meeting was especially powerful for all of us who were there. One of the inmates shared with all of about his recovery. He talked of spending the last twenty-seven years incarcerated. About the fact that his choice to drink and use the way he had was what put him where he was. He talked about the fact that life in prison has a great degree of sameness every day. About being told when to wake up, when to eat, and when he could or could not see his family and others dear to him, and he spoke of the humiliation of being strip-searched after a visit. He also talked about some of the things that he was aware he had missed out on. Watching his children grow up, being there for people who died, and a lot of other things that most of us take for granted. Then he spoke about Alcoholics Anonymous. About staying sober for the last twenty plus

years, and how much it meant to him. About the freedom it gave him to live more comfortably, in spite of his surroundings. That being able to carry the message to others gave him a sense of purpose and something constructive to do with his time. That taking the Steps of the program had helped him change from the person he was to the person he wanted to be. Then he told the men who were not serving life sentences that the day would come when they were once again on the outside, and that at that point they would have the freedom to choose whether they wanted to stay out or not. Something that might never happen for him. That he was convinced because of all the meetings he had attended inside that there were people waiting on the outside who would welcome them to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and help them stay out. He spoke of being impressed by the fact that we were willing to give up our own Friday evening in order to be there for the meeting. I just need to say that we were the ones who were helped, that we would not have missed it for the world.

Tim W.

Supporting Member Donation Coupon

this form can be used for both new sign-ups and regular contributions

Yes, I would like to become a supporting member of the Santa Barbara AA Central Office, and help it continue 'carrying the message' and being there for the Alcoholic who still suffers. Please sign me up as a Supporting Member so that I may contribute on a regular basis throughout the year.

"Every AA Group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions"

Seventh Tradition (short form) reprinted with permission of AA World Services, Inc.

Enclosed is my first contribution of \$ _____, which I will continue to donate on a (please circle one) monthly, quarterly, annually, other _____ basis.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Please make checks payable to: AA Central Office, S.M.C. 1213 State Street, Suite H Santa Barbara, Ca 93101

Submit to the Messenger

What better way to share your experience, strength, and hope? Have a great idea for a theme, or something that you would like to share with the AA community? Has one of your meetings moved to a new location? Have you started a new meeting and want to get the word out there? What better way to reach the AA community, from Goleta to Carpinteria than with the Messenger? Please submit any meeting announcements, birthdays, stories, artwork, or upcoming events, etc. to be published. (You can also submit anonymously) to Central Office at 1213 State Street, Suite H Santa Barbara, CA 93101.

Submit via email to:

sbaa@silcom.com

or

calijax@cox.net

Remember, this is *your* Central Office Messenger.

Service Meetings

"...Give freely of what you find and join us"

GSR

General Service Representative Meeting Goleta Valley Community Center 5679 Hollister, Room #7

Meets the first Monday of every month at 6:00 pm

Please note this is a new location !

IGR

InterGroup Representative Meeting First Presbyterian Church 21 East Constance. Meets the

second Tuesday of every month at 6:00 pm.

H & I

Hospitals & Institutions

Central Office 1213 State Street, Suite H. Meets the second Monday of every month 6:00 pm. *Donations to H & I are accepted at Central Office.*

PI

Public Information Meeting

Please call 687-7673 for location. Meets the fourth Saturday of every month.

Visit us on the Web...

<http://www.silcom.com/>

~sbaa/

It's just around the corner!



TRUDGE THE ROAD

Santa Barbara, CA 2004

The Twentieth Annual Convention - October 22-24

The Elks Lodge, 150 N. Kellogg, Santa Barbara/Goleta

Register now to get in on the pre-convention package deals and

to assure you have a seat at the Friday night BBQ and the Saturday night banquet. Last year we sold out on many of our events, so you'll want to be sure and register early. You can now register online with your Mastercard or Visa, or you can print a copy of the registration form to mail in.

Don't forget that you can also find registration forms at Central Office and with any of your friendly committee members. Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to seeing you there.

www.sbaaconvention.com

Happy Birthday!



Liezel	1 yr
Arden	1 yr
Stephanie G	1 yr
John W.	1 yr
Mark K	1 yr
Shannon W	1 yr
Mandy	1 yr
Ray C	1 yr
Lorilee T	2 yrs
Darren W	2 yrs
Metika	3 yrs
Mike S	5 yrs
Fred	5 yrs
Tom M	6 yrs
Dan M	7 yrs
Earnest L	7 yrs
Tom P	7 yrs
Jennifer V	9 yrs
Andy R	9 yrs
Chrissy B	11 yrs
Kevin B	12 yrs
Joe F	12 yrs
Jacquelin D	13 yrs
Leslie C	16 yrs
Earl	16 yrs
Mary Michael O	17 yrs
Peter S	18 yrs
Carl H	18 yrs
Mary Anne D	18 yrs
Gordy C	20 yrs
Linda M	20 yrs
Tom	20 yrs
Elinor H	22 yrs
Jack E	29 yrs
Rick M	45 yrs
George H	47 yrs
Gardiner	56 yrs

480 Years!

One Members Ninth Step Prayer

Higher Power,
I pray for the right attitude to make my amends, being ever mindful not to harm others in the process.
I ask for Your guidance in making indirect amends.
Most important, I will continue to make amends by staying abstinent, helping others & growing in spiritual progress.

Amen

September AA History

1st AA group founded in Chicago - September 1, 1939

U.S. Assist. Surgeon General Kolb speaks at dinner for Bill and Dr Bob - September 12, 1942

Florence R, 1st female in AA in NY - September 13, 1937

WHJP in Jacksonville, FL airs *Spotlight on AA* - September 13, 1941

1st issue of Grapevine published in "pocketbook" size - September 1949

Bill D, AA #3 dies - September 17, 1954

Dallas Central Office opens its doors - September 18, 1947

Bill W & Hank P form Works Publishing Co - September 21, 1938

Bill 12 steps Bobbie V who replaced Ruth Hock as his secretary in NY - September 24, 1940

Morris Markey runs story on AA, *Alcoholics and God* in Liberty Magazine September 30, 1939

1st AA group in Mexico City is formed - September 1946

Morris Markey runs story on AA, *Alcoholics and God* in Liberty Magazine- September 30, 1939

Bill W a biography by Robert T. is published- September 30, 1975

STEP NINE

Made direct amends to those we had harmed, except when to do so would injure them or others.

READING FOR STEP NINE Big Book: Chapter 6, Into Action. From: Page 82, line 17 Thru: Page 84, line 15.

12&12: Step 9

Our experience with Step Nine prompts us to emphasize four ideas about this step.

Token amends will not do! Just what is an amend? Here is what one trusty dictionary says:

a-mend: to change for the better; improve., . to remove or correct faults in; rectify, to grow or become better by reforming oneself.

Extracted words and phrases as examples of "amends":

SELF CORRECTION

...sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will. [BB, pg. 76, line 22]

...demonstration of good will [BB, pg. 77, line 13]

...sweep off our side of the street [BB, pg. 77, line 32]

...sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it. [BB, pg. 83, line 2]

...We clean house with the family... [BB, pg. 83, line 7]

...asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love. [BB, pg. 83, line 8]

...The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.. [BB, pg. 83, line 11]

...Our behavior will convince them more than our words. [BB, pg. 83, line 15]

...There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. [BB, pg. 83, line 19]

...Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter. [BB, pg. 83, line 22]

...We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. [BB, pg. 83, line 25]

RESTITUTION

...repair the damage [we have] done in the past. [BB, pg. 76, line 21]

...set right the wrong

[BB, pg. 77, line 12]

...straighten out the past [BB, pg. 77, line 32]

...arranging the best deal...[of repayment]...we can [BB, pg. 78, line 21]

...reparations [BB, pg. 79, line 5]

...sent...money [BB, pg. 79, line 29]

...willing to go to jail [BB, pg. 79, line 30]

...make a public statement [BB, pg. 80, line 15]

...[make]...good to the wife or parents [BB, pg. 82, line 19]

...reconstruction [BB, pg. 83, line 1]

APOLOGY

...confessing our former ill feeling [BB, pg. 77, line 27]

...expressing our regret [BB, pg. 77, line 27]

...we let these people know we are sorry [BB, pg. 78, line 21]

...admitting faults [BB, pg. 79, line 28]

...admit our fault [BB, pg. 81, line 21]

...asking forgiveness [BB, pg. 79, line 28]

...A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. [BB, pg. 83, line 2]

Don't rush into amends without guidance.

You can mess up yourself and others unless the best judgment is used. And, when we are new to sobriety, our judgment is often not so

Your amends must never harm others.

Both of the books make clear that we cannot seek atonement at the expense of others. Be especially careful not to implicate or injure other people in your wrong-doing.

Don't forget about – forgiveness.

You will recall that in Step Four you listed the people who had harmed you as part of your resentment matrix. None of the steps emphasizes sufficiently that the ultimate process of resentment elimination (and they must be wiped out) is forgiveness of those we resent. If you have not yet cleaned up your resentments, you might want to finish them off in Step Nine. It then becomes the double-edged sword that cuts you free from all

harms done by you and to you.

There is a difference between being forgiven and forgiving, however. Our amends to those we have harmed are made at our own initiative and directly to the person harmed, whenever possible. On the other hand, when we are forgiving others, it is rarely appropriate to approach them to let them know they are forgiven. Why?

► They might have no idea that we have resented them. After all, the resentment is ours. Letting them in on our problem cannot do them any good, and may cause them considerable hurt feelings or aggravation—even anger.

► We have been learning not to play God and to avoid ego-serving activities. Approaching other to let them know they are forgiven would usually be thought of as self-serving. This we avoid.

If, on the other hand, the injuring party has let us know that they feel guilt about what they have done, it can often be a true act of kindness to let them know they are off the hook as far as we are concerned. We do this with true humility and compassion. We never give the impression that they owe us something for our act of forgiveness. We then try to treat them the way we want others to forgive us for our own wrongs.

There is no need at all that we be forgiven by the person we have harmed after we make an amend. If they choose to tell us we are forgiven, that is a fine gesture—one we might cherish. However, the real goal here is that you cease to know guilt stemming from your prior acts or omissions. The removal of guilt is the exclusive domain of your spiritual power.

The principle of Step 9 is:



References to Step Nine

"Good judgment, a careful sense of timing, courage, and prudence — these are the qualities we shall need when we take step nine."

"Most of us begin making certain kinds of direct amends from the day we join AA. The moment we tell our families that we are really going to try the program, the process has begun."

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
Page 83

"Direct amends, by all means, is a must, in restoring physical property to the rightful

owner, paying debts willingly within our ability to do so, and retracting the lie that hurt a reputation; but the real amends are made is scrutinizing our day-in and day-out conduct and keeping the conduct 'on the beam.'"

Best of the Grapevine II
Page 164

"In making amends, it is seldom wise to approach an individual who still smarts from our injustice to him, and announce that we have gone religious...But the man who hears our amends is sure to be impressed with our

sincere desire to set right a wrong. He is going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in talk of spiritual discoveries."

As Bill Sees It
Page 187

"There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could...But we don't delay if it can be avoided. We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone."

Alcoholics Anonymous
Page 83

TRADITION NINE

AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

The words "Let's keep it simple" were the last Bill W. heard from his fellow founder of A.A., shortly before Dr. Bob's death in 1950. Aware that "it" meant our recovery program, Bill later wrote, "We need to distinguish sharply between spiritual simplicity and functional simplicity. . . . When we get into questions of action by groups, by areas, and by A.A. as a whole, we find that we must to some extent *organize* to carry the message-or else face chaos. And chaos is not simplicity."

When Tradition Nine speaks of "A.A. as such," it goes to the heart of the A.A. experience, to the "spiritual simplicity" of one alcoholic's saying, silently perhaps, "Help!" and another alcoholic's answering, "I know how you feel. We're here to help you." Such a relationship couldn't be organized. Or could it?

A nonmember familiar with modern business procedures might examine the A.A. practice of sponsorship and see it as a haphazard operation. How about computerizing it?



Then an A.A. behind an intergroup desk might say, "So you want help? First, you need the right sponsor. We have personality profiles of all our sponsors fed into our computer. We'll match you up to the best one for you if you'll just fill out this questionnaire. . . . Where are you going? Come back!" *That* would be an attempt to organize "A.A. as such." (Please-nobody get any ideas!)

But in "action by groups," we find that we do need some degree of organization. If everybody thinks somebody else is going to make the coffee, what's the result? No coffee! To avoid such a disaster, one or more members agree to be responsible for preparing meeting refreshments. All the way from coffee-brewers to trustees on the General Service Board, those who take part in A.A. service work are assuming responsibility— *not* taking on authority. (Here, Traditions Two and Nine interlock.) Group officers are responsible to the members of the group; intergroup committees, to the groups in one locality; institutions committees, to A.A. groups in treatment facilities and correctional facilities; area committees, to all groups in their areas; Conference delegates and committees, to all groups in the U.S. and Canada; the General Service Office and Board and the board's committees, to all groups and members everywhere.

In an average business corporation, the board has final power to determine company plans and policy. Our board of trustees serves in a custodial capacity; trustees vote at the Conference—but as individuals, with one vote each. In industry, branch offices jump when the home office speaks. Our G.S.O. is just a clearinghouse of A.A. information, offering suggestions based on experiences reported to it by groups.

And yet, with so small a degree of organization, A.A. miraculously does work! One reason may be that Tradition Five applies to each A.A. committee and board as directly as it does to each A.A. group. By cleaving to this "one primary purpose" in all its activities, the Fellowship retains "spiritual simplicity." To diffuse that purpose, to embroil A.A. in issues apart from its true concern, would create dangerous complications. . . .

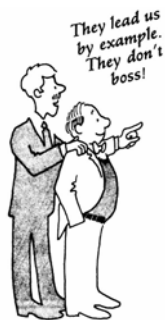
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CONCEPT NINE

Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are all at levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership once exercised by the founders of AA must necessarily be assumed by the Trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

No matter how carefully we design our service structure of the principles and relationships, no matter how well we apportion authority and responsibility, the operating results of our structure can be no better than the personal performance of those who must man it and make it work. Good leadership cannot function well in a poorly designed structure.... Weak leadership can hardly function at all, even in the best of structures."

Due to A.A.'s principle of rotation, furnishing our service structure with able and willing workers has to be a continuous effort. The base of the service structure—and the source of our leadership—is the General Service Representative. The G.S.R. is the service leader for his or her group, the indispensable link between the group and A.A. as-a-whole. Together the G.S.R.s are A.A.'s group conscience—and together, in their areas, they elect the area committee members and ultimately the delegates and the area's candidates for Trustee. Groups who have not named G.S.R.s should be encouraged to do so. And as the G.S.R.s meet in area assemblies, care and dedication are required. Personal



ambitions should be cast aside; feuds and controversies forgotten. "Who are the best qualified people?" should be the thought of all.

"No society can function well without able leadership in all its levels, and A.A. can be no exception. Fortunately, our Society is blessed with any amount of real leadership—the active people of today and the potential leaders of tomorrow as each new generation of able members swarms in. We have an abundance of men and women whose dedication, stability, vision, and special skills

make them capable of dealing with every possible service assignment. We have only to seek these folks out and trust them to serve us.

"A leader in A.A. service is therefore a man (or woman) who can personally put principles, plans and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him and help him with his job.

"Good leadership will also remember that a fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere. Consequently, good leadership will often discard its own cherished plans for others that are better, and it will give credit to the source.

"Good leadership never passes the buck. Once assured that it has, or can, obtain sufficient general backing, it freely takes decisions and puts them into action forthwith, provided of course that such actions be within the framework of its defined authority and responsibility.

"Another qualification for leadership is 'give and take,' the ability to compromise cheerfully whenever a proper compromise can cause a situation to progress in what appears to be the right direction.... We cannot, however, compromise always. Now and then, it is truly necessary to stick flat-footed to one's convictions about an issue until it is settled.

"Our leaders do not drive by mandate, they lead by example. We say to them, 'Act for us, but do not boss us.'"

Heard Around the Rooms



"It's hard to make a comeback when you haven't been anywhere"

"The only difference between a rut and a grave

is the depth of the hole"

"Prayer is listening to God. Meditation is listening to anything but your own mind"

"Luck is easier when the mind is prepared"

Willingness is doing what I have to do whether I want to or not.



THE ISOLATOR GOES TO A CONVENTION

When I drank, I drank alone. No bars for me! Too much trouble, and I couldn't drink in public the way I wanted to anyway. So I drank alone. And since I drank all the time, I was always alone.

When I finally got to the point where I couldn't go on anymore, it had been a very long time since I had been around people, so coming to AA was a huge change. I sure wouldn't have done it if I hadn't been so desperate. I was more afraid of drinking than I was of you, but only a little. I was afraid of your friendliness, and of your laughter. I didn't understand your language, didn't understand your Steps, and certainly didn't understand how anyone could refer to himself or herself as a "grateful alcoholic". I was separate and unique, you know. Fortunately, I got a sponsor who understood my fears and had the patience to lead me slowly, not just into the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, but also into the fellowship.

When I was about seven months sober the Santa Barbara AA Convention was coming up, and my sponsor was the Volunteer Chair. Guess who he thought

ought to volunteer? By that time, I had begun to feel a little more comfortable being around people, and had even made a few new friends, but that was in the small, familiar discussion groups I attended on a regular basis. The idea of mingling with 800 or 1000 sober alcoholics wasn't high on my list of things I wanted to do.

In spite of all my attempts to convince my sponsor I didn't have the time to go to the convention, (you know how busy you are when you're new), on Saturday morning I found myself paired up with Wayne at the Memorabilia table, selling T-shirts and coffee mugs. We weren't very busy, so we spent most of the three-hour shift talking, one alcoholic to another. To my surprise, I found I had made a new friend. And I was trusted enough to handle the moneybox - that made me feel good.

When our shift was over, I didn't go home as I had planned to do. Instead, I went to a marathon meeting and met more members of Santa Barbara AA. I sat in the hospitality lounge drinking coffee with them, talking about recovery. I watched the Saturday night speaker on closed circuit TV. I even went to the dance with a woman I had met in the

program. Though it wasn't a real date, we both had a lot of fun, and I learned I didn't have to have a drink in order to get out on the dance floor.

Finally, I went to the Sunday morning "spiritual meeting". What a wonderful way to complete a weekend of growth for me. I felt connected to AA and to the many people who are part of our sober community. I felt newly committed to my recovery. I had begun to understand what a gift this program is.

Only a few months before, the highlight of any given day was when I would get home, pull the shades, and pull my bottle out of the cupboard - the only companion I thought I needed. At the convention, I discovered I am truly not alone any more. I don't have to go back to that empty house, to that empty life.

I eventually married the woman I took to that first convention dance, by the way, and today we have a wonderful life together. None of that would have happened had my sponsor not gotten me involved in service, or if I had done what comes naturally to me - sitting home alone. I'm grateful to that sponsor, and I'm grateful to AA for giving me a life.

~ *Anonymous in SB*

Dear Messenger,

I would like to thank everyone at **The Messenger** for sharing with me the message of AA. Some time ago The Messenger appeared under my cell door, and it has continued to come every month. How this started I never questioned. It was just what I needed at the time I needed it. I've looked forward to its arrival every month. So it is with mixed feelings I must ask you to stop sending me your newsletter. You see, I'm going to parole before the September issue arrives, and right now I have no forwarding address. Onward I go, a small part of a great whole, where I place principles before personalities and practice a genuine humility, which is a tall order. The hand of AA is waiting for me and I think I'll take it. Thank you.

Jimmy The Jaywalker

SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The other day after I shared at an AA meeting, a person told me I think too much, then another told me it's a simple program. I don't know that it is all that simple. There are many, many people who left the program because they didn't get a sponsor or because they didn't take step 4 (a fearless and searching moral inventory of ourselves). Didn't some of these people really want to get sober? I think so.

Many more left the program because they could not come to grips with step 3 (made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, *as we understood him*). It is plausible that many people feel they cannot say they have taken step 3 without really taking it, because they would be lying to themselves and to others, which is contradictory to many of the twelve step and program concepts. Yet at the same time, AA philosophy seems to assign slim probabilities for recovery to those who cannot or will not take step 3.

There are millions more suffering alcoholics who have never made it to Our front door, or if they did said "what an order, I can't go through with it", and walked away after one or two meetings.

After some soul searching and a little research, the following definitions and concepts revealed themselves to me through the grace of God. They have helped me, maybe they can help you:

god - something held to be of supreme value (taken from Webster's Third New World Dictionary, pg. 973);

God - the supreme or ultimate reality (*ibid*, pg. 973);

God - the creative, integrative and redemptive process at work in the world that is the supremely worthwhile actuality of all existence and upon which all other forms of existence depend for life, meaning, purpose, value and the realization of their highest destiny (*ibid*, pg. 973);

God - the one ultimate, infinite reality that is pure existence, consciousness and bliss with out distinctions of time and space (*ibid*, pg. 973);

God - the ideal or essence of what is best in human life (*ibid*, pg. 973);

deity - thing that is exalted or revered as supremely good or great (*ibid*, pg. 595);

deity - (one that) holds or wields supreme power or influence in some field (*ibid*, pg. 595);

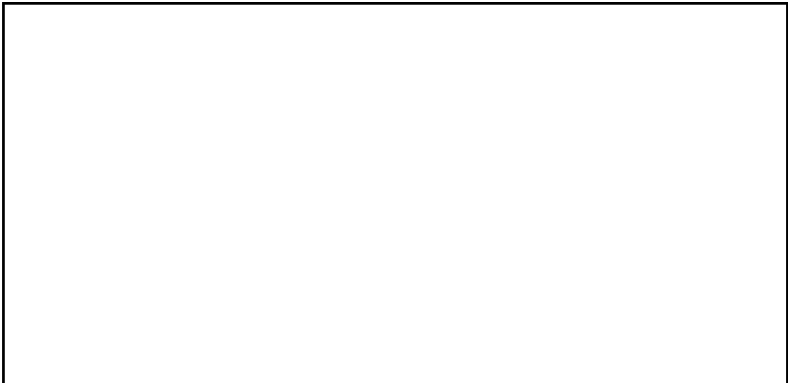
divine - of or relating to god (*ibid*, pg. 663); and

God - a power greater than ourselves (my definition as inspired by step 2 in the twelve steps of AA).

~ Bernie C.

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*... Don't see
anything the
matter here, Ma!*

