

THE NIGHT CAP

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AN INTERPRETATION OF THE 12 STEPS

Step Two - Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step Two of the AA program may appeal to alcoholics in two distinct and separate ways, depending on the severity of their own particular illness. To some, it may mean reliance, while in others it arouses defiance. It is just as important that it be taken at face value in its entirety as the First Step, wherein we admit and accept our inability to tolerate alcohol.

It has been my observation that alcoholics, on being introduced to the Twelve Steps of our recovery program usually "bristle" when reading Step No. Two. They literally leap on the word "sanity," all the while ignoring the real significance of the Step, which in my opinion means that we have to rely on a Power greater than ourselves to help us refrain from taking that first drink.

Most alcoholics will admit they are somewhat confused in their thinking for a couple of days following a particularly heavy spell of drinking, but they certainly do not consider themselves insane. They do not even consider themselves confused in their thinking to any great degree. They will admit abnormal behavior while drinking, although some few feel that situations, circumstances and "tough luck" play a major role in incidents that befall them; but on the whole they feel "victims of circumstance." Things and people get out of control.

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LINCOLN ON ALCOHOLISM

Following are excerpts from an address by Abraham Lincoln to the Washington Temperance Society. We think they are interesting and show that Lincoln had an acute understanding of alcoholism in a day when the disease was unheard of, as such:

"In my justment such of us who have never fallen victims have been spared more by the absence of appetite than from any mental or moral superiority over those who have. Indeed, I believe if we take habitual drunkards as a class, their heads and their hearts will bear an advantageous comparison to those of any other class.

"When one who has long been known as a victim of intemperance bursts the fetters that have bound him and appears before his neighbors clothed and in his right mind, a redeemed specimen of long-lost humanity, and stands up with tears of joy trembling in his eyes, to tell of the miseries once endured, now to be endured no more forever; of his once naked and starving children, now clad and fed comfortably; of a wife long weighed down with woe, weeping, and a broken heart now restored to health, happiness and a renewed affection; and how easily it is all done, once it is resolved to be done; how simple his language! - human feelings cannot resist.

"I have not inquired at what period of time the use of intoxicating liquors commenced; nor is it important to know. It is sufficient that, to all of us who now inhabit

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They are driven by other individuals to drink, to they react in some specific fashion. How often we hear the statement, "Well, if so and so hadn't acted as he did, I would not have acted as I did." It's an age old dodge of evasion, or escape from responsibility for our actions. (I feel it most appropriate to add that this trait is not only peculiar to alcoholics.)

The first part of Step Two is of the greatest significance: the "ut" of the matter, so to speak. Once the alcoholic admits and accepts the fact he is powerless over alcohol, he knows immediately that he will have to have help to stop drinking. The questions...How...Tell Me...Show Me...Help Me...simply crowd his mind. He expects help; is told he will receive it; led to believe it, and gets it...from AA members themselves - and a Higher Power. It does not require an immense amount of Faith - only enough belief that he will receive help is sufficient to make a start, providing he is sincere and honest in his desire. Wanting to want to stop is not enough. There must be no reservations. The alcoholic seeking help must believe it will form for him, as it has for others. His will must be submissive and receptive.

Resentment and rebellion are the number one offenders insofar as the alcoholic is concerned. There, together with his own dissatisfaction and feeling of frustration, plague him, and to escape these, plus the stings of his conscience, his feelings of remorse and guilt, he seeks solace in a bottle. In a world of his own creation, he is in control - he can run things to suit himself, or go further and anesthetize himself into oblivion. Having practiced such deception on himself, as well as others, having dulled his talents, perverted his reason, and reduced himself to the point of being unable to differentiate between fancy

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TO NO OTHER PEOPLE IS IT GIVEN

. . . to know, as we alcoholics may be privileged to know, the true rich meaning of those God-inspired words: Sobriety and Peace of Mind. For only those who have traveled the low road, reaping the ravished fruits of alcoholism: fear, frustration, disgrace, poverty and sometimes, madness - can fully appreciate their distinctive beauty, their profound meaning, the opportunities they offer. Sobriety! Peace of mind! Each of us may glean their full significance if we will let our minds drift into memory. Let memory turn the switch on the many lights that once burned along that trail. Lights that represented faith, hope and aspiration. We may watch those lights grow dim and, finally, go out - - smothered by a fog of alcohol. Sobriety and Peace of Mind were always beyond our reach. Alone, no man can save himself. Alone no man can find himself. Alone, with his bottle, the alcoholic is merely a doomed animal. Yet, within the protective mantle of AA -- though he may by circumstances be stripped of all his worldly goods -- nothing and no one can strip from him the God-giving right to recover his hope, his aspiration, his faith. His right to walk with Sobriety and Peace of Mind.

Two men were going out for a drink. Said one: "Let's go to the Mermaid Tavern." Said the other, "Why?" Explained the first: "Because of the large painting of the mermaid hanging behind the bar." "I never knew you were a lover of art." "Oh, it isn't that -- it's a system I have. After every drink I look up at the mermaid and wink. When she winks back, then I quit drinking." (Who said dot?)

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.

- James 1:12

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the world, the practice of drinking them is just as old as the world itself - that is, we have seen the one just as long as we have seen the other.

"Those who have suffered by intemperance personally, and have reformed, are the most powerful and efficient instruments to push the reformation to ultimate success. It does not follow that those who have not suffered have no part left them to perform. Whether or not the world would be vastly benefitted by a total and final banishment from it of all intoxicating drinks seems to me not now an open question.

"The victims of it (alcoholism) were to be pitied and compassioned, just as are the heirs of consumption and other ... diseases. Their failing was treated as a misfortune and not as a crime, or even as a disgrace.

"There seems ever to have been a proneness in the brilliant and warm-blooded to fall into the vice - the demon of intemperance ever seems to have delighted in sucking the blood of genius and of generosity. What one of us but can call to mind some relative, more promising in youth than all his fellows, who has fallen a sacrifice to his rapacity? He seems ever to have gone forth like the Egyptian angel of death, commissioned to slay, if not the first, the fairest born of every family.

"Happy day when - all appetites controlled, all poisons subdued, all matter subjected - mind, all-conquering mind, shall live and move, the monarch of the world. Glorious consummation! Hail, fall of fury! Reign of reason, all hail!

"And when the victory shall be complete - when there shall be neither slave nor drunkard on the earth - how proud the title of that land which may truly claim to be the
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THOUGHT FROM A FRIEND

When a man is first introduced to the AA program he is often at a stage which has aptly been described as a boy approaching middle age! Certainly, he is facing a major transition, and one that requires skillful handling. We love the things behind us more than the things that lie ahead. A boy who enters high school finds his grade school roots are deep, and the young man entering college does not easily forget his high school loyalties. But the transitions are gradual and, accordingly, there are no undue strains during the mental and social adjustments. It's a different story, however, when Foggy Fritz comes to his first meeting. Foggy may have a college degree, but he's never been graduated from the kindergarten of life. He's lived in a world of unreality and fantasy, and is suddenly called upon to take his seat in the most difficult graduate school, the University of Life. It is during his first semester in AA when old loyalties are strong and new ideas are repugnant, that the tutor, or sponsor, faces his greatest responsibility. Example is more important than precept, and a single, kindly word will outweigh a bookful of bluster. No one will pass through a wilderness without confidence in leader, and the leader must give convincing evidence that he knows the way. And knowing the way is not enough. He must continue to lead until his baby has been brought to the open plains of security. Every failure in AA is the result of a retreat from the battle. And, too often, the retreat is the result of the leader who failed.

Let us never brand the man who fails as a deserter. Rather let us examine the quality of our leadership as sponsors. The mark of the deserter may be near home.

- Dubuque Alanews

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and reality, having reached the point of becoming completely unpredictable and being unable to judge for himself on even the smallest matters, the alcoholic has little belief in anything left - and probably no faith. He has case aside or turned away from whatever conception of God, or a Higher Power, he might have had at one time. He has been rejected. He is alone.

The acceptance by AA members themselves, and the fellowship of AA alleviates the alcoholic's feelings of rejection and aloneness. It restores his belief - his faith, however small. Slowly, little by little, painfully, guiltily and hesitantly, he begins to ask the Higher Power for help, much as a baby reaches its hand hesitantly towards a hot stove. Miraculously he receives help. As he receives help, tensions lessen and the alcoholic begins to rely on the Higher Power. He feels, but cannot believe what is happening. He begins to feel that he has been insane and restored to sanity.

Steps One and Two, being steps of admission, acceptance, submission, belief and reliance are important steps in the rehabilitation of our lives. It is the End - and the Beginning -- therefore, they must be definite. There are no halfway measures. The simplest part of all is that it can only be done on a twenty-four hour basis, because that is all we have allotted to us at one time. We can do it no faster, or no slower than someone else, on the basis of Time. We are not restricted as to how we use our time.

Steps One and Two are the basic foundation of our recovery program -- the two main hurdles. Clear them well -- lest they trip you up later.

- Nedra M.

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birthplace and the cradle of both those resolutions that shall have ended in that victory. How nobly distinguished that people who shall have planted and nurtured to maturity both the political and moral freedom of their species.

THE DRUNKARD'S WIFE

For a number of years, the 30-year-old psychiatric nurse had been married to a confirmed alcoholic. The husband was a highly unstable, disturbed man who refused to accept treatment for his trouble. Twice when his wife threatened to leave him, he attempted suicide.

Then suddenly the husband stopped drinking and remained sober for a year. The wife suffered a deep depression, the first she had ever experienced. This developed into a psychotic condition, requiring electric-shock therapy. With psychiatric care, she gained insight into her marital problems. It was, she admitted, as though she did not wish her husband to get well and remain abstinent.

This case, one of several gathered by Dr. Samuel Futterman, Los Angeles psychiatrist, illustrates clearly a reciprocal relationship between a husband's alcoholism and his wife's neurotic state. As long as this patient's husband was incapacitated, she was the mainstay of the family; as soon as he began to improve, she lost her sense of importance and indispensability. Her purpose then was to keep her husband an alcoholic, dependent weakling in order to have him under her control. In spite of her great unhappiness, she remained in the marriage because she felt "her husband could not get along without her."

- Medicine

- AA -



