

THE NIGHTCAP

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AN INTERPRETATION OF THE T W E L V E S T E P S

1. Admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.

It is my opinion that the biggest and most important decision ever made by an alcoholic is when he finally admits to himself that he cannot handle alcohol. If he also accepts that decision, honestly if possible, he is well on the road to recovery. A transition in his life is assured. Once he makes this admission to himself, and to others, he is willing and anxious to seek help. He is open-minded and conditioned to listen to suggestions.

To an alcoholic, the discovery that he has a disease serves to cushion the blow of his new found discovery. For some indecipherable reason, learning he has an affliction is not as devastating to the alcoholic's ego as believing the things about himself that he has come to believe. It gives a boost to his morale that enables him to "let go" and really plunge headlong into something new that promises to revolutionize his life.

To his amazement he discovers, also, that there are other people inhabiting this planet who are similarly afflicted. He has previously been "alone" - One against the world. To learn that this world is peopled with other "different" people gives him a measure of consolation. A strong feeling of fellowship begins to emerge from the shell he has built around himself. To say that a whole new world opens up is literally true. Foes turn into friends. Resentments

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YOU SAY YOU DON'T PRAY...

You say you don't pray, but I'm sure you do. Perhaps not formally. Perhaps not as other people do. But you pray -- and I can prove it to you. You have been lonely and you have prayed for a friend. You have prayed you might find somewhere that man or woman who is your other self. You have stood in a gray corridor somewhere, in some hospital, just outside the door of an operating room, and prayed that everything would be all right. Prayed a child might be born and a mother not suffer too much. Prayed an operation would be successful. Prayed it might not be as bad as you feared it might. You have prayed your children might not need to endure some of the things you have stood. Or that they might have the strength to stand a little more sturdily than you know you have. You have prayed they might have cheerful audacity and courage and not too much hard wisdom -- but at least enough wisdom to see it through. Surely you have prayed.

There have been times when you felt, "I can't do this alone. The strength that is mine is not great enough. Somehow I must reach out and touch something mightier than I am or ever will be -- and draw some of its strength to myself. I must reach out to that which is beyond my grasp on common days, and thus be strong enough to endure." You know you have done that. Everybody has done it, and sometimes you have prayed when you did not know you

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(An Interpretation... cont'd)

begin to fade. Intolerance becomes more subdued. Jealousy and envy seem out of place in an atmosphere of complete and utter acceptance by the individual who has heretofore existed in an atmosphere of antagonism, ostracism and anti-socialism. Doubts of his being "a victim of his fellow man" begin to surge up in the mind of the alcoholic. He begins to feel a new kind of remorse, somewhat foreign to his previous feelings of this nature. He is even willint to entertain the idea he might not be entirely blameless in every instance. He somewhat hesitantly admits that perhaps he might be a little maladjusted. He may even remember where he might have been in the wrong on a couple of occasions....that some occurrences occurred because he was drinking.

When the alcoholic reaches this point in his thinking he is honestly and truly ready, willing and desirous of admitting and also accepting the fact that he is powerless over alcohol and that his life was unmanageable when he was drinking. He begins to see a ray of hope for a situation that appeared hopeless. He realizes, perhaps for the very first time, that if he can abstain from drinking he can begin to live as a normal human being and be acceptable to other human beings. Due to his drinking, the very thing he wanted most out of life has been denied him. Once he has admitted his weakness, he has an opportunity to alleviate it.

The alcoholic learns early that his admission requires no pledges - no promises - no swearing off. Only one simple question - "Can you go for 24 hours without taking a drink?" Presumably anyone can, if the incentive and desire be strong enough. There is no time limit. This appeals to the alcoholic who has hitherto applied every conceivable remedy to

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(You say you don't pray...concl'd)

were in need. You have seen something beautiful...a tall tree...a splendid dawn...a sweep of meadow in the mist...a glowing sunset... or some heart-taking deed. And that small egotism by which we live our daily lives has been broken apart by that mysterious common beauty and you have offered up some kind of prayer, all by yourself. A cleansing, humbled and yet uplifted prayer that nobody could ever put into words. These have been prayers, although you have not known it. These are prayers for help, for strength, prayers of thankfulness that come forth from a man in his moments of weakness and in his moments of joy. Everybody prays in one way or another but we do not always know it.

(San Francisco Chronicle)

** AA **

"Yeah, my girl friend was a very bright girl - always lit."

** AA **

Did you hear about the fellow who lost his car - - - he forgot to make the payments.

** AA **

"And having thus chosen our course, without guile, and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in (the justice of) God, and go forward without fear, and with manly hearts."

- Abraham Lincoln

** AA **

We are responsible for effort only. Results lie in other hands.

** AA **

Don't wait for a shower. Take one.

J A N U A R Y
B I R T H D A Y S

2 years: Jim B.
4 years: Paul B.
6 years: John B., Dick L., Jim McI.

F E B R U A R Y
B I R T H D A Y S

years: George D.
4 years: Emitte P., Martha S.
5 years: Louise D.
6 years: Pop W.
7 years: Earl A., Jay H., Bill McA.
8 years: Arthur C.

*** AA ***

FROM A FRIEND

In our AA world we find some who want to quit drinking and do stay sober; some who don't want to quit drinking and yet stay sober; some who don't want to quit drinking and are not sober; and some who want to quit drinking but are not sober. Maybe we should all read that again. In the first batch you find the majority of the AA flock. Fellows who had a hell of a tough battle with Old John but finally latched on to AA. Now their wives like 'em again, or at least pretend to, their bosses are surprised, and the lads themselves are as happy as anyone can be in this tearful vale of no beers. The second batch produces the saints of AA. We may err slightly in saying they don't want to quit drinking. Actually, they want to quit because they are honest enough to admit the situation calls for quitting. Except for the results of not quitting, they'd rather not quit, because theirs is a continuous battle against an obsession. They are an heroic group. Condemned to a hair-shirt existence on earth, they'll wear champagne-scented robes in Gabriel's Celestial Pump Room. We always have a few of the third batch. They have no intention of quitting, but make a feint at the program because they are on a hot seat; they've got to

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find a temporary cloister from the storm. A few of these may eventually become honest; the others will disappear into the never-never land of the unregenerated alky. And then we have the fourth batch. These furnish the grist for our 12th step mills. These are the fellows who take an oath at 10 o'clock they will quit, and at 11 o'clock are as full as a hootched-up-Indian. They come home vowing never to touch another drop, but carefully plant a jug in the basement or in the barn. They stop in a tavern to buy a coke, and wind up stinky in the municipal poke. But these fellows are pretty close to winning . . . all they have to do is quit fighting, give up, surrender, cut out the skirmishing, stop picking on Old John . . . admit defeat. Oh yes, that takes honesty, sincerity, humility and faith, but it does produce sobriety. It stops you from being a hypocrite and no normal person really wants to be a hypocrite. In AA we like sober people; we do not dislike drunks. But it's hard to stomach a hypocrite

(Dubuque, Ala. News)

*** AA ***

JUST A THOUGHT . . . To the man or woman who has a King, a Divine resource outside, above and beyond himself, there can never be a turning back. As long as God is with us, who can be against us? As long as we live by moral precepts there can never be any defeat. We may not be famous. We may not be wealthy in this world's goods, but we will always have the satisfaction of having done our part, of having kept our integrity and of having met life courageously. It is never too late to make settlement with your conscience; to vote your convictions instead of your dividends; to stop complaining; to overcome our physical limitations or to help others share the burdens of life. It's never too late, but it takes more than will power. It takes AA and the help of God. (Anonymous)

CREDENTIALS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN AA

It is interesting to consider the credentials we present when we apply for membership in AA. Among them we find wasted years, financial insecurity, physical debility, mental conflict, spiritual and moral apathy; we also state that we are not dependable; that we run away from responsibility; that we have mistreated family and friends. We also advise the organization that we are in a state of confusion, hopelessness and despair. The only possible affirmative statement that we can make in our own behalf is that we are sincere in our desire to rehabilitate ourselves. Imagine, if you will, presenting this list of credentials to any civic or fraternal organization. Contemplate for just a moment giving these qualifications on an application for employment. Any organization, upon receipt of such an application would hurriedly reject the applicant..... And yet, when we present these credentials to AA, we are received into membership with open arms and a hearty handclasp. Let us then, with a deep feeling of gratitude and humility, always remember the type of credentials we presented when we entered. (PenPointers)

(An Interpretation..... concluded)

control his compulsion. He is placed on his honor. A trust has been bestowed upon him. This he proudly accepts. It takes the sting out of his admission.

The original admission is made, or brought about, through the breaking down of certain inhibitions. The alcoholic feels he has reached bottom. If he can be made to see that there is "strength" rather than weakness in his admission and that he is a "sick" person, rather than a moral degenerate, that his admission is not one of humiliating defeat, but the beginning of victory, then the battle is won, and he becomes proud that he was big enough to make the admission.

THINGS I DON'T UNDERSTAND

How can one live the Ten Commandments and practice only the first? How can one uphold the constitution but believe in only the first amendment? How can one be on the AA Program, but admit he got that way by taking only the first step? Maybe I've got rocks in my head, but somewhere in my two years and 20 days of AA I picked up the idea that being on the program entailed something more than an admission of my alcoholic problem. Has someone been kidding me? Is the acceptance of a higher power, the moral inventory, cleaning up our lousy characters, and practicing the AA Principles in all our affairs just for jerks like me that always have to do the things the hard way? In the past two weeks I have heard no less than four people say they have read over the twelve steps but got no further than putting the first step into action. These guys are firm believers in "Easy Does It," "First Things First," "Live and Let Live," and "You Make It Your Way and I'll Make It Mine," but watta they wanta stand still for? Don't they feel they're getting nowhere fast? Heck, fellas! I haven't taken all twelve of them either in their entirety, but somebody, who thought he knew the answer, told me the happiness and peace of mind I was enjoying was a result of trying to live them all to the best of my ability Could he have been kidding me? I realize the first requirements for any cure is the acceptance of your condition and wanting to do something about it, but why go to a Doctor if you are only going to use part of his prescription ... It don't make sense to me. Maybe I'm just confused in my thinking.

(Aridity Review)

** AA **

Some run their lives cafeteria style -- Self service only.

R E S O L U T I O N S

Although New Year's resolutions may be trite, it is a fact that setting a goal is a spur to accomplishment. Hence the following ten resolutions, declared to be the wisest of them all, are suggested:

1. Adapt yourself to circumstances, but do not lose character and purpose.
2. Be frank but not blunt.
3. Be courteous, but not defiant.
4. Work hard, but consistently and not in spots.
5. Specialize and master some one thing, but do not narrow yourself and lose perspective.
6. Cultivate the power of expression in writing and speaking, but do not be verbose.
7. Separate the fundamentals from the details and summarize action, but do not ignore the details.
8. Have faith in mankind and self-confidence, but do not be gullible or conceited.
9. Be mindful of your business and personal associates, but not to the point of breeding disrespect.
10. Visualize and plan ahead, but not so far ahead as to overlook the immediate future.

(Sunshine Magazine)

** AA **

SELF-PITY

Most alcoholics have a tendency to feel sorry for themselves. There is no quicker way to lose friends than to drench ourselves in self-pity. Our constant complaints - about our treatment, our health, the state of the world in general - are soon going to fall on deaf ears. For nobody, not even our best friends, can stand a never-ending tale of our phony grievances.

Aside from alienating our friends, unpleasant thoughts make unpleasant faces. Discontent, sorrow and hate leave an imprint which cannot be easily erased, and are part of an ugliness that comes from within. There are few things more satisfying than an invitation to air our grievances, but when we complain constantly without invitation, that's a different story; it's the beginning of the end of getting along well with others. One of our loudest complaints is about lack
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of success in our work. We complain that the boss doesn't appreciate us, our talent is being wasted, we are getting a raw deal. We blame it all on bad breaks. It never occurs to us that we fail because we don't want to succeed.

..... If we want to stop feeling sorry for ourselves, the first step is to do more for others.
Finally, the surest way to lessen unhappiness is to call on that Higher Power for faith in this program. This will bring us back to the fields of renewed effort and self-reliance. It is only after we learn these constructive ways of dealing with our complaints that we find ourselves getting along better with others. By showing fortitude and courage, we will make people want to be our friends.
Above all, let us learn to overcome our incompetence in the management of our lives. The situation demands self-denial and sacrifice. Unless we practice these things we shall lose first the spiritual battle and then the physical one - (F.E.D.)

