

THE NIGHTCAP

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An Interpretation of The Twelve Steps

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

For the benefit of those who prefer their speeches and reading material in digest form, this step could be summarized into four words - "LET GO - LET GOD" -- however, lest this capsule form mislead you, please be assured that the reduction neither simplifies the application nor minimizes the action required for results.

It is my personal opinion that no one person can apply and practice this principle at all times -- alcoholic or non-alcoholic. Having been endowed with a free will by our Creator, we desire to exercise it. Therein lies the conflict, the turmoil, the emotional disturbances and our feelings of guilt, remorse, stings of conscience, etc., that on occasions lead to mental and physical breakdowns, and drive the alcoholic to drink. Being human, we can only do one thing at a time. By the simple process of elimination anyone can see that we cannot do God's will, and also exercise our own at the same time. It has been said that the will of even the tiniest infant cannot be broken, even when it lacks reasoning power. I believe anyone will grant, without fear of contradiction, that the will of the alcoholic remains inviolate, rigid and non-submissive throughout his drinking career. It has been demonstrated over and over that he is going to do what he wants to do the way he wants to do it, and when he wants to do it, regardless of any consequences. Nothing
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SAN ANTONIO'S

AA BIRTHDAY

1954

On Tuesday, April 13, 1954, San Antonio AA will observe its ninth anniversary with a program at Municipal Auditorium. The Rev. Everett H. Jones, D. D., Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas, the civic-minded individual who was instrumental in bringing Alcoholics Anonymous to San Antonio, will be the principal speaker.

The program will also include Esther E. of Dallas, who did some pioneer work here on the invitation of Bishop Jones. Other members of AA will be introduced. Esther E. holds the longest continuous sobriety of any woman member of AA in Texas.

This program will probably be the outstanding one of the year, and if you miss it you will probably regret it; so make a date now for Tuesday, April 13, 1954, 8 p.m., to be present at West Wing of Municipal Auditorium.

DO UNTO OTHERS . . .

It would be difficult to name a situation in the world where laymen acquire so much personal confidential information about others as do members of AA. In the first place, it is natural and beneficial for a member to discuss his personal problems with one or more of his intimates in the group. In fact, the fifth step advises us to discuss with another human being the exact nature of our wrongs, and who would
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short of a complete physical and mental breakdown will deter the alcoholic while in the throes of his obsession, from doing as he wills. No obstacle is too great for him to attempt to clear, nor any hurdle too high.

Having steered a life course of exercising his will over a period of years, it is understandable that he encounters difficulty when he attempts to let a Higher Power direct him. He is unacquainted with such a Force, and it is likely that he has little, if any, faith in such a Power. He is fortunate indeed if he retains the barest minimum. Certainly it is impossible for him to sit back and wait for guidance. In the first place, he does not know how. Action is what he wants -- action, action, and more action. It has been his motivating force. Impatience goads him. Besides he places no dependability in an abstract being which, insofar as he believes, has never evidenced any interest in him or his well being. Honestly speaking, he is afraid to let go and rely on something in which he has no faith. He is entirely unwilling to do so, and has no intention of doing so until such time as he can find out what he is letting himself in for. While drinking, he is fairly oblivious to outside forces, but once sober, he becomes cautious, suspicious, mistrusting and backward in making decisions. No one hands him a list of instructions to follow, telling him just how to turn his will over to a Higher Power. There are no maps, charts or blueprints furnished. He is just simply told to turn his life over - to let go! Get out of the driver's seat. Such advice is frustrating and has precisely the same effect on an individual as telling him to stop worrying, when that individual has a problem that gnaws away at him constantly - one of such import to him that it threatens his very existence and seems to have no solution. Every

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human being faces these things, but for the alcoholic who has existed in a state of disorganized confusion, frustration and guilt, stepping out of the picture and turning loose -- it is almost impossible. To surrender his will, even when he becomes willing to do so, and wants to let go, creates a problem for him. He does not know how, and cannot seem to find the way.

The only advice I can offer in the matter came from my own experience. By reminding myself constantly to believe in this Power, to be willing to surrender my will, and to keep asking for this over and over... and to practice it whether I felt it successful or not. Gradually the feeling of willingness, of surrender and belief emerged. Little incidents occurred that heretofore would have gone unnoticed, that served to strengthen my convictions that prayer would work. This feeling must, of necessity, be genuine and humble. It must be a completely wholehearted desire to seek guidance and to ask for help. The faith and trust that most of us believe we never possessed is only lying dormant and once we begin to want it to work and try to make it work, it is like HOPE. It springs eternal. Desperation brings us to this point, and regardless of the state of our mind, or bodies, and regardless of the physical condition we are in, the law of self-preservation still works and we want to live. Desperation is born and we are willing to call on a Power to deliver us. If we can keep this feeling of humility and gratefulness for our delivery, and continue to depend on it, we are well on the road to rehabilitation.

The alcoholic's survival depends on his belief. He has a great need to become childlike and gullible. He needs to believe that a Supreme Being is watching over him, helping him, protecting him, and loving him, in spite of what he has been, and done. He needs to be cared for and to feel cared for. He needs

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(Continued from Page 1 - Do Unto Others...)

be better than some other person who has had a similar problem? The things discussed are of the nature which the majority of people do not discuss except with a confidential adviser such as a doctor, lawyer or clergyman. It is unusual for a layman to have this trust placed in him, and to be worthy of it we must respect the confidences.

If possible, there is even greater obligation to respect the confidences which are given by a new member incapable of normal reflection and inclined to state his innermost problems and affairs in a desperate reaching for help. It may be said that he discloses personal matters almost involuntarily, and it is reprehensible not to guard these disclosures. When information acquired in confidence is either thoughtlessly or viciously made the subject of gossip among AA members, the spectacle is repugnant to any human being with normal sensibilities. The whole situation requires restraint and decency on the part of the members mainly because it is so unusual for ordinary people to be so intimately acquainted with the personal affairs of others. We should lean over backward in respecting these confidences in order that we do not cause irreparable harm to the reputation of any member.

We should all have charity toward others. It is but a short step from criticizing one who has trouble with the program to becoming indifferent to his welfare, or actually refraining from helping him when the opportunity offers. Although their number is not great, there are AA's who after a considerable period of sobriety, acquire an attitude of what appears to be intolerance or perhaps a lack of understanding of those who continue to have difficulty. There seems to be a tendency on the part of the self-righteous ones to judge the man who has slipped, and

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A MEETING OF ALL INTERESTED SAN ANTONIANS WILL BE HELD AT 8 P. M. WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, IN THE WEST WING OF THE MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM FOR THE PURPOSE OF ORGANIZING A

"SAN ANTONIO COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOLISM."

This Committee will work coordinate-ly with the Texas Commission on Alcoholism on programs of Public Education, Hospitalization and Rehabilitation programs for problem drinkers.

Members of AA and non-AAs, including Doctors, Ministers, Industrialists and Law Enforcement Officers are invited to attend and lend their constructive suggestions.

Members of the Texas Commission on Alcoholism will be on the program.

The meeting is open to the public.

BIRTHDAYS

FOR MARCH

1954

- 1 year: Jim C., Col. E.M.G., Helen J., L.H.J., Joe J.M., Jr.
- 2 years: Richard H.
- 3 years: Gene G., Col. S.C. "Red" T.
- 4 years: Marian W.
- 5 years: "Abe" G., Jack L., E.M. "Doc" W.
- 6 years: Frank B. Jr., C.H.M., Joe C.M.
- 9 years: Grace D.
- 11 years: Jack C.
- 12 years: Hollis H.N.

BIRTHDAYS

FOR APRIL

1954

- 3 years: Lucille D., George H. McK.
- 4 years: Frances A.
- 5 years: Mona S.
- 6 years: Wm. F. "Bill" G., Sharp McG.
- 7 years: Harry W. M.
- 9 years: Dorothy L.



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understanding. If he can become convinced that all of this, and more, exists in the Higher Power, and is his for the asking, he feels reassured and somehow does not mind asking a loving, kind and merciful God for help. This kind of a God he can understand.

In many instances, the alcoholic has to revise his concept of God, or a supreme Being. He often has to formulate new ideas concerning such a Power before he is able to accept Him, or to believe that he will receive help. If his belief has been of the "hell-fire and brimstone damnation" concept of God, his feeling of rejection is most acute, and he has to re-educate himself into believing that a kind and loving God exists, and that, in spite of his affliction, this God loves him and understands him and wants to help him. In other words, he has to feel his way along in a new avenue of thinking. Prayer is the only method of contact with this Power. It is a communion of our soul, or spirit, with God. Although some individuals may feel that words, or thoughts are necessary for prayer, it is my personal opinion that this communion takes place in many forms, and in many ways. It is expressed in action toward our fellow man; in deeds, in feelings, in admiration of God's handiwork; in emotions of joy, sorrow, or sympathy for another human being. When we are in harmony with this Universal Mind, our lives tend to smooth out and we have a sense of well being. When we feel good, and kind, and gentle and love everyone, it is a prayer of thankfulness and gratefulness. Without this force we are nothing, so it behooves us to stay in contact and in harmony. Admitting dependence on this Power, accepting the fact that we cannot survive without it, and being willing to keep in mind at all times, if possible, our dependence is rather a large order. It calls for constant effort and awareness on our part, but most of all for patience. The AA slogan of "Easy Does It" could well be "Acquire Patience." We may push and shove and hurry our friends and ourselves. We may rush, rush, rush at high speed 24 hours a day, but we cannot hurry God. Neither can we bargain with Him. He knows all of our thoughts too, so there is no point in trying to fool Him, and we can't fool the other fellow long, so in a sense when we get right down to it, we're cornered and the only way out is complete honesty and sincerity. Having a kind, understanding, merciful and loving Father to talk to, we can unload and release our troubles on Him and feel secure in the knowledge that He will protect and guide us, for our best interests. We should all feel deeply grateful and thankful that we have been spared and given a new lease on life. To be unappreciative of the opportunities offered us is unthinkable.

We should not forget that our fellow alcoholics, as well as members of our families and friends, are also of interest and concern to this Higher Power. Our every need has been carefully thought out for our benefit and in attempting to submerge our will we must needs be in harmony with our associates. This Power, while not available to us directly in God's form, is available in human form through His guidance. We often hear stories in AA of some one making a telephone call, or writing a letter, or appearing at just the precise moment of greatest need. These appear to be miracles. I prefer to believe that our Higher Power is working thru another human being, for our welfare. The group fellowship is important to each individual, and for each individual. We have all experienced the friendly pat on the back in time of trouble; the warm handclasp; the smile that cheered us on our way. To some they may seem small things but once we sober up and observe our surroundings and begin to straighten

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- (Interpretation) -
 out our lives, these things loom up in importance. We rely on individuals - then the group - and eventually can manage our own affairs with only the help of this Power. It takes fortitude and patience, but we have to keep trying or perish. God will furnish us all that we ask, if we just ask, and thank Him each time. I suspect He likes to be appreciated, too.

Turning our will and our life over to God is something each individual must experience for himself. Through diligent effort he finds the way, in his own way and his alone. It is his own personal experience. He may not know when, where, or how it happened. He just knows that suddenly he is in tune ... he is willing, yea, happy, to let God take over. He experiences a sense of release, of relaxation. The struggle is over. With it comes contentment, peace of mind, serenity. Fear is gone. He knows that nothing can really harm him again. Holding on to this feeling is what he wants most in the world and he will stop at nothing to keep it. He is at peace with himself and his Maker.

- Nedra M.

Throw away all ambition beyond that of doing the day's work well. The travelers on the road to success live in the present, heedless of taking thought for tomorrow. Live neither in the past nor in the future, but let each day's work absorb your entire energies, and satisfy your wildest ambition.

- Sir William Osler.

The best bridge between despair and hope is a good night's sleep.

Prayer is the pipeline to God's throne - the golden thread that binds us to Him.

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- (Do Unto Others) -
 find him wanting. How an alcoholic or an addict who by the grace of God and the help of AA has been able to return to a normal life, can look with anything but charity on another alcoholic or addict who is still indulging, is a cause for wonderment. We are not commissioned to give expert advice or to minister as a doctor because of his special knowledge and trained mind. We are only arrested alcoholics and addicts who got that way by the grace of God and the help of others like ourselves. In the interest of our own continued success it behooves us to stand ready to return this help whenever and however we can and not to judge or criticize. If we can recall the misery that was associated with our own drinking or addiction, we know that no one would deliberately prefer the condition of a drinking alcoholic or a person actively addicted to drugs if he could find the power within himself to escape. If we have forgotten that misery we have lost some of our ability to understand the sick person and should remember that in judging him.

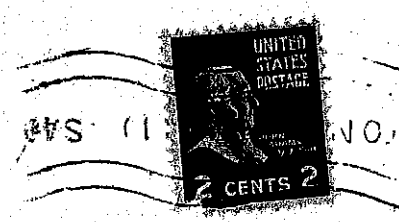
We recommend the Golden Rule modified as follows: Do unto others not only as you would have them do unto you, but also as they have already done for you,

- The Key

Although genius always commands admiration, character most secures respect. The former is more the product of the brain, the latter of heart-power; and in the long run it is the heart that rules in life.

He who has not forgiven an enemy has never yet tasted one of the most sublime enjoyments of life.

- Lavater



MONTHLY A. A. THOUGHTS

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