

What's the Hurry?

With so many failing in sobriety and so many groups becoming history, one must ask, "What is going on?" Maybe a better question would be, "What is NOT going on?" And what is NOT going on is the newcomer is no longer getting the same opportunity to survive alcoholism as was offered by the Authors of our Big Book.

While we do not have a clear picture of Ebby's recovery, we do have one of Bill's. We know that he entered Townes Hospital on December 11, 1934 and left the Hospital on December 18, 1934 having had a Spiritual Experience, while hospitalized, as the result of following the directions that Ebby outlined for him and he lived another 36 years without taking another drink.

We know that once Dr. Bob surrendered to the whole program of action that Bill laid out for him after his failed sobriety of three weeks, he asked Bill, "Don't you think we better find another alcoholic to try to help?" That question was asked on June 11, 1935, the day following Dr. Bob's last drink.

Before another three weeks was out, they had talked with an attorney who was hospitalized for his drinking. It was not their first effort but it was their first success. To quote the Big Book on AA No. 3, "On the third day the lawyer gave his life to the care and direction of his Creator, and said he was perfectly willing to do anything necessary." He never had another drink.

One of the things about alcoholism that was well understood but no longer given serious thought is the message that is given on page 24 of the Basic Text:

"The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes nonexistent. We are unable at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink."

With that thought in mind, the "sponsor" would tell their story of what their life was like during their days of drinking. How they came to understand the deadly truth about their alcoholism. They would describe the allergic reaction an alcoholic has to alcohol, which makes it impossible to control the amount they drank once they commenced drinking. And then they would describe the mental obsession that produced the insidious insanity to start drinking even after they had solemnly pledged to never drink again. If the prospect showed a genuine interest in learning what to do, they would then present our Program of Recovery on a take it or leave it basis.

That procedure is clearly outlined in the Chapter on Sponsorship; Chapter 7, "WORKING WITH OTHERS." With the Problem (Step One); powerlessness of body and mind over alcohol established and the Solution (Step Two); the hope of a Power greater than ourselves or alcohol that could remove the insidious insanity, the prospect was given a Big Book and told to read it. And then the Big Book reads:

"Suppose now you are making your second visit to a man. He has read this volume and says he is prepared to go through with the Twelve Steps of the program of recovery. Having had the experience yourself, you can give him much practical advice. Let him know you are available if he wishes to make a decision (Step Three) and tell his story (Step Four), but do not insist upon it if he prefers to consult with someone else." You mean on the second visit? Yep, Take it or leave it! "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path."

And when we had that type of Sponsorship, Alcoholics Anonymous was very successful in helping newcomers find lasting sobriety. But is that the opportunity the newcomer is offered today? Unfortunately, not very often. What the newcomer hears most often is, "Don't drink and go to meetings." Think about that one for a minute. If they knew how to not drink, they would have no reason to go to those meetings. Or, how about this one, "Just keep coming back and you'll be OK." That, of course, is a lie. The only hope for a chronic alcoholic is a spiritual experience. So how long or how many meetings is the newcomer faced with to have a spiritual experience? What has happened to "rigorous honesty?"

One more time, let's look at the statements that were made by those who were so very successful:

"These are the steps we took which are suggested as a program of recovery."

OR

"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and practice these principles in all our affairs."

I see no reference to "ninety meetings in ninety days" in those two statements. So, why do we hear such misleading advice being given to newcomers? "Twelve steps in twelve days" was much closer to the common practice during the days of great success.

"When anyone, anywhere reaches for help, I want the hand of AA to always be there and for that, I am responsible." The Big Book gives us the experience and knowledge that has not failed those who take advantage of that wisdom so we can be responsible.

And to quote Dr. Bob:

"If you think you are an atheist, an agnostic, a skeptic, or have any other form of intellectual pride which keeps you from accepting what is in this book (ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS), I feel sorry for you. If you still think you are strong enough to beat the game alone, that is your affair. But if you really and truly want to quit drinking for good and all, and sincerely feel that you must have some help, we know that we have an answer for you. It never fails, if you go about it with one half the zeal you have been in the habit of showing when you were getting another drink.

Your Heavenly Father will never let you down!"

We recover by the Steps we take, not the meetings we make!

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