

The Values I Learned as a Child

An All-Encompassing Spiritual Roadmap

By Rick R.

As I navigate my way through the program of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.), with only a limited education, but a desire to learn all I can about life as it unfolds, it occurs to me that most of the things that the program teaches me are things I've have been taught before. I learned the Ten Commandments in church. In the Boy Scouts, I learned that a scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent. In sports I learned of Teamwork and of Disappointment. In kindergarten, I learned to play fair in the sand box, I also heard of the Golden Rule. These things have been around long before me and even before A.A; so, where did I go wrong? I, like most Alcoholics that come into the program, had a myriad of personal problems, and at first, I believed that those life issues including Marital, Legal, Economic, Physical, etc.; were the cause of my drinking the way I did. At that time, I was not experienced enough to understand the ins and outs of these things. I am not sure that anyone can just drop what they have been conditioned to do, just because they quit drinking. There must be more to it than that. If at first, we are fortunate enough to envision the wonderful life we can experience as the result of fully embracing this program, we will first, want to clear up the wreckage of the past. This we can do by thoroughly going through the steps in the spirit they were intended to be taken, being careful not to hold back anything. As we approach the twelfth step, we are introduced to the Saint Francis prayer in the 12&12. Francis was not a saint when he wrote this prayer, but he expresses that these virtues were the answer to all the misguided thinking of the past. Note that not one of his requests is for help with things that are of a selfish or material nature. I am not affiliated with any religious organization, but I am not threatened by religious doctrines, and I agree with the statement on pg. 87 BB. "Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer". I am sometimes honored when a newer member of the program asks for some guidance and I will usually suggest that he/she write out this prayer in long hand, paste it on his/her mirror and read it every day for a minimum of 30 days, and I guarantee that it will influence your thinking for the rest of your life. It did for me. I do not know of a more practical thing to set the tone for a person's interactions with others. Thinking back on it, I always knew the right thing to do, but was not always strong enough to do it. I dismissed these things, not realizing the pain that would result as I lost my direction in life. The Saint Francis prayer is one of the ways in which the program suggests we revisit our early value system. It gives us a spiritual direction that deals with the change in our inner self, which, if we heal in that area, the material world will take care of itself. When faced with a sticky situation, I have a choice whether to escalate it or to back off and withdraw with love and understanding. After years of trying my best to live in the spirit of this prayer, it occurred to me that, as the result, I qualify in all those things I learned as a child, in church, in the Boy Scouts, in Kindergarten, The Golden Rule, and in childhood sports. To me, it is an ALL-ENCOMPASSING SPIRITUAL roadmap.