

Chose Your own Path to Enlightenment

Atheists, Agnostics, or Former Believers

By Rick R.

The main reason that I ever drank alcohol was because of the way it made me feel, otherwise, why would I, or anybody, pour a chemical onto their brain cells that is closer to gasoline or lighter fluid, than any of that romantic thing we see on the screen. It seemed to arrest all of my fears and inhibitions and, for a while, I'd get relief from the stresses of daily life. It is often referred to as a social lubricant which may be ok for normal people. (Normys) For those of us that are alcoholics, it goes far beyond that gentle relief it afforded the normal drinker. It, somehow sidetracks us into a way of thinking, that is so flawed, that our lives become unmanageable and we get so invested in this way of thinking until the world starts closing in on us and, as a last ditch effort, we decide to give Alcoholics Anonymous a try.

With our preconceived ideas of what we are getting in to, one of the first challenges we face is, what our concept of a higher power is. To some this comes easy, to others it may be difficult but in time they find a way to clear the hurdle; and for others it is a real struggle. They seem to have a bias against any talk of a God, and just using the term *Higher Power* seems, to them, to be some kind sales pitch to get them to believe in the God of some form of religion. They seem blinded to all of the references in The Big Book and the 12X12 to the contrary. Alcoholics Anonymous is all inclusive and welcomes everyone that has a desire to stop drinking and "*does not require you to believe anything*". (See pg.26 in the 12X12) There is no hidden agenda here. I've heard A.A. referred to it as *an education in the art of living* and that is very close to what I have found it to be for me. It seems to help us to revisit all of our old ideas that were tainted by our alcoholic thinking. It also helps us, over a period of time, to get back to a fundamental set of principles that work for everyone, who actually does them.

For the first person, the often referred to as the believer, that is on the path of a religious affiliation, the A.A. guiding principle is expressed on page 98 of the 12X12, when addressing meditation, "*It is hoped that every A.A. who has a religious connection which emphasizes meditation will return to the practice of that devotion as never before*". To me this illustrates the inclusiveness of the program. They could have, just as well been talking about a carpenter, as opposed to a plumber or computer programmers. None are excluded.

The agnostic, on the other hand, is somewhat adrift and isn't attached to one side or the other, and if only he/she can be patient, over a period of time they will usually find their niche and come to terms with a power greater than themselves that they can do business with.

The, so-called atheist who becomes an alcoholic, may have a real struggle with this issue, but he/she really has the same chance, as anyone else, to live a sober and happy life. Those who

doubt this can open the 12X12 to page 26 where it states "Take it easy. The hoop you have to jump through is a lot wider than you think..... A one-time vice-president of the American atheist Society.... got through with room to spare". Just don't assume that every time someone who mentions a bible verse at a meeting is trying to convert you, and in return, they will not assume that you are not trying to debunk their religious beliefs when you say you can prove the nonexistence of God.

The simplest form of a higher power to me is *alcohol*. If we all had power over it, none of us would need A.A., but that not the case; is it? The simplest form of a power over alcohol, to me, is the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. As stated on page 27 in the 12X12 "You can, if you wish, make A.A. itself your higher power". I have one last reference on the subject of a, Higher Power, and it is on page 27 also, "*To acquire it, I had only to stop fighting and practice the rest of A.A.'s program as enthusiastically as I could*". If you simply do that, I believe that, in time, you will come to terms with a *concept* of a higher power as well as any of us. *Faith* is not synonymous with *religion*, but it is synonymous with *trust*. If you can just put aside your prejudices about how the next alcoholic finds his way to enlightenment, you should be fine. I recommend you read the entire article, and not just the headline, and you will have a chance. You can be an atheist and still work the program, you can be agnostic and still work the program, and you can be a religious believer and still work the program. I can't put it any simpler than that. Trust the program, it work for everyone that actually does it.

Rick R.