

Now - What of Prayer?

A Power Greater Than Myself

By Rick R.

The A.A. program is open to anyone that has a desire to stop drinking. It makes no difference if you are an atheist, agnostic, or a member of a specific religion. We all have the same opportunity to get well through the steps. They were fashioned that way to ensure that no alcoholic is left out. We embrace everyone that walks through that door. If step two had been written to say, "came to believe that God", rather than, "a higher power" could restore me to sanity, I wonder if Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) would have succeeded in the way that it has, especially when we consider the problems that the Oxford group had with this issue. I've seen people talking of religion, and others that were irritated with any talk of God, yet we still hold hands at the end of the meeting and say a prayer and everyone leaves the meeting feeling a little better. I personally know priests and ministers in the program, and they seem to adjust to the diversity of the landscape. I wish that it would be simpler for each person, but there are no two people that are identical in this matter. Speaking for myself, if I wanted to be freed from the deadly obsession of alcoholism, I had to trust the guidance of the two books, Alcoholics Anonymous (BB) and The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (12&12) that are suggested, and the leadership of the more experienced members of the group, to come to terms with a concept of a power greater than myself. I was the one in the 12&12 that "tried religion and had found it wanting". I also read that, "even the militant atheist got through the hoop with room to spare". I did not believe in the God of the religionist, in the same way, that I thought, they did, but I did not think I was an atheist either. The Power Greater than myself option, was a good start for me.

Something happened to me within minutes after arriving at my first introduction to three people, sitting on a bench in the front yard of a little house in Los Angeles, where they held their meetings, and I the obsession to drink was gone, and I have not had, nor wanted, a drink since then. You might call that a miracle, and you might be right, depending on your definition of a miracle, but it came to me as a *profound Change of Perception* brought about by the Love, Understanding and Compassion I sensed as they welcomed me.

These experiences were a great way for me to start, but NOW, WHAT ABOUT PRAYER? Who or what do I pray to? I heard about doorknobs and icons, the ocean, and other such things but that way of thinking did not set well with me. I did not want to be too glib about such an important matter. Then I noticed that, in step two, it did not say that I had to believe *in* anything, only that I had to believe *that* a **power greater than myself could restore me to sanity**. The collective wisdom of the AA program and the people in it have been the framework for my faith in a higher power.

The experience that I had in that front yard, fifty-three years ago, was all I needed to know to get on with the rest of the program. To this day I still do not know for sure, who or what God is, but I do know what God does. I use the word God, only to describe the influence that A.A. has had on this drunk. I pray to God as I understand God, and he expresses himself in my consciousness, the only thing left for me to do is to separate the wheat from the chaff.