

I JUST DON'T PICK UP TODAY

There was a time in recent years that it was not uncommon to hear people in A.A. meetings, with their fist held up as a symbol of triumph, stating that "I JUST DON'T PICK UP TODAY" and that became their mantra. I wondered if they were reading out of the same two books that I was. When I decided to give the A.A. way of life a try, I too thought that it was all about the drinking and I was under the impression that they were going to help me to stay on the wagon or something like that. I try not to offend people who think that it's all about not drinking, and I don't judge them for it either. I do, however, sincerely wish the best for them and I pray that they will, eventually want more than just the absence of alcohol, (and drugs).

I seldom hear people that are married and have families that are satisfied with just being dry. Once I became a father I was faced with the reality that it was not just all about "me" and "just not drinking today", and that's where the rest of the steps came in. It is important that we put the bottle down and don't pick up in our early days of sobriety as none of the rest of the steps can be taken short of total abstinence. We must be very vigilante in the beginning, but there comes a time when, if we are fortunate enough to recognize the possibilities that lay before us as the result of embracing the program in its entirety, we settle into the process of resolving all of those failed beliefs that brought us to our knees in the first place. If I were single and had no one else depending on me, I could do it anyway I saw fit, but that's just not the case. I have a family that needs more than a sober horse thief. (So to speak) It requires my full attention.

Is the Big Book wrong when, in Ch.3, Pg. 30-31, it says "We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of the jitters if you get the full knowledge of your condition"? The *main point is that you get full knowledge of your condition*.

Step 1 in the 12&12 is only 4 pages long. (Short and to the point) On the 3rd of those 4 pages it says "To the doubter we could say, "Perhaps you're not an alcoholic after all. Why don't you try some more controlled drinking, bearing in mind meanwhile what we have told you about alcoholism?" This attitude brought immediate and practical results. It was then discovered that when one alcoholic planted in the mind of another the true nature of his malady, that person could never be the same again. Following every spree, he would say to himself, "Maybe those A.A.s were right. . ." After a few such experiences, often years before the onset of extreme difficulties, he would return to us convinced. He had hit bottom as truly as any of us. John Barleycorn had become our best advocate".

I know that in today's A.A. environment, these two paragraphs are almost never discussed unless you are in a step study or a Big Book study and I believe it is because most people are still of the opinion that it's all about Not Drinking. I don't think that I can stop a person from drinking if he wants to, and I don't think I can talk someone into drinking if he doesn't want to. This would be plain arrogance on my part. I do however feel somewhat responsible when I hear of a person who has a relapse after years of hanging out at meetings and, over and over saying, "I JUST DON'T PICK UP TODAY" and then one day he

JUST PICKS UP. I can only think of all those years he kept himself away from the real message we learn by taking the steps and all of the intimate discussions he could have had about the things that really matter. I know that some will be offended by this frame of thought but I don't think we can rewrite the Big Book, can we? We can take the steps, or we can JUST NOT PICK UP TODAY, or we can do BOTH.

I could also refer you to another area of the Big Book that addresses this issue to some degree. Starting at the bottom of page 100-103 it stresses that idea of trying to protect an alcoholic from a drink is doomed to failure and the reasons why this is so. They also say that those methods have **always** failed. If a person wants to drink, my hat is off to him. If that person wants to stop drinking, my hat is firmly in place.

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