

Love, Resentment and Forgiveness

A Deeper Understanding

I do not think I have ever witnessed a member of AA that had first completed their fifth step and went on to the step six with the feeling that they dealt with the issue of *resentment* and had put it behind them. The example in the Big Book (pg.56) concerning the inventory starts with discovering our defects of character and our shortcomings. Resentment is considered the “*number one*” offender, so it is not surprising that they kick off our inventories with that one. It could have just as easily started with, “Gossip or Character assassination” or any of the many things that cause us the mental gymnastics that we live with every day. The drink used to give us a temporary relief from that madness, but that option is off the table if we want to stay sober. Except for step one, I do not believe anyone can do any of the following eleven steps completely, the first time, simply because we do not fully understand our problems at their deepest level, and we still have our old way of thinking when dealing with these issues. As a self-preservation instinct, we want to blame our psychological problems on others such as, Parents, X-spouse, Employer, The government, and any number of things. As we make our first pass through the steps, we may do some of them better than others and, as we hear the topics cycling through our regimen of meetings, we hear others sharing and we often get a deeper understanding of how we are disturbed, and if we really want to experience the peace and serenity that hear so much about, we will become willing to dig back in again and address these matters on a deeper plane. We in AA, all come with our share of regrettable behaviors and misdeeds of the past and as we address those things, we wish that we could be forgiven and get a fresh start, and we can, but when it comes to those other people, in our past, and even some in the present, how willing are we to be that forgiving of them? It seems that most of us have pet peeves when it comes to others, and, for my way of thinking, if that persists, we will have only limited peace of mind. Why settle for half measures, which avail us, nothing? *We get forgiveness as we forgive others*, and until we can do that, I do not think we can wish forgiveness on ourselves. When we consider that the people that cause grief to others are just as sick as we were before we got sober and unfortunately, they have not found the answer to their problems yet, and furthermore, if we can still criticize them, who do they get to blame for their psychological problems. To be consistent with the spirit of the program, I might suggest, giving everyone amnesty. *Find a way to be understanding* and remember when you were in that state of mind. *Your EGO wants to keep the battle going but your Conscience must win this fight. Find the strength to take the high road. They are not a threat to you, but they are a threat to your EGO.* If you find people that still cross your boundaries, *simply and quietly, withdraw from the situation, being careful not to criticize or point out his/her faults.* You may become his/her best advocate by helping others to understand that he/she has problems of his/her own and that you are not going to be one of his/her problems. There are many definitions of the word LOVE and for our purpose, I believe the one that Scott Peck writes about in his book “The Road Less Traveled” He defines *love* as, “The will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth”. To me this means that *Love is, caring for, and nurturing another person.* You can love anyone even if they do not love you back. *It is not about them; it is about you.* As you take this approach, one by one you defuse and neutralize all those mental conflicts

and accept everyone exactly as they are. *No longer do they crowd your thinking.* There lies the peace of mind that we seek. The only adversary we have left is our own EGO.