

Understanding a Material and Spiritual Interface

The Difference between Advice and Perspective

Like everything else that we should face in the A.A. program, many of the members come to us with a pretty shabby record when we start to address *spiritual* as well as *material* (financial) principles. As much as we would like to give advice on either of these topics I find that I have to differentiate between the word *advice* and the word, *perspective*. When I give *advice* on any subject and someone follows that advice and it ends up in disaster, am I not partially responsible for the outcome? On the other hand when I give *perspective*, based on my experience, of the pros and cons of what might happen, and ask him/her, "how much pain are you willing to risk?" This is perspective and when that person decides which direction to go, on the issue, they can take the credit for their successes or failures after they recognize and make their choices. Many of us come into the program with our share of fears and insecurities as the result of our decision making in the past which was based on our alcoholic thinking. How are we supposed to focus on spiritual matters, when we are upside down in debt due to undisciplined and misguided spending habits? How do we right the ship and get ourselves and our families on the path to recovery in both of these areas and get beyond the fears of the past? I wish I could say that I prayed to God to fix these things and shortly, thereafter, a check came in the mail and fixed all of my economic problems, but that would be wishful thinking. I see no evidence that God works at that level, for if he did, the sinners would all be sad and financial poor and the people who prayed would be economically rich and happy. In the A.A. program, we do *materialistic actions*, such as, *written inventories, making amends, changing habits*, and so on, to expose our spiritual problems. When we do shameful deeds we can jokingly say "*The devil made me do it*" and dismiss our responsibility in the matter. I can talk of *devils and angels* that I have no control over, or I can reduce it to *my Ego and my Conscience* which I can set boundaries upon. The changes we make when we recognize faulty thinking (spirit) corrects our faulty actions (material) and that is where the solutions lie. Understanding doesn't get it done. Actions based on our understanding sets us on the road to their correction. A principle of economics may be as simple as "Spend less than you earn." From that comes the next question, "What do I do with what's left over?" Answer: Save it. Then what? Invest it. The point is to develop the discipline to get ahead of the curve on these material matters and stay there. The sooner these types of material issues are dealt with, the sooner we will experience peace of mind and spirit. When I became desperate enough to seek out the A.A. program I let down my guard and began to follow, to the best of my ability, the principles set forth in the program and I had to revisit all of my old motives concerning my past failed ideas and to put in place simple principles, and go about the business of abandoning my old ego driven thoughts which were doomed to failure. One principle at a time, I set myself on a road to right living and the results have been exactly as described in the promises: "We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace." (B.B. Pg. 83-84) These days when we talk of prayer, I am complying with the version in step eleven: "*praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*" In my own words, "*God, please show me what to do and give me the strength to do it; I don't do to good by myself.*" When interfacing the material and spiritual issues, I've heard it put this way: "*If you're praying for potatoes, you better grab a hoe.*"