

# The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

## Step Study Meetings

By Rick R.

I consider myself to be one of the fortunate ones that came to AA in 1969, at the age of 28, desperately looking for answers. The Rehabilitation programs had not gotten off the ground yet, and Drug Addicts did not begin to show up until the mid-1970s. A considerable number of the members of AA came there of their own free will, wanting to get sober. The elders of my first group suggest that, if you plan to attend so many meetings a week, one of them should be a Step Study Meeting, and I have been doing that ever since. As we do that, we go through the steps 4 times a year as we split step 12 into two parts due to the number of pages it entails. As new members come into the group, they bring with them their own variety of alcoholic symptoms and it takes time to abandon the things that they feel threatens their own identity. It was not uncommon to see them in the parking lot after the meeting gossiping and bad-mouthing other members that they disagree with, and I was no different than them in my early days of recovery.

About 20 years ago a local group in our community was uprooted from their location and ended up in a new Alano Club at the time and they settled into the Monday through Friday 7 AM slots. The Thursday meeting became a Big Book Study, and the Friday meeting was a Step Study. I was happy to have them so convenient for me. I was much happier when, after we completed Step Twelve, we did not go back to Step One. We went straight into Tradition One and in a short time I noticed how the traditions shined a new light on what AA was all about. On the first page in Tradition One it states *"We believe there isn't a fellowship on earth which lavishes more devoted care upon its individual members; surely there is none which more jealously guards the individual's right to think, talk, and act as he wishes. No A.A. can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled. Our 12 steps to recovery are suggestions; the 12 traditions which guarantee A.A.'s unity contain not a single Don't. They repeatedly say, "We ought..." but never "You must." WE don't normally hear these things in everyday meetings.*

Each of the Traditions have their own variety of suggestions that, in the interest of unity, add a mature understanding to those that study them and share them with those that have not studied the Traditions.

When I share at a meeting I try to explain, in a way that does not reflect *being in judgement* about any individual. I may discuss Character Defects or Shortcomings and explain the idea that we all have them and for me to point out the faults of others is a *shortcoming in itself*. The person that gets off the beaten path is the person I care about the most. These are all symptoms of Alcoholism, and I am no better than anyone in the program. I may be farther down the path, but No Better. We may hear the term "Love and Tolerance" and try to explain how I include it in my approach to these two words. Scott Peck was influential in the spiritual approach in the program and in his book "The Road Less Traveled" he defines Love, as "Caring for and nurturing another person's soul, and not the version we see up on the movie screen." It is an action word, and I can Love everyone even if they do not love me back. As for the word "Tolerance," I would change that word to "Acceptance," as they suffer from the same disease that I once suffered from, and I am not superior to anyone in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous