

PREPARING FOR THE SECOND STEP

STEP TWO

“Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

I would suggest that you read eight pages in the “Twelve and Twelve” (pp. 25-33). Identify which of the five ways described depicts your relationship with God when you came to A.A.:

1. Belligerent
2. Once had faith but lost it.
3. Intellectually self-sufficient person.
4. Self-righteous person who condemns religion.
5. Person full of faith but reeking of alcohol.

In what ways has your relationship with God been restored to sanity since then?

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

STEP TWO:

“Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

Homework: Writing Inventory on the Second Step
By Dennis F.

The “12 & 12” describes five insane views of a Higher Power and ways to answer each when carrying the message to one who has no belief in a Higher Power. I was just such a person when I came to A.A.; in my study of the Second Step, I came to believe.

1) **The Belligerent Person.**

The answer for the atheist is to point out three ideas:

- a) A.A. does not demand that you believe anything at all. The “Twelve Steps” are suggestions.
- b) In order to stay sober one need not do all of Step Two at one time; it can be done piecemeal.
- c) All one needs is an open mind. We can use the method of substitution, where the group in A.A. becomes the Higher Power. This is what happened for me. Eventually I came to replace the group with a Higher Power.

2) **The Person Who Once Had Faith But Lost It.**

The answer here is patience, because once we are sober we rediscover our lost faith simply by staying sober in A.A. This also happened to me.

3) **The Intellectually Self-Sufficient Person.**

This person can find a faith that works if he or she is willing to place humility before intellect. I identify with the defect of thinking myself intellectually self-sufficient. I also found a faith that works for me by setting aside my need to “understand” the working of God in my life. Acceptance indicates a willingness on my part to practice some humility.

4) **The Self-Righteous Person Who Condemns Religion**

I was once such a negative person, taking inventory on other people’s religious practices. The answer here is given in just a few words: “belief meant reliance, not defiance.” I discovered a faith that works under all conditions when I began to ask what God’s will is for me instead of telling him what it ought to be.

5) **The Person Full Of Faith But Still Reeking Of Alcohol.**

Two extremes are given here . . . the superficial believer and the one who wallows in emotionalism and mistakes it for true religious feeling. Neither approach works

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because we have not cleaned house, made amends, given of ourselves or learned how to pray. When my prayers changed from “Grant me my wishes” to “Your will be done,” my faith began to be restored to sanity.

The Second Step is the answer for the agnostic, atheist or former believer if I carry this message: I have been restored to sanity in my relationship with God.

When I saw that my life was unmanageable, I came to believe that a Higher Power could restore me to sanity. So I sought and followed the advice of a Sponsor. This action meant to me that I was taking the Second Step. I was saying that I could no longer be my own Higher Power and that I needed direction.

This happened when I was five weeks sober and, not coincidentally, the desire to drink was removed at the same time. I suspect that when God saw that I was willing to turn over the reins to the person he sent to guide me, my Sponsor, I no longer needed the obsession to drink to motivate me to sobriety. He uses everything for good!

I started to believe in a Higher Power in my first month of sobriety. I thought I was an agnostic. As I became sober and the fog cleared, I saw that I was really letting go of my insane idea of a punishing, unloving, denominational God.

I divided the membership of A.A. into two categories: those who rarely laughed and had white knuckle sobriety and those who seemed to have an effortless happy sobriety. The last group believed in God.

The trouble was that I wanted their good sobriety but I had no belief in God.

I soon discovered that I did not have a relationship with God because I did not speak his language. It was like learning to speak a foreign language.

I had to learn three things to have a relationship with a God I didn't believe in: 1. prayer, 2. meditation, 3. giving.

I began with make-believe prayers: “Dear God, if you are there, please send me some money.” It had been so long since he had heard from me that I think he forgave this sincere but self-seeking prayer.

What is amazing is that I spent much of my time in the first year of sobriety going to meetings and beginning to write inventory. And God did send me enough money to pay a large amount of my debts and save my company from bankruptcy.

I was the kind of person who not only had my shopping list of wants but also my list of answers ready for God to grant. I would repeat both lists to him and after a while I wondered why I didn't hear anything back from God. I was so busy praying that I never stopped to listen.

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I used the threefold method described on page 101 of the 11th Step in the “12 & 12”:

- A) Get the “inner essence” of the subject of my meditation.
- B) Take a good look at where I stand now in relationship to the subject of my meditation.
- C) Examine “what might happen in our lives were we able to move closer to the ideal we have been trying to glimpse.”

EXAMPLE:

- A) I would like to be more loving in my relationships
- B) Yesterday I was unloving to my wife because I wanted my own way.
- C) I visualize what I would be like if I were loving to her or anyone else God put in my path in the next twenty-four hours.

I found that God usually gave me an opportunity to be “loving” or to practice the subject of that day’s mediation as the spiritual theme of my Twelve Step work.

This brings me to the third quality I needed to develop a relationship with God. That is the idea of “giving.” God speaks a language of love that expresses itself in “giving.” He loves me so he gave me sobriety simply because I asked for it.

I never gave in my drinking life. I was a taker. My gifts had price tags. I give to you if I get this from you. This was my idea of giving.

I simply didn’t speak the language of love that God speaks until I came to A.A. The first experience I had with giving without expecting anything in return was when I picked up ashtrays and coffee cups after my first meetings. I got that glow inside that I now know to call happiness which comes from freely giving of myself.

The first time I experienced selfless love was when I went on my first Twelve Step call at one year of sobriety. (I now know that I can only keep the spark of love glowing in my life by continued Twelve Step work.)

This was the language God spoke. The more freely I gave of myself, the closer my relationship developed with God.

What began as a halting and distant relationship has now turned into an infinite affair with the Almighty.

This is how I came to believe and how I was restored to sanity in my relationship with my Higher Power. Sanity now means to me . . . oneness of purpose with my Maker!

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Working a Step, Tradition or Concept to me means that I am willing to take written inventory and allow it to surrender something within me. The Second Step suggests to me that I need to believe in a Higher Power rather than my own power in order to be restored to mental sobriety or sanity particularly in the area of obsessions.

Let us examine ourselves by writing inventory in three areas of our lives: 1. God & A.A., 2. Relationships, and 3. Work and our other talents.

1. GOD AND A.A.

Do I have a sane relationship with God or am I just trying to use him for my purposes? Do I ask him for sobriety and relief from the obsession to drink or am I trying to do it by myself? Am I seeking the experience, strength and hope of the Sponsor He has sent me? Or, am I still trying to run the show?

Am I obsessed with myself at discussion meetings and only talk of my problems? Am I relying on God to use me to carry the message or am I “pulling them off the barstools”? What other obsessions do I pursue in A.A. rather than seeking sanity by relying on my Higher Power?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story Too often I find that I overrate the importance of “my efforts” in carrying the message.
- b) What Did I Do Wrong? I become obsessed with myself and play God.
- c) What Should I Do Instead? I should rely on God to give me sanity in carrying the message and let humor and a light touch come through when appropriate.

2. RELATIONSHIPS

Am I obsessed with lust? Am I obsessed with what others are not doing in my life rather than what I can contribute to the relationships I am in? Am I treating God this way?

Am I relying on my obsession with food, sugar, caffeine, or smoking rather than relying totally on a Higher Power? (After I stopped smoking through God’s power, which I sought in the Seventh Step when I was about two years sober, I discovered through inventory that smoking for me was a socially acceptable form of suicide. Like alcohol, it was insane for me to continue smoking while trying to give quality and increased years of service to my Maker. God rescued me. Again he did for me what I could not do for myself, he removed the obsession to smoke from my life!)

Am I ready to believe that I can be restored to sanity in all my relationships and appetites? Sanity is oneness of purpose with my Creator.

3. WORK

Am I a workaholic? Do I have a balance in my life with exercise and sports and working? Do I need sanity here?

Am I obsessed with financial success? Am I ready to be restored to sanity financially and be content with giving service, knowing that the miracle of sobriety is enough?

Or, am I obsessed with laziness? Do I need sanity in order to be motivated to work or complete the Steps? Am I ready to surrender trying to manipulate and instead rely upon God?

Write a letter to an imaginary newcomer describing three ways you were insane while drinking. Identify for the newcomer which of the five concepts of God (given at the start of this Step) you held while drinking. Conclude the letter by describing for the newcomer how you came to believe in a Higher Power (was your belief sudden or gradual?) Also, describe your present concept of a power greater than yourself. If possible, keep the letter to a sheet of paper.