



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

A.A. General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

Spring 2012

Dear A.A. Friends,

Let's open our meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the A.A. Preamble: "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."*

'TRYING TO FEEL FREE INSIDE'

"I have two strikes and I don't want to wind up spending my life incarcerated. I don't want to die in here an alcoholic. My mother passed away in 2002 and I made her the promise that I wouldn't spend my life in prison. I didn't even know how to grieve and deal with her death when it happened. She was a member of A.A. with over 25 years of sobriety, managing to turn her life around before it was too late. I can't do it alone and I know this from firsthand experience. When my troubles become overwhelming, I turn to alcohol. Thank you for helping to get my life out of the ruins of alcoholism and all the hell that one endures just trying to live sober, one day at a time. I pray for my sobriety and your correspondence as I am getting closer to parole. I'm sick and tired of doing time and forfeiting my freedom because of the destruction from being an alcoholic. I'm tired and I strive for a happy life before it's too late! I already feel dead inside from this insanity of spending year after year wasting away in here after a binge of drinking, trying to feel free inside. But it always turns out to be years in prison. I know and understand the nature of the disease of alcoholism, yet I am powerless once I'm released and this is always my final stop. I am very sincere about changing my life." — **Paul C., Pacific Region**

THE POWER OF IDENTIFICATION

"Luckily, one day I found an A.A. book named *A.A. in Prison: Inmate to Inmate*, which I picked up and took to my cell and started to read. I started to relate to most of those stories and started to see parts of myself reflected in them. I began to get really sad and depressed as I thought of how many chances I needed to straighten out my life and of how foolish I was when I was younger for not taking A.A. seriously and thinking that I could control my drinking. I never thought about the things I would do when I was drunk or the people I hurt in some way. I never thought much about my drinking or where it might lead me. The night of my arrest, I never thought about how much I could or would lose. Now that I'm writing this letter I can say that I am truly ready to change my life, self, and work the Twelve Steps. I never believed before in a Higher Power,

but when I think back to some of the crazy drunken nights I had — some kind of Higher Power did show itself to me, but I didn't pay any attention to it. Now I fully believe and wish I would have had my eyes opened a little earlier. I don't have the Big Book yet, but I'm working on trying to obtain one. I can't go to any meetings because of my classification status, but I hope one day that will change. At least I have the book I found and I read the Steps and Traditions every night before I go to bed." — **Brian L., Pacific Region**

'SOBRIETY... MORE THAN NOT PICKING UP A DRINK'

The struggle to stay sober is real in many ways. At this moment, I find myself in a prison within a prison and still...beneath all this concrete and iron, the desire to drink surfaces from time to time. However, I stand strong knowing that sobriety is more than not picking up a drink. It's about changing the way I think and taking responsibility, not only for my actions, but for the influence I create in the world around me. So, every day is an opportunity to be better and to do better." — **Joseph M., Northeast Region**

THE BIG BOOK — ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

"I'm still working my program. We have A.A. meetings here once a week. I never miss a meeting. I feel I have come a long way. I've obtained issues of the Grapevine. I have a year's subscription from a friend through my networking and looking for a sponsor. He's 93 with 39 years sober. He writes about once a month. I only ask for help with my sobriety, never money. I do well in here with my artwork. I now read the Third Step prayer on page 63 every day and page 86 when I retire at night. I read the Big Book three to four times daily. I'm very inspired by that and of course, page 417. People around me seem to notice a change in me. I never felt writing down my resentments would do anything for me. But *wow*, was I ever wrong! I went back 30 years. I wrote it all down, put Sweet 'n Low on it and fed it to the horses. I can't believe how much this has done for me. I feel like the hole in my chest is healing. I'm going to dig deeper. This program really works!" — **James T., Southwest Region**

"I'm 47 years old and I have been a lifelong, and now serious, alcoholic. I'm in jail on some serious charges because I was real drunk and didn't know what I was doing. Today is my third A.A. meeting, and I love going to them. I need two things in my life now and that's God and A.A. If and when I get out of here, I will be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous for the rest of my life. I've lost everything—my wife, house, all my stuff, my dog, and it's not the first time. Oh yeah!—my family hates me. There are only two books in my life now—and one is the Big Book. This book tells me a lot about me and I take it everywhere I go; it's my lifeline. I just want to thank Alcoholics Anonymous for giving me a chance at life without drinking. I want to stay sober. One day at a time." — **George W., Southeast Region**

“I now have my own copy of the Big Book. I like to highlight and add my own comments throughout this marvelous and life-changing book. I am 55 years young and have admitted my alcoholism and turned my will over to the care of God, my Higher Power. I am glad I have done this and look forward to changing my life and showing my family and friends that I am not that drunken monster I have portrayed before. Going to the A.A. meetings here is life-changing and exhilarating. I always seem to take a special nugget of information from each and every meeting I attend.”
— **Steven P., East Central Region**

‘HOW DARK IT IS BEFORE THE DAWN.’

“I’ve been here nearly three months and I asked myself, ‘Where did I go wrong?’ After serving three years here, I’m facing more time. I realize my mistake was the drink I took after my release. I went to the jail library and the most shocking thing happened — it actually spooked me. Before, when I went to prison to serve my three-year sentence, I read the A.A. book and in Bill’s Story, I highlighted the sentence ‘how dark it is before the dawn.’ Well, in the library recently I just grabbed an A.A. book to take back to my cell and upon reading Bill’s Story, I realized this was the Big Book I highlighted nearly four and a half years ago. The same book came back to my possession, and at that moment I realized the need I have for A.A. I believe in God and I don’t know what’s going on right now with all the events in my life. I want help and I want to change.” — **George B., Southwest Region**

“Within the last two years I have become a true alcoholic, but still functioning on a ‘normal’ level, even though I got arrested on a drinking related charge, lost my driver’s license, and a very good job at a school. I slowly fell into severe depression, drinking up to almost a 30-pack of beer every other day, using my unemployment money, which I manipulated to get. Last October, my husband and I got arrested for fighting (my alcoholism to blame). The courts ordered him to move out because the house is still in my name. He now lives with his father. I became so lonely and depressed, I drank to a high blood alcohol level. I tried committing suicide several times, but that time in October I set my house on fire! There was minimal damage (thank God) and the house was livable right away. I just got convicted for a crime related to this ‘cry for help’ and know from deep down that if I were sober that day, I would have sought other ways to ask for help! I am now in a jail cell paying dearly, and need to learn every day about sobriety so when I am eligible for parole in two years, I will not touch another drink.”
— **Karen K., Northeast Region**

“I’m an alcoholic, and I am also starting a 24-month prison sentence. I feel as if I’m at the bottom of a crumbling mine shaft. If this isn’t my bottom, then I sure as hell don’t want to find out what it is! I realize many people have had to endure jail or prison, and many of those for much longer periods than I am now facing. Here is why the word ‘powerless’ has finally become clear to me. I was only out of prison for two weeks before being arrested on my current charges. In fact, every time I’ve been arrested (which is a lot!) has been due to alcohol. So I guess that kind of covers the unmanageable aspect as well. While I was awaiting sentencing in the county jail, I picked up the Big Book. For the first time, it made sense to me. I began to attend A.A. meetings weekly and am drawing strength from them.” — **Phillip G., Southeast Region**

A.A.’s MESSAGE OF HOPE

“I am an alcoholic, currently incarcerated. I am also recovering from my alcoholism through the Twelve Step program of A.A. I’ve been a member since March 23, 2010. The life that I live today is a

direct result of living by our simple program and, God willing, it will always be my life. Your efforts to carry this message of hope saved me and for that I am eternally grateful. I will continue to honor Alcoholics Anonymous by service, carrying our message of hope to any suffering alcoholic anywhere who reaches out for recovery. You reached for me and saved me from further misery, despair, and incomprehensible demoralization and the very least I can do is extend my hand to someone else.” — **Steven A., Pacific Region**

“I got sober by the grace of God on January 1, 2000 after three years inside the system where I’m serving double life. I was only 17 years old when I was arrested for my crime, which was the result of my alcoholism. As a result of other A.A.s in prison, I was given a firm handshake of what A.A. really is and how to find the way to a better life. I’ve found purpose, usefulness, and meaning in the Fellowship. I’ve had some wonderful sponsors and sponsored some wonderful men. I’m simply a drunk to whom God has given some great gifts. I show my gratitude by sharing them. I share me by my defects! The age of miracles is still here. If a juvenile with double life can get Twelfth Stepped by other convicts and have as beautiful a life as I have in spite of my situation, *Anything* is possible! No one is too hopeless for the power of our message!” — **William W., Southeast Region**

“I am an alcoholic. I’ve been drinking for over 25 years. I’ve been in and out of mental and prison institutions and I’m tired. I’ve been sober going on six months. That’s not by choice, by the grace of my Higher Power, who has given me another chance to live and I’m very grateful for that. I don’t want to lose my relationship with him and this new person I’m experiencing. I need someone to help me continue on this path of sobriety.” — **Avant S., East Central Region**

THE TWELVE STEPS

“I am an alcoholic and currently incarcerated after two drinking related offenses. Along with the loss of my house, wife, and everything else due to alcohol, I seriously began to think whether I may or may not have a problem with alcohol. I began attending A.A. here in prison and began understanding things I wish I would’ve understood years ago. Now, as strange as it sounds, I’m happier in prison than I was outside—all because of the Twelve Steps. I’m on Step Four and every time my sponsor and I begin to work with it, I am shamed a little, but then come the feelings of happiness and peace afterwards. Thank you A.A. for being there!”
— **Eli J., Southeast Region**

CORRECTIONS CORRESPONDENCE SERVICE (CCS)

If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months, and are interested in corresponding with an outside A.A. member with whom you can share your experience as it relates to your problems with alcohol, please write to A.A.’s General Service Office to request a correspondence form. This is a random match with men writing to men and women writing to women.

PRERELEASE CONTACT

If you write to G.S.O. within three to six months of your release date and give us your destination (city and state) and approximate release date, we can try to arrange for someone to write to you just prior to your release. This would give you a chance to have an A.A. contact in your home community to help with your transition from A.A. on the “inside” to A.A. on the “outside.”

We look forward to hearing from you.