



# SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Summer 2011

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."\*

## PROGRESS

"Only Step One, where we made the 100 percent admission that we were powerless over alcohol, can be practiced with absolute perfection. The remaining eleven Steps state perfect ideals. They are goals toward which we look, and the measuring sticks by which we estimate our progress."

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 68

## 'TODAY, I AM ABLE TO LIVE SOBER.'

"I spent years in an alcohol-induced stupor until finally I hit bottom and reached out for help. It's crazy how this program works, because I was always trying to get and stay sober for years before I found the A.A. program of recovery, but then I entered the program and not only was I able to get and stay sober, but today, I am able to live sober. I am a better human being and I am eternally grateful to you, Alcoholics Anonymous." —

**George B., Northeast Region**

## ... ANY LENGTHS

"I am 29 years sober and ended up here from doing my final work on an inventory item I had held back from sharing—the one we want to hold on to until we die. Well, I chose to deal with it instead of drinking. Part of what I knew would have to happen did; I was sentenced to eighteen months. I am still sober, walking through a most terrifying time in my sobriety. I have to be an example of an oldtimer who made a bad mistake in sobriety, but I am choosing to face it and be an example of not drinking—no matter what."

— **William L., Pacific Region**

## THEY DID IT FOR US

"I thought I was recovered, so I didn't go to meetings, and without the support of my A.A. brethren, I began drinking within two months. It only took me another eight to get a DUI and lose my livelihood. Another four months gave me 27 months in prison. My son and his family don't trust me at all, and although my daughter

still writes me, she also is very, very cautious. Who can blame her? So, here I am again, a 60-year-old man with nothing except hope and faith that once again my higher power hasn't abandoned me. But I know he hasn't and even though I've got a lot of work ahead, I'll never, ever forget that I have an incurable disease."

— **James E., Pacific Region**

"I am a recently incarcerated alcoholic that once had several years of continuous sobriety. As the old story goes...I failed to enlarge my spiritual life and rested upon my laurels. As a result, a twelve-day binge/relapse found me locked up. Grateful that I am not insane or dead, I have once again hit my knees, asking God to do for me what I can't do for myself. The challenges of maintaining sobriety in prison are great, but are no more daunting than in the free world."

— **Clint B., Pacific Region**

## '... MY FREEDOM OF SELF'

"God has kept me sober through all this. He will manage all the rest if I let Him. That is where A.A. comes in. A.A. shows me how to get out of God's way. I know surrender today. I know sobriety today. I also know that there is a lot more I don't know. Thank you for introducing me to God. Thank you for my sobriety. Thank you for my wife and family. Thank you for my freedom of self. Thank you for my life." — **Orval E., Southeast Region**

## 'I AM POWERLESS OVER ALCOHOL ...'

"I'm eight weeks sober now—now that I've been in jail for eight weeks. My charges are minor but I have intentionally not bailed out because it took this shock to realize I've ruined my life with alcohol. The day I was arrested I had drunk over 65 beers. I was averaging at least 2-3 six-packs a day, and this increased since my son's death five years ago. I've lost my 30-year career, my home, all my possessions, money, and my wife of 32 years is now divorcing me. I'm determined to get sober and stay sober. I've also been hospitalized three times recently due to alcohol, twice in the ICU. The environment I'm in is very difficult since most people here (75%) are here for alcohol/drugs, but none I've met yet really want to quit but me. Many have tried and most say things like, 'If I'd have kept up with my A.A. sponsor and meetings, I would have made it. 90 meetings in 90 days.' I have started working the Twelve Steps as hard as possible. I am powerless over alcohol and have destroyed my life and my family's lives. Only God can restore my sanity. I have made a fearless inventory. I've begged God for help, forgiveness, redemption from my flaws, and have discussed with him many of my failings. Help me get on the path to recovery. I'm determined to put 110% of my effort into it." — **Randall M., Northeast Region**

"I was out of control. I drank every night after work. I had a nice town house, two cars, a beautiful loving wife and three kids. In one drunken rage, I lost everything. I'm now divorced, no cars, and live

in a very small cell. I didn't even know who I was. I would look in the mirror and see the loss in my eyes. I thought for a long time I've got a good job, wife, kids, house, car—I'm OK. Well, no, I didn't and no, I wasn't OK. But by this Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and the grace of God (which is my higher power), I'm sober and still alive. I'm still divorced, but I can have a normal, sober conversation with my ex-wife, and my children can't wait until I come home. I'm sober, a lot happier, and can't wait to continue being sober and in A.A." — **Scott S., East Central Region**

"My name is Micah and I am 16 years old. I'm writing you from juvenile hall. I am an alcoholic. I'm writing for help but also to prove to other people my age that you're not the only one living out here in this world. I believe in a higher power — and that's God. I believe that he has a plan for all of us and that he'll do whatever he needs to do to help us." — **Micah G., Pacific Region**

### **'I AM RESPONSIBLE ...'**

"I am responsible . . . when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that I am responsible.' I never realized in all my years of bouncing in and out of the rooms of A.A. how *powerful* these words really are! I was welcomed again, and again, (*and again!*) with open arms, open minds, and open hearts! Now that I finally have a true desire to change and a Higher Power (other than myself!), I know I have a chance for a responsible and productive future as a respected member of society. That was the one major part missing—a 'God of my understanding.' Being the true 'doubting Thomas,' it's been a long road to enlightenment. Through a series of events and relationships, it has come to pass that I have finally understood the error of 'my' ways." — **Thomas D., Southeast Region**

### **JUST FOR TODAY**

"I was sentenced to 33 months, but today I feel as if I am a totally free man from the inside. I have been going to a lot of A.A. meetings. I am no longer letting the time do me. Today I am doing the time. Today I have a lot of brothers in A.A. who look after me. Today it is a great feeling, after a long time hanging around A.A. You see, for me there is a great difference between going to A.A. meetings and being a part of A.A. Today I am a part of A.A. and the A.A. family. And I am very grateful and thankful. Today I go to A.A. because I want to, not because someone else wants me to." — **Marvin L., Pacific Region**

### **CAUSE AND EFFECT**

"Although I've never been arrested for alcohol per se, whenever I've been arrested I've been under the influence of alcohol. Seems like double-talk right? But I know that alcohol has played a role when it comes to making irrational decisions, which have brought me to prison — not only this time, but also in the past. Currently I attend A.A. meetings and share at every meeting, as well as reading A.A. literature. I'm 39 years old, college educated, father of two, and definitely an alcoholic who needs support in and out of prison." — **Omar D., Northeast Region**

### **THE TWELVE STEPS**

"As of today, I have 43 days sober. Before that, I had 40 days. Then I relapsed. It lasted about 12 hours before I landed myself in here. I have battled alcoholism off and on for 20 years. I have been in and

out of the rooms of A.A. and am actually reading the Big Book for the first time, not just glancing through it to get the answers for a study group. This time I'm digesting it. I know that you probably hear this all the time, but I see myself in so much of what is written in the Big Book. I know where the meetings are held in my local area. I even attend a meeting here in the jail every Thursday night. I plan to be in an 'outside' meeting the day I am released, hopefully around the middle of July. So what makes this time different for me? Why am I writing? I could have died — easily! I now believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that if I drink again, I will die. I have been over the Twelve Steps in my previous experiences with A.A., but since I've been in here I have started working them to the best of my ability as though my life depends on it." — **David R., Southeast Region.**

### **'WE ARE NOT A GLUM LOT'**

"Hello, my name is Jerome and I am the chairman for my A.A. group. The men who have walked through these prison gates into hell on earth have found a small piece of heaven inside this A.A. group. I have been a member here for a year and a half and I have found hope and brotherly love as a result of A.A. unity. I have seen men really recover with a new lease on life and I wish more people with the disease of alcoholism would find the doors of a meeting. The meetings here are as diverse as you can get. Men from all over with different backgrounds, heritages, and from all walks of life are represented in our group. We love to share the program of recovery and hope with everyone who wants to quit drinking. We have become like family thanks to A.A. We are also not a glum lot and are all willing to put pride aside when it comes to helping another alcoholic in need." — **Jerome B., Southeast Region**

### **A.A. MEETINGS**

Many alcoholics believe that regular attendance at A.A. meetings is a vital part of their sobriety. If there are no A.A. meetings at your facility and you are interested in starting one, please write to us at the General Service Office and we will try to find local A.A. members who may be able to assist. When you write, it is helpful if you include the name of a staff member at your facility who would be willing to serve as a contact person for the group.

### **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), 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 "outside" A.A.

We look forward to hearing from you.