



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Spring 2017

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 achieve sobriety."*

FEELING GRATEFUL

"I just wanted to take a moment to say thank you. As a result of this program I am a recovering alcoholic. I owe my sobriety to A.A. The impossible has become possible. Where I currently am housed, they do not have A.A. meetings. However, I do have a Big Book and devote time to reading it daily. My plan is, once I get moved from the county jail and make my way down to the state prison, I will attend whatever meetings they offer, or if there aren't any, I will attempt to establish a meeting. Upon release it is my plan to return to school, get my doctorate degree in chemical dependency and spread the message of A.A. to as many people as possible. I feel my story will give hope to the fact of being able to stay sober throughout anything life may throw your way. A friend of Bill W. for life..." — **James L., Southwest Region**

"I continue to share the message here in prison and to put it into effect in my life so that others can see it does work. In November I will be down to my last year here. I thank God each and every day that I am no longer in prison. I am still here physically but I have peace and serenity today, more than I've ever had. I love this simple yet beautiful program. Please let our recovering 'outside' friends know how much we appreciate them. No matter where we go in this world we can always find a friend in Alcoholics Anonymous, and for that I am extremely grateful." — **Michael H., East Central Region**

"I am going on five months sober, and I am actually developing narrow-sighted vision, namely living 'just for today.' Just for today I'm sitting on another rack on another yard with another number. I can be grateful to be alive, rescued, sober. I can be joyful despite my surroundings. I can be faithful — full of confidence in my Higher Power. I can be humble — it's a 'we first' program. I can be useful, selflessly serving others. These are realities and not just pop psychology to eschew the grim face of life. It's what has come from those drunks meeting in that home in Akron in 1935."

— **Jesse B., Pacific Region**

A.A. LITERATURE

"Since my incarceration, I have read the Big Book front to back and started on it a second time. I also read all of the 'Twelve and Twelve,' and I continue to read my *Daily Reflections* book. It's amazing just how much of this literature I relate to (pretty much all of it). I look forward to getting out of here and sharing my story with other alcoholics. I hope I can be an inspiration to people who are struggling with addiction. I truly see now what life is really about." — **David T., Southwest Region**

"Someone sent me a Big Book, and cover to cover this book tells about my life. I took a leadership position here, which allows me to go to outside meetings, get a sponsor and work the Steps. I have a sponsor who is properly armed with the facts about himself. I am currently working on my amends, and I look forward to returning home in a few weeks, where I can begin the amends. I am continuing to work daily against those glaring defects I found in my character. God has really blessed me with another chance at life and an opportunity to have a relationship with Him. I hope that someday I will have an opportunity to help carry this message and these principles to another alcoholic so that he too may have an opportunity to escape this terrifying and deadly disease." — **Kevin R., Southeast Region**

THE FIRST STEP

"I am currently incarcerated in a state prison, and for the fourth or fifth time I've decided to begin and maintain sobriety 'once and for all.' But this time I really do mean it. It comforts me so much to know that the people I'm saying this to have faith that the above could possibly be true. I just got a sponsor and he has begun the process of walking me through the Steps. If I get through them again (which I plan to unless I get killed), this will be my second time going through them. I feel like this time is different from other times. I can't explain it, but I know in my heart that the fight is over. I don't want to die of this thing (alcoholism), so I'm doing whatever it takes. So far, I got a sponsor, acquired a Big Book, signed up for meetings (it takes a month to be approved) and found a book — *A.A. in Prison: Inmate to Inmate*. Thank you for all of the good this program does for the world, one day at a time. I hope to become a part of the help and less of the helped." — **Jean P., Pacific Region**

"I am currently in jail, again. I am defeated; alcohol has broken me into a total state of submission. I have lost or given away all that I had or held dear. I have chosen alcohol over *everything* else. I want to be a better man. I am just so lost and scared, and I feel as if I'm trapped in a cycle of destruction and self-abuse. I am 37 years old. I have been in the rooms of A.A. before, but I never 'got it' until recently. I have been reading and studying the A.A. Big Book, and now I think I have an idea of what this all entails. It is a complete overhaul of attitudes and ideas, isn't it? It is a completely different way of living." — **Jon H., Pacific Region**

“At 33 years old, I have had maybe two and a half years of my adult life free. Going over my criminal history recently, I saw that I have 31 arrest cycles. Out of those 31, one single arrest took place sober. The other 30 took place under the influence. Everything from DUIs to vandalism to burglary, fights and arson. Realizing this was my First Step. Your book has brought me all the way to what I estimate is Step Four so far. I am eager to continue my progression. I plan on pursuing your Fellowship and making it an integral part of my life.” — **Charles C., Pacific Region**

“This is my sixth time in prison due to my alcohol addiction. I just paroled in June of last year, was supposed to get off the Greyhound bus to my loving wife-to-be, but found myself getting drunk on the bus ride home. Needless to say, I still have not been home, and I have found myself back in prison for five years. I am sending you this letter because I have made a decision: I am tired of being sick and tired of giving my life to the state. I have started reading the A.A. Big Book from cover to cover.” — **Eddie S., Pacific Region**

“WAIT FOR THE MIRACLE TO HAPPEN”

“I never got violent when I was drinking, but I sure did like to drive. You see, I am a mechanic by trade, and back in my drinking days I liked old-school muscle cars like my '69 Chevelle. The police didn't like it too much. It was red and black and way too fast. Needless to say, I got some DWIs, not just in that car but a few more. I never hurt anybody in a wreck, thanks to my Higher Power. As I read my Big Book now on a daily basis, I am learning to trust in the Fellowship of A.A. I am learning more about spiritual experience and the change that will come as I work the Steps suggested in the Big Book. It is said, 'Wait for the miracle to happen,' so I wait patiently for it, and I pray for my Higher Power to deliver me from the bondage of alcohol. I also need to keep working the Steps daily and file away what I have learned along the way. I plan to keep attending A.A. when I get out, because if I don't I will be back in here. I don't want any more of this life. I want what you all have: peace and joy.” — **John B., Southeast Region**

“I am truly blessed to say that I am being released in a few months. My upcoming release is only made possible through hard work and the discipline of the program. The principles of the program and the constant working with others have allowed me to love others and love myself. For that I am truly grateful! The biggest gift I gratefully received was a power greater than myself who I don't understand most of the time; but still, no matter what, I seek His will for me in every situation because it works — it truly does. Trust God, clean house, help others — and most of all don't take the first drink! This program is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me.” — **Mike B., East Central Region**

“The A.A. member who's corresponding with me is incredible. It's like another world of hope opened up for me. I am just getting into Step work in my journey to sobriety, and I've made it to Step Four with my sponsor. It is so empowering to complete these Steps. I still have 12-16 months left on my sentence, but I can't wait to be in the timeline to ask for a prerelease contact in my hometown to get in touch with. That will be so exciting!” — **John G., Southeast Region**

GROUPS ON THE “INSIDE”

“By the grace of God, I've been sober now over six and a half years. I attend weekly meetings here, and I try to help others by carrying the message as much as I can. Today, after many years of struggle, lost time, loss of family and a lifetime of turmoil, I can gratefully say I've found peace of mind and harmony due to A.A. Along with my newfound freedom I also found a talent I never knew I had, and that is drawing with pencil. I have done many works of art for my fellow inmates of their mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, girl-

friends, etc. I also have some works that I've donated to the law library in San Francisco. I am writing to you to ask if you could send me pictures of Bill W. and/or Dr. Bob, as I would like to have them so I could draw them for my local meeting place when I parole.” — **Paul K., Pacific Region**

“Tonight, I'm proud to say that our meeting was more inspired and spirited than ever. We read Step One from *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and talked of our humiliations. Only two of us are actively working the Steps, but we regularly have many of our fellow inmates sit on the edge of our group and listen in. At first I feared ridicule and judgment, but, for some reason, no one attempts that! Each night our little group meets, everyone seems to respect our choice, and we now have five people who sit, listen, identify and share. Is this crazy, hopeful, happy feeling what Twelfth Step work is like? I'm so glad to have taken the First Step and to have been willing to face the ridicule of my peers to offer this tiny bit of solace to people. I may have started this for me, for selfish reasons, but now I carry on for them — to see the way eyes light up as I get my books out. It's incredible to go from contemplating my past in shades of black to seeing how much it helps others realize that they're not alone.” — **Joshua Q., Northeast Region**

“Sobriety and recovery proved to be the answer to the problems in my life, but I failed to work the program. One of my favorite old-timers I have known for 20-plus years always says our disease is waiting while we are sober, doing push-ups and waiting for us to slip up. That makes sense to me because this disease is progressive and fatal. I want desperately to get sober, stay sober, help others and live the good life. My son needs it. He needs me to be sober and not sick. He is a familiar face in the rooms, too, and everyone knows he is my boy. He used to come with me sometimes to meetings. A.A. is our family and I believe my only hope for a future.” — **Chris M., East Central Region**

“We only have a few of us going to our makeshift meetings, but others are beginning to inquire. Good thing. I think it's good for my sobriety anyway, so, yes, it's a good thing. Starting meetings in here is giving me the tools and experience I will need to get some more meetings going in my hometown. I know in my heart that I'm going to need at least one meeting a day for a while, and I'm good with that. I don't think I'm alone there; if there are two of us — that's a meeting, right? It took me 44 years to get to acceptance and admission, but I'm there now — sobriety is the number-one priority and I'm enjoying it. I can actually look at myself in the mirror — not very long yet, but it's coming. It's a beautiful thing I'm experiencing. Thank you — please share that with everyone there.” — **James L. S., Southwest 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. We appreciate your patience if you do not hear from us in a timely manner. Obtaining outside contacts often takes time.

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.