



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 2010

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."*

CHOICES

"As active alcoholics, we lost our ability to choose whether we would drink. We were the victims of a compulsion which seemed to decree that we must go on with our own destruction.

"Yet we finally did make choices that brought about our recovery. We came to believe that alone we were powerless over alcohol. This was surely a choice, and a most difficult one. We came to believe that a Higher Power could restore us to sanity when we became willing to practice A.A.'s Twelve Steps.

"In short, we chose to 'become willing,' and no better choice did we ever make."

As Bill Sees It, p. 4

'A PLACE OF PEACE...'

"Hello, my name is Dave, and I'm an alcoholic. I am at the point where I will be completing my Fifth Step at the end of the week with the chaplain. For me, this is a time of trepidation, but one of hope too. I am indigent and without the support of either my close friends or family now. What I have left is my faith, an A.A. Blue Book [the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*], and some issues of the Grapevine magazine that I found in the jail library. I just cannot go on enough about the Grapevine. I have the back cover of one issue glued with toothpaste to the bottom bunk of the bed above me. It has the Serenity Prayer and a picture of a courtyard that has a couple of palm trees and a very old building. The sun isn't shining, it is in the shade, but mostly it is a place of peace I can go to away from the negativity and animosity. Although my life has come down to only the barest of essentials, and I face many difficulties in the future, at least I have my sobriety and my sanity back for the first time in thirty years. I hope this letter finds you all well and your lives full of hope and happiness."—
Dave W., West Central Region

'CHANGE IS A PROCESS'

"My name is Craig, and I am a grateful recovering alcoholic. I am writing with hopes of expressing my appreciation for all that you've done for me. I finally reached a point in my life where I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. I wanted to know what made me tick and why I did the things I did. It's been an interesting journey indeed. Like most of my fellow prisoners, I too struggled with my denial, and I used it as a defense mechanism to avoid dealing with the more painful twists of my reality. I've since discovered that clinging and chaining myself to the past, wallowing in my mistakes, and perpetually rehashing what I cannot change is a colossal waste of time and only serves the purpose of hindering a true sense of internal healing within myself.

"Today, I'm a grateful member of Alcoholics Anonymous. The last time I had a drink was on April 28, 2000, at approximately 9:00 pm. Now as I sit here writing (in retrospect, with 20/20 hindsight), I can honestly say that being locked up was the best thing that ever happened to me! It was in that very cell that I found my rock bottom. It was in that very cell that I truly understood and finally admitted that I was powerless over alcohol and that my life was completely unmanageable. Childishly immature, selfish, jealous, angry and vindictive were the definite visible traits apparent in my daily walk. I nursed grudges, fueled resentments, and harbored exhausted expectations on life and all those around me, and the more I considered the circumstances of my life the angrier I became. I had yet to understand the true affect of my actions upon others. Rationality, thinking reasonably, and empathy are skills one must learn. Change is a process. Eventually these things did come. I've developed a sense of compassion and I'm living a sober life today with a newfound sense of hope and happiness within my heart. I am so grateful to A.A., and I can hardly wait to attend meetings in the free world upon my release."—
Craig C., East Central Region

THE BIG BOOK (*Alcoholics Anonymous*)

"I am writing to you as a fellow member of A.A. who is currently incarcerated. This incarceration is a direct result of the wreckage of my past. But through the grace of God, as I understand Him, the Twelve Steps, my sponsor and the Fellowship, I am able to accept this as it is. This incarceration befell me when I had 11½ months of sobriety. So no, I wasn't able to attend my token A.A. birthday, but God has a plan and this too shall pass. But I'm grateful that I was able to get a copy of the A.A. Big Book (the mini version, first 164 pages, plus the appendixes). I read it daily and stay spiritually fit through Steps Ten and Eleven. I'm also grateful that I was allowed to work the Twelve Steps before this incarceration

happened. God is good. I am eternally grateful to my God, the Twelve Steps, the Fellowship, my sponsor and my wife (who has been more than accepting of my journey through this spiritual awakening). God willing, I will continue to 'trudge the road of happy destiny.' May God bless you and keep you."—**Shannon C., Southeast Region**

"When I read the Big Book I often get the feeling it was written directly to me. This is not my first rodeo with A.A. However, this is the first time I have had the 'desire' to stop drinking. I know it is not too late, and I have a long life ahead of me. I do have my family and God behind me this time. They have always been there but, like I said, this is the first time I have actually wanted to face it."—**Kyle R., East Central Region**

SETTING GOALS

"My name is Billy and I am an alcoholic. For the past 20 years my life has been controlled by alcohol. This disease has caused my family and me nothing but sorrow and pain. During this time I've been in prison five times. Today, I am still incarcerated, but things are different. I'm sober and I feel great! A few months ago, I decided to do something different with my life. I decided to ask God for forgiveness. I started reading A.A. material and began to work the Steps. Today I feel like a different person. My whole life is different. I've set goals that I want to achieve. My relationship with my family is better now. This program is really working for me and I am sincerely grateful for these blessings. God bless us all!"—**Billy W., Southeast Region**

"Since I wrote you last, I have learned that I will be going home on parole in the next six to eight weeks. I have learned a lot about my alcoholism. I have the meeting list in my area and have made arrangements for another A.A. member to meet me upon release. When I get back on my feet, I will be making a contribution so that A.A. may continue to help others as it helped me."—**Warren C., Northeast Region**

"Due to alcoholism, I ended up homeless and incarcerated in prison for life. I didn't know which way to go and who to turn to. I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to an A.A. meeting.' It has been one of the best things that ever happened to me since my first can of Pork-n-Beans! My fellowship here in A.A. has been very positive in my life. During my troubled time, I was blind, so blind. But now I am thankful that through A.A. and my Higher Power I can see! And I know through my Higher Power's gracious love that He still has a plan for me!"—**Archie L. J., Pacific Region**

STAYING IN THE SOLUTION —NOT THE PROBLEM

"I am thoroughly convinced that I am an alcoholic, not just because of the terrible things that result in my drunken stupors, but also of how terribly dark my world becomes when I'm not drinking. When I haven't had alcohol for a while, I become so terribly haunted by the despicable things I have done in the past. I have this fire inside of me against everyone who has hurt me, it's more like extreme hatred. I think my mind would be better if I channeled it on the solution of the problem that landed me in here, which is undeniably my drinking. Alcohol has destroyed everything that was ever of

any value to me, including my relationship with my family. I don't have anymore fight left in me. I don't know if I will ever bounce back from this one, but I have seen people work the Steps from the Twelve and Twelve and the A.A. Big Book and they seem to somehow succeed against all odds. I would bet against me, but if I am destined to fail despite my attempts, I figure I have nothing to lose. I want to be able to say I tried everything possible to end this insane reality I am in."—

Travis H., Pacific Region

THE TWELVE STEPS

"My name is Climmie, I am an alcoholic. I haven't a clue where to start, so I will start with my first contact with alcohol. When I was about eight or nine years old, I was given alcohol as a joke to entertain the grown-ups. The adults would make fun of me as I would fall down in a drunken dance. Throughout the years alcohol played a big part in my life. I would drink every day. When I started going to jail, I didn't understand why I was always in trouble. I went to my first A.A. meeting in 1977. Then and there I started to hear my story from other people giving their own testimony. I got out of it in 1978, but immediately I relapsed into drinking and self-destruction. This behavior continued until 1994, when I was returned to prison with a 25-years to life sentence. I have been sober now for 16 years. I work the Steps to the best of my ability. I have learned to live in prison alcohol-free thanks to A.A. and the fellowship of its members."—**Climmie W., Pacific Region**

"Hello, my name is Micah and I am an alcoholic. We have A.A. meetings about every two months. I was fortunate enough to be allowed to go and was given a Twelve and Twelve, and also a Big Book. A few of us decided to start having our own Step Study Meetings every other day. I am learning a lot from the meetings spoken in English and Spanish. There are six of us at present with two interpreters. I thank God for the Serenity Prayer because we were not able to change how many meetings we were able to go to. But we had the wisdom to start our own meetings and the courage to share our experiences with each other."—**Micah S., 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), 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.