



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Summer 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."*

WORKING WITH OTHERS

"Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail... Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail...."

—*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 89

'OTHERS—JUST LIKE ME'

"I have been on this unit for five months and have not once, since being here, missed one meeting. Before starting A.A., the word 'sobriety' meant nothing to me. Now it's all I live for! See, I can't wait to go to the meetings because I found out there are others out there like me."—**Jordon G., Southwest Region**

"I am working with a couple of inmates in solitary who asked what the Big Book is. I am carrying the message as that is how I have to live. I can never forget about the value of one alcoholic helping another. I must give back what was so freely given to me by my first sponsor, God rest his soul. Please pray for me. Thank God for A.A. behind bars."—**Jack M., East Central Region**

"Thank you for the service you do for so many. I have come to love and appreciate all that A.A. offers me. It is my hope and desire to return or do service work to show how grateful I am. In small ways, I try to share with those who are around me every day. I believe it is by servicing others that we are blessed with our own healing. May God bless you—each one."—**Heather C., Pacific Region**

'I WAS THE PROBLEM...'

"I don't even remember my last two weeks as a free man. I was a blackout drunk. I used to drink to have fun, but that all changed somewhere down the line. I didn't plan when I was going to drink. Most of the time I woke up the next day from sleeping outside or in a car or somewhere I had never been or seen before. The one thing I have learned about my drinking problem is my drinking was not the

problem... I was the problem. And in order to fix the drinking problem, I had to fix *MY* problems and find a way to deal with them. I would not be here if I would have stayed sober. I am going to do anything I can from inside these walls to help those who suffer. I wish I could be standing there in front of you, but I can't. I do hope my story will help someone. I pray for only the best for those who suffer and I pray no one will end up here where I am. May God be with you and your family."—**Brandon L., Southwest Region**

A.A.'s TWELVE STEPS

"I have been sober since 2006 and, while at one point in my life that was sufficient, now I am sick and tired of being sick and tired. I have to take a more active approach in my recovery. While prison is not my first bout with sobriety, all the other times I have failed. Thus, the result of my last relapse was this six-year sentence I am currently serving. I have come to the realization that I've been kidding myself and that my self-will is not going to keep me sober. I know I want to do the Twelve Steps—this time with vigorous self-analysis and serious and thorough self-reflection. I can admit that one of my character defects is my inability to ask for help. So, here I am working past that and humbly asking for assistance. I would like someone who can help guide me through the Twelve Steps."—**Khalid A., Northeast Region**

"Hi, my name is Chris and I am an alcoholic. I am currently serving a 36 month sentence. When I was out all my superiors told me I had a problem and needed to attend a treatment program, which was not what I thought! As I was sitting in my cell with shakes that I could not stop, I started to attend the A.A. meeting we have here. Everything that was said in the Big Book described me! Once I realized I was an alcoholic, I started working the Steps. I am working on Step Four and hope I can continue this on the outside. I have been sober since August 22, 2008 and hope to stay sober. Thank you for helping me A.A."—**Chris T., West Central Region**

"I am writing as a fellow member of A.A., who is currently incarcerated as 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 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 Big Book. 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."—

Shannon C., Southeast Region

HOPE

“I’m writing you today with hope—hope that I didn’t have a few years ago. Hope that I can keep my very much needed sobriety. I’ve been trying without much success at this sobriety thing for over two decades now. That’s a long time to keep failing at something. I’ve been walking, talking, looking and sounding like A.A., but with no success. You see that’s all it was. Nothing more than just me looking good, until I woke up in jail for being drunk again. With the help and guidance of a good and caring sponsor, I’ve now started doing what I’ve never done all these years. I’m talking about working the Steps to the best of my ability.

“Step One is really simple for me to swallow because it’s plain as day that I have a problem. Step Two is not so simple, but necessary none the less. I just had to believe that a higher power can help me. Step Three is where I had to spend some quality time. I loathed a higher power that was willing and able to torture me all this time. Then I started trying to pray. It has become a lot easier now that I see *I* was the one torturing me. No one did anything. I just finished the Fourth Step and well, it’s deep. Two days after I’d written down all that gook and did more on *my part* in all those situations, *Wow did I feel good!* Just yesterday I spoke to my sponsor about what I wrote and that put the seal on it. God does work in mysterious ways. Even though I’m sitting inside my cell almost 23 hours a day, I can’t help but smile whenever I see anyone come to my door. Some folks here may think I’m starting to lose it in here. They must think ‘What could he ever be so happy about? He’s stuck in the box until summer next year. He doesn’t get any visitors. What could possibly make him want to smile?’ I don’t care what they think. God is truly doing for me what I can’t do for myself. That’s me feeling good, being with myself in my own skin.—**Christopher P., Northeast Region**

“God is awesome! I’m so grateful for my sobriety and what A.A. is doing in my life. I have a little less than four years to go in here, but my life is filled with purpose, peace and hope for the first time.”—**Tom K., Pacific Region**

“My sobriety was forced on me by coming to prison. My probation got revoked because I got drunk, and got the full sentence in prison. I have many Big Books at home and never really read them. I have hurt many during my years of drinking and I am starting to make amends. I am at a prison that has A.A. and I go faithfully.”—**Brian G., Southwest Region**

“I have to say right now how grateful I am to be sober and to have changed my life. I am new at this A.A. thing and have a lot to learn. Maybe I will never know everything, but I know that I want to be sober for the first time in my life.”—**Nancie S., Southeast Region**

A DISEASE OF DENIAL

“My name is Nick and I’m an alcoholic. It took me a lot to finally say that out loud. I used to stand and say, ‘My name is Nick and I’m in the closet.’ I said this line for almost five months at our Friday A.A. meeting where I am currently incarcerated. This is until last week when I was reading out loud to our group from ‘The Doctor’s Opinion’ in the Big Book, where it says, ‘There is the type who always believes that after being entirely free from alcohol for a period of time that he can take a drink without danger.’ When I read those words it was like getting hit squarely between the eyes and my mind was saying, ‘Hey, dummy, that’s us!’ After I finished reading, I went back to the podium and I started out with, ‘My name is Nick and I *am* an alcoholic!’ The group burst out applauding and several came up to me to clap me on the back. At the end of our meeting I asked our group sponsor, Jim, how I could get a copy

of the Big Book. In closing, all I can say is I thank Dr. Silkworth for those words and Bill W. and Dr. Bob for giving an alcoholic like me this chance before I drowned.”—**Nick D., Southwest Region**

‘IT’S THE FIRST DRINK . . .’

“Since I’ve been arrested for two D.U.I.s, I have become seriously involved in A.A. for the first time in my life. Everything that I have ever loved was lost because of alcoholism. I spent many years of my life in prison before being released on parole a few years ago, yet I found myself back behind the walls again for not being able to stay focused on my recovery. Now that I have almost four years of sobriety, I look back at my life from my restricted world, and I can honestly say that I really had a wonderful life before I took that first drink. Eventually I ended up hitting bottom as my drinking became more excessive with time. Now I understand why they say in A.A. that one drink is too much and a hundred are not enough. I know that it is possible to live a complete and fulfilling life in sobriety. We have without a doubt the chance of a life-time to redeem our life in a positive way through the A.A. Fellowship. I am definitely ready to fulfill my life in A.A., one day at a time. I really mean that with all my heart.”—**Angel C., Northeast Region**

WHAT TO DO UPON RELEASE

“Our A.A. group has received the initial packet of material. In some of this material we learned that the local A.A. Corrections Committee may be of some help and support to us, in that they might provide some leadership and direction, as well as an occasional speaker for a meeting. Also, we learned from your material that prerelease contacts are available to provide support to those of us who are preparing to be released. We agree with you that the first few days and weeks after release are a critical time to get plugged into an A.A. meeting and find at least a temporary sponsor. Men are released here every two months. As a result, we have a relatively constant need for the type of support I have just described. Many of the inmates are not alcoholics, but drug addicts. We are encouraging them to write a similar letter to the N.A. General Service Organization. We truly appreciate any help and support, including any suggestions you might be willing to give. I pray that God will bless you for your efforts!”—**James R., East Central Region**

Note: See entry at bottom of page.

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.