

“I don’t get all this God stuff”

Probably the most common thing I hear when someone new to Alcoholics Anonymous is presented with the solution to their drinking problem. Yes, you did read that correctly, I did say the solution to their drinking problem is God. Now you may be saying who is he to say that the solution to anybody’s drinking problem is God. Let me reassure my critics: *I am not saying it; Alcoholics Anonymous is saying it. I merely agree with their view.*

When a new prospect for Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) arrives at their inaugural meeting they are met with a barrage of information, opinion, and an overwhelming greeting of varied slogans and mottos, which requires a map to navigate. It’s no wonder that people who are still dizzy from their convalescence become more confused about what exactly AA is supposed to provide.

The most common misconception is that AA will stop people from drinking. Nonsense. Alcoholics Anonymous had never stopped anyone from drinking. Only the individuals themselves have stopped themselves from drinking. Here comes the debate I’m sure. This statement is supported through their primary piece of literature, Alcoholics Anonymous know as the Big Book. On page 34, it states, “We are assuming, of course, that the reader desires to stop.” What AA provides is a solution to *stay* stopped.

Time after time the Big Book states that the solution to the drinking problem, as well as everything else if you are an Alcoholic, is God. Here’s the exciting part: you get to choose what God is. Once again, I’m sure there are debates. However, AA is quite clear in their philosophy of God through their statement “*as we understood Him*”. They do make certain conditions to that statement as well.

Alcoholics Anonymous goes to great lengths to describe what they mean by God, Him, He, Creator, Higher Power, Director, Father, Creative Intelligence, Spirit, Love, etc. They even

“I don’t get all this God stuff”

have an entire chapter devoted to Agnostics, which means those not having knowledge of God. Within that chapter the authors explain different angles from which to approach and make an effective conscious contact with a God. It is written over and over that as long as it is not a *specific* human and it is not the individual itself, the concept of God one may envision will suffice to make a beginning. That is quite a relief to me.

Now, here’s where I start to get controversial. Most of AA’s critics, meaning those outside of AA or those in AA that don’t believe the AA philosophy, generally object to the notion that God exists outside of them. Let me repeat that. Most people that have difficulty with God, as AA defines it, is because they believe that AA demands that it be outside or separate from themselves. Certainly there are vast amounts of people that do believe just that. After all, AA was founded by two Christian men. One was a simple believer, and one who was much more pious. Nevertheless, their brilliance was in knowing that the Judeo-Christian God could and would be rejected by many disenfranchised members of those religious sects that included those very same deities.

In actuality, AA’s belief of where God exists is quite evident. On page 11, it states, “Here was something at work in a human heart which had done the impossible.” At the bottom of the same page it starts, “I saw that my friend was much more than inwardly reorganized.” Hmm, page 11, they didn’t waste much time telling us where God resides did they? That friend was the man who carried the message of recovery to one of AA’s co-founders. Previously in the book, this friend proposed the notion of a personal conception of God. So in essence, what this man was saying is that God is not finite. It is not a particular vision of God. God is an idea.

Well that means that one can consider them self God. Indeed they can. However, AA’s philosophy dictates that when an individual plays God it does not work, or they would be able to

“I don’t get all this God stuff”

muster the ability to leave a drink alone, or accomplish anything they set out to do. They even state quite boldly on page 31, “If anyone who is showing inability to control his drinking can do the right-about-face and drink like a gentleman, our hats are off to him.”

Let’s return to where God exists for a moment. On page 25, we read, “... We have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God’s universe. The central fact in our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous.” Whew! What does all that say about where God is. Well if they have had a deep spiritual experience that means it’s the opposite of shallow or external. Then they claim that experience has been effective in transforming their thinking and actions. Last time I checked, “thinking” was done in the brain, and actions are a series of events triggered by nerve impulses originating in the brain. We know those things have been transformed because they use the word revolutionized, which means to over throw an old way of doing things and replacing it with a new way. Then they claim a central fact. I guess that would be like one and one is two. It is the basis for a structure. Well what is this basis? The authors felt it so important that they were redundant in its stating that it is “absolute” and “certain”. So what is it? The fact is their God lives, which in context means resides, in their hearts. Once again, the last time I checked my heart is inside of me. Even the philosophical abstract “heart” is inside me. That would mean that God is a part of me. Internal not external. Driving my thoughts, feelings, and actions. Impossible you say? Not at all.

As previously stated, most critics get tripped up on where God is supposed to be. Probably because they are told by well-intentioned people what their own conception of God is therefore projecting it the new person confusing them even more. Then they are criticized being

“I don’t get all this God stuff”

told they don’t have God. Well, let’s try to understand *why* they don’t have a God. If you are anything like me, you grew up being taught a particular way to view God. When you didn’t understand you were told you don’t have to understand, you just have to accept and believe it. The consequences of arguing or rebelling against this illogical point of view were monumental. You were condemned to Hell by someone who believed them self to be pious, you were punished by your parents for embarrassing them, and perhaps you were even given detention or extra homework for your blasphemy. And in some extreme cases you were physically punished through a simple smack or an extreme beating, depending on the zealots you were defying or the nature of your punishers. In any event, you were met with Fear, Wrath, and Loathing at your God-givens thoughts and feelings.

It seems to me quite logical when presented with the solution to your problem being God to vehemently rebel. Here’s the rub: our rebellion can be fatal. It is the seeming paradox of Spirituality being the path to Freedom that is the most difficult to accept. Why? Because we have a preconceived, appropriately despised notion of God. The God we reject should be rejected. It is someone else’s God. It may work for them, it may not work for them, and it may or may not work for you, but it is *their* God. On page 55, it states, “Actually we were fooling ourselves, for deep down in every man, woman, and child, is the fundamental idea of God.” There it is again. “Deep down”, not outside, up in Heaven, in a church, or anywhere else. And they claim it is fundamental; well it is. Only people who do not know the difference between right wrong don’t know God. We all have a CONSCIENCE. The authors continue, “It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or other it is there.” Calamity could perhaps be the trauma of questioning others’ beliefs of God when we are young. Pomp can simply be the ego, or rejection of God. Worship of other things in alcoholics’

“I don’t get all this God stuff”

cases would be alcohol. It accomplished for us what we could not do for ourselves. Then it stopped working.

It stopped working for us because we have a physical allergy that blocks out the reality of our lives. Further on page 55, “We found the Great Reality deep down within us.” Inside again. “In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us.” Amazing. There’s that word that I love: ONLY. It creates a singular choice. It means that anything else is wrong. So now we are posed with the challenge that if we look anywhere but inside ourselves for God we are wrong. The authors even say that it is final and it is thought to conclusion, which is what analysis is. Inside; not outside. It means that each and every one of us has God inside us. It gives us the ability to know the difference from right and wrong. Only after the body is detoxified from the chemical effects of alcohol. Something we generally ignore when we get a “wet” drunk at our meeting halls.

So how then can I help illuminate the inner sanctums of people’s heart to help them create a conscious contact with their God? Here is what I can suggest. Grab a sheet of paper and write on the top the word God and underline it. Next, start to list all the qualities you want your God to have. After all it is your God. I must take pains to be absolutely clear. When I say list the qualities, I mean just that: a list. Not complete sentences, not ideas; a list. I will provide an example:

GOD

Loving

Caring

“I don’t get all this God stuff”

Understanding

Compassionate

Funny

Ironic

Forgiving

Intelligent

Patient

Etc.

Now your list can be shorter or longer because it is your list. This is what *YOU* want God to be, not what God wants you to be, not what you want from God, not what you want from your life, not what you want God to provide for you, not what you *think* other people want your God to be. This is the God that has ALL POWER! May you find IT now! May God bless you and keep you!

Keep the Faith!

BB Tim