

RECOVERY & ME

The Third Step: The Beginning of the Program of Action

Anonymous

"Selfishness-self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help."

(Alcoholics Anonymous, Pg. 62)

The third step of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous helped me to begin to understand that the problems that I have, or have had, are a direct result of trying to live my life on self-will. I have come to understand and believe a very important message that my second sponsor taught me years ago. He told me constantly; "there are two foundations of human enlightenment; one; there is a God, and two; you're not Him". Like most alcoholics, I struggled with the idea that I was the source of all my problems. It's not the actions of others that are the problem; it's how I respond to others. I have been reminded throughout my life that as soon as I am willing to accept and take proper action, my problems no longer dominate my life. I realize today that I am in God's world to do His will, and work to align my will to His, so that I can be of maximum service to Him and others. But exactly how do I determine what is God's will and what is my will? Well, Dr. Bob, one of AA's many founders, used to ask himself four simple questions. He'd ask;

Are my actions honest?

Are my actions unselfish?

Are my actions loving?

Are my actions pure?

Dr. Bob felt comfortable that if he could answer "yes" to all four of these questions, he was doing God's will. These four measuring sticks that Dr. Bob used in making his decisions were not something that he pulled out of the air; they were the four absolutes of the Oxford Group (the organization where AA traces its beginnings). Many times throughout my life I have found myself asking the exact same questions when attempting to determine whether or not my actions are rooted in self-will or God's will. Time and experience has demonstrated to me that when I have asked these questions, checked with others in the program that too employ this technique, the actions that I have taken have proven to be the most productive and beneficial in my life. I have found purpose and meaning and it has come in-part through the understanding that any life run on self-will is a life headed for disaster. I have also come to accept that most good things in life are simple; and that my greatest stumbling blocks have been not those created by others; rather they are those that I have created myself by living a life run on misdirected self-will.

P.S. Step 3 –Described on pages 60 – 63(The directions for taking Step 3 are on page 63, paragraph 2, lines 1 - 8)

I welcome your questions, your ideas for recovery topics or perhaps a personal story or two. Don't forget, a dose of good humor about recovery or addiction is always welcomed...it has certainly helped me and many others through some tough times! Please send your submissions to: Council on Chemical Abuse, Attn: Recovery & Me, 601 Penn St., Ste. 600, Reading, PA 19601. You may choose to remain anonymous by including only your first name with your submission, as it may in part be reprinted in a future article.