

I had come to Step 2: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. At this point I spent time with my sponsor reading and talking about this. I wasn't sure how I could go about working this step because I had always thought of myself as an atheist with no hope of a religious life. After all, religious people seemed to lead such a boring way of life. What are they always so happy about anyway? With all their praying and ice cream socials.... Spare me!

I do have to admit that in a way, I had always envied the people who truly seemed to get the God thing because like I said they always seemed to be filled with joy. Then I heard a new concept concerning belief in a higher power. "A Higher Power of my own understanding." Wow! You mean that I don't have to limit my thoughts of God and Jesus to the pictures I remember from Sunday school in the 70's? Hmmmm..... Very interesting. My own perception of God?

My mind, almost immediately, was opened wide to this God thing. How could I limit my understanding of a God that created the heavens and the earth, to only what I can see with my human eyes? It says in the big book of A.A. in the chapter "We Agnostics" for instance; when we look at a steel beam with just our naked eyes we only see a piece of steel. But when we look at the same steel beam under a microscope, we see life! We see that it is a mass of electrons whirling around each other at incredible speed. It's much more than meets the eyes. It says in the Bible that His thoughts are much higher than mine and that my mind cannot fathom his ways and power. I came to the conclusion that my understanding of how God works is irrelevant. That's why it's called faith. After all, we can see His amazing work is all around us.

My sponsor explained to me that this is a very important step. As a matter of fact; it's the solution. He said, God could do for me what I could never do for myself. I knew for a fact that the second half of that sentence was true. I told him that I didn't even feel comfortable thinking about praying let alone actually

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praying. I realized that it is still a matter of life and death and that I had promised myself that I would go to any length to stay sober. This was just a suggestion so why not try it? I had nothing to lose and if it kept me sober for another day, well then it worked for that day.

After a few weeks of praying first thing in the morning and a few times throughout the day, things started changing in my life. Things that I used to think were only luck had new meaning to me. I began to ask myself, is it odd or is it God? I couldn't believe how often good things were happening to me! Through a suggestion from a friend of mine I began to listen to Star 88.3. When I was tired of it I would just turn the radio off instead of changing the channel. Slowly, I began to enjoy the songs one by one. The positive messages began to change my moods and feelings. But at the same time my convictions became more intense. I began to see how dishonest I really was. My sponsor let me know that this was normal for an alcoholic of our type. I was reminded that for the past 20 years I had protected my addiction with lies, deceit and selfishness. All those years of practicing that behavior had made me into the person I had become and it wasn't going to leave me over night. He explained to me that my alcohol abuse was only a symptom of what really going on inside me. This information was exciting for me to hear! I had always felt different than everyone else. I began to understand that these steps were really going to give me a second chance at life. A do over! Healing from the inside out. To be continued.....

We hope that you had an enjoyable Valentine's Day and that you shared the gift of your ability to love, with another human being. Valentine's Day doesn't have to be a romantic type of love. It can be an opportunity to

be loving. A kindness. An expression of gratitude. There is an old song that has the phrase “money can’t buy you love” It doesn’t buy happiness either. A person at peace with themselves, God and the world around them doesn’t acquire it by seeking it in things. A person at peace, deep in their soul, knows that they are living well. Honesty. Integrity and doing the work God created them to do.

I thought it might be helpful to explore this word integrity. The American Heritage dictionary defines integrity as steadfast adherence to a moral code, unity and completeness. Soundness. I began to think about this in relationship to our work force during the winter storm last week. There are some of you that called the office to ask whether to go clean or not, some of you would go clean because it was the right thing to do and others of you that would not go clean because it is the right thing to do. Still others went the following day when the roads were safe and clear. It is our levels of integrity that made the decision for each of us during that storm. Past experience, fear and the reliability of your vehicle may have entered into the decision. One of your responsibilities in taking a job in the cleaning industry is to make sure you have dependable transportation. In Indiana snow, sleet and ice are part of our normal working conditions. This means we need to be prepared. It was my prayer, the entire day, for a level one snow emergency to be declared so that you would be legally protected from having to drive in unsafe conditions. It was also deeply upon my heart a prayer for everyone’s safety. It is my hope that each employee made a wise decision that had wisdom, honesty and integrity at its core. It is my hope that every single day, you live your life, and I mine, with a high level of integrity. Doing the next right thing whether emotionally we want to or not. We aren’t children. Life is not recess. Work is work. Our word is a bond. Our acceptance of a job with this company is a commitment. I once heard the phrase “how well we do anything is how well we do everything”. It has taken me a long time to see how true that phrase really is. If we aren’t willing to go the extra mile for the company we already work for, why do we think changing jobs will bring greater

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success? There are a great many of you that have a high level of commitment, dedication, loyalty, trustworthiness and integrity in all that you do. IT SHOWS! Those that don’t, reveal that as well. We project on the outside the condition of our hearts on the inside.

What is Character:

Availability vs. Self centeredness: giving to others basic needs without having as motive personal reward.

Compassion vs. indifference: investing whatever I can to heal the hurts of others

Diligence vs. sloth: investing my time and energy to complete things entrusted to me

Endurance vs. discouragement: the inward strength to withstand stress and do my best

Obedience vs. willfulness: quickly and cheerfully carrying out the direction of those to whom I am responsible, even if it’s me.