



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 2015

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."*

VICTORY IN DEFEAT

"Only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength. Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built."

— *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 21

'LIVING IN THE SOLUTION'

"Hi, my name is Lobester, and I am an alcoholic. Being in A.A. benefitted me tremendously. I never realized how much I've grown until I was unable to attend A.A. meetings. While there is no A.A. meeting we experienced here, I'm left with fond memories of our A.A. group, 'Living In the Solutions.' The stories we shared, and the healing that was made possible by our willingness to listen. I felt a new perspective taking shape in my life. The one thing I can say is that active alcoholism is one thing; living in the solution is another. It is my belief that no one should take A.A. for granted. Help is there and if you are willing your recovery won't be far behind. I want to personally thank A.A. for giving me my life back. Without your stories and encouragement, I'd still be lost in a sea of confusion thinking my life is okay. My thanks to all of you; my A.A. brothers are definitely 'living in the solutions.'"

— **Lobester L., Southwest Region**

'FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE'

"I am truly in awe of the awesome people we become when we turn our lives over to the care of God as we understand him. I fell away from A.A. and the grace of God; I had been sober 3 ½ years when I thought I could do life on my own. I have found that the Fellowship, as well as the friendships I walked away from, really do mean a lot and I do feel bad for walking away from a life worth living. I pray daily for God's will and for freedom from bondage. Even though I am incarcerated, I am still truly blessed. My experience is worth sharing with the alcoholic who still suffers. It makes my life worth

living and gives me a secure sense of freedom. Thank you for being here for me." — **Dean M., Pacific Region**

"Today, I'm 31 years old, twice divorced, five kids and still sitting in a jail cell. I started drinking when I was 12 years old. At the age of 17 I was drunk and got into a bad fight. My dad's friend was a cop. He showed me pictures of the guy who got beat up. It made me cry, I felt bad and turned myself in at the county jail. I was given probation and released. Within a year of being released I was sentenced to five years on another charge. I was also given 13 months for a battery charge. I got drunk and thought it would be a good idea to beat up a couple of innocent people in a parking lot. Today I'm sitting in a jail cell. I received a letter from A.A. along with a *Daily Reflections* book and pamphlets about the program. I've been sober for three months now." — **Andy P., West Central Region**

'A.A. DID NOT SAVE MY LIFE — IT GAVE ME ONE'

"When I stood up in an A.A. meeting and said, 'My name is Brooks and I'm an alcoholic,' I realized that was the first time I had ever told the truth. Life doesn't come with simple instructions and I believe our experiences make us who we are. I am very involved in A.A. here at the prison. There are 1,000 inmates here and sadly I only know of about 20 who are living the program. At times it can be hard. I have been living the A.A. way for 30 months now. I know in my heart everything is going to work out this time. A.A. did not save my life, it gave me one! I have mental stability and good direction today. My judgment is fortified by considerable experience and I am patient. Nothing like this has ever happened in my life before. I am so grateful that A.A. showed me that the one thing I thought I had to have, the one thing that got me through the day and was the glue that held my life together was, in fact, the one thing that was poisoning my life and was responsible for my bone-wrenching status. My sane, sober, and respectable self is who I really am. I want the simple things life has to offer. Even though I've lost everything a man can lose and I'm in prison, I've found true happiness, one day at a time. Thank God." — **Brooks F., Southeast Region**

'PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION'

"Laying here in my bunk I'm constantly reminded of all the wrongs that I have done. I realize that my problems are all a result of the choices I made throughout my chaotic life. God knows that I had every chance in the world to avoid coming to county jail, prison and halfway houses. But I refused to be responsible, I refused to seek guidance, I refused to do the right thing and I kept making bad choice after bad choice until finally my right to make my own choices was taken from me. Since December 1, 2011, I have not been allowed to go anywhere or do anything without asking permission. After I came to jail I tried to convince everyone that I wasn't at fault, I tried to minimize my actions, to

blame others. I even tried to justify my actions. I finally understand that God could and would do for me what I could and would not do for myself. I never thought that I would ever seek God. I thought that I was running the show. But since I have started down this path of bettering myself through the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, I am growing. I have to remember that I claim spiritual progress and never spiritual perfection, I still have a lot of growth to achieve. Today I am gaining people back in my life to guide me so that I can be a healthy and productive member of society." — **David L., East Central Region**

"My name is Justin and I am an alcoholic. I used to be an active, involved member of A.A. I was on the P.I. Committee, working the Steps and living the A.A. way. Until one day I got my heart broken, and I couldn't deal with the feelings that transpired. I thought I could solve them with a drink. I drank and drank and drank some more. I just couldn't get back to A.A. I threw away everything God had given me. My feelings of regret kept me away from my friends in A.A. I'm back at the tables inside the walls. Life is better than it was, but not as good as I want it to be." — **Justin C., Southeast Region**

"By the time I reached 22, I was drinking a fifth of whiskey daily. I have been in and out of A.A. since 1985, mostly out. I attend my group in Texas, when I am not incarcerated. In 2000, after my 3rd D.W.I, I was sentenced to ten years. Luckily I did not hurt anyone but myself, all by the Grace of my God. Probation was revoked in 2006 and I was sentenced to ten more years. I have since found out I am in third stage cirrhosis. I have been to a treatment facility eight times. Thank you all for letting me share." — **Mary Lee L., Southwest Region**

THE TWELVE STEPS

"I am in prison for drinking and having a standoff with the police. I never thought I had a problem. The day after I got sent to jail, I found A.A. I had been to A.A. groups but, at the time, they never did me any good, so I stopped going. I did not like A.A. and never got anything out of it — it just did not work for me. It wasn't until I got this charge that I started going and discovering that in fact I had a problem. Well, I can say now that A.A. is my way of life. Since I have been going I have found out so much about myself that I never knew, or that I just pushed aside. I go to every A.A. meeting I can. I really love my life now, even from where I am at the moment. I got myself a sponsor and I'm doing the Twelve Steps. I am taking this very slowly and am currently, on Step Four. There's no turning back for me! I have learned so much from A.A.; without A.A. I probably would not be alive. I am so blessed to have a second chance to live life to the fullest, sober and free." — **Randy K., Pacific Region**

THE BIG BOOK

"This is definitely a lifesaving journey, I know that I am one of the lucky ones who was able to make it into the rooms of A.A. before it was too late. The Big Book is the best book that I have ever read. The promises have started to come true in my life. My sponsor is a vital part of my program, and was the first person who gave me their time and understanding and wanted nothing in return. I have always said, that if my house catches fire, my Big Book is the first thing I will grab. I am so thankful for the time and patience of everyone involved. I used to say that it would take a whole army to get me sober, and A.A. was able to do what no one else could. Thank you, Alcoholics Anonymous, for being patient, and never giving up on me; for that I will be forever grateful. I am going to give back what was so freely given to me." — **Tamera N., Pacific Region**

'I CAN BE GRATEFUL ...'

"I found A.A. in California, where I went to rehab on June 5, 2013. A.A. was my life for 1.5 years and things were getting very good. I had a pending case that sent me to prison in sobriety. My sentence was 15 months. Since being locked up I fell out of A.A. and have spent seven of my months here in solitary. Every day, I read the Big Book, pray, and read *Daily Reflections*; it makes me feel like I'm back in California in my meetings. Although I have slipped on a few occasions since 2013 my life is much, much better now and I owe that all to A.A. I have lost friends and girlfriends and was put in prison, but the Fellowship has always been there. I'm grateful for A.A. and can't wait to be involved again. Thank you for being there. I just want to say I can be grateful, even in jail today." — **Wes M., East Central Region**

"I have been an alcoholic for quite some time now, and A.A. has been a wonderful part of my life. I have many friends in the Fellowship. My life got so much better. I got custody of my two kids, nice home, good job, and family ties back. It was great. Then, in November of 2013, I had a drink! I was back to the races and it all finally stopped on August 21, 2014, when I was in a fight and arrested. Being a part of A.A. for so long I knew exactly what the problem was. I dove back into the Big Book and meetings. A few years ago my son, my daughter, and I were leaving a meeting. My son said, 'Why do we have to come here?' Without even thinking about it my daughter responded saying, 'Because these meetings help daddy take care of us better!' Even at six- or seven-years old, my daughter knew the importance of A.A. and for that I'm grateful." — **Brad S., Southeast Region**

'THE RIGHT PATH'

"Words could barely express the shock, amazement, joy, thanks and the deepest regards to the appreciation I feel at this moment. Wow, talk about a blessing, this is beyond a simple answer and being pointed in the right direction of the path. Thank you to all who donate to Alcoholics Anonymous. For your generous heart and giving, my prayers go out to all of you. These small samplings, as you call them, may be small, but are tremendously more than that! I believe that a cure cannot be bought, but to be given to those individuals who accept the fact that a change is needed to stay sober. I am a Native American and a firm believer that true answers come to us when the time is right, and if in our hearts we want to change to receive these answers and tools, I am on the Right Path. Call it a sign, if you may, for me it symbolizes that the quest is real." — **Marc M., Southwest 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 and give us your destination (city and state) and approximate release date, 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 A.A. on the "outside."

We look forward to hearing from you.