

**David Lee**

**CD702: Working With People**

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On February 11, 2023, I visited “The Workshop” which is an Alcohol Anonymous fellowship resource center in lower Manhattan. During my visit, over twenty members were present. The majority of the participants were primarily men, but there were also a few women. The ages varied from the mid-twenties to the late sixties. When the meeting officially opened, it centered around “The Twelve-Steps Oath”, which reminded me of the Ten Commandments. The director, who I will call Esther, which is not her real name, let the members decide on the topics of the day. The subjects were: 1) Think Think Think, 2) Fellowship, and 3) Gratitude.

The “Think Think Think” topic was initiated by an upside-down sign which read and conveyed to each member that to win the battle against alcoholism, they have to think not only in a positive manner but also in a way that causes them to settle down their feelings and respond rationally. As many responded to this topic, they reflected over the last several years and expressed their need to deal with the issue of anger. For example, an older woman communicated how she wanted to get into an altercation with her coworker because she did not like what her colleague said to her. While another young man expressed how he has a habit of destroying things around him due to not having his way. I guess that you can say that what they were really looking for was (a sense of) inner peace.

As Esther shifted to the next topic which was “Fellowship” the members began to speak more about their need to find and rely on God. Many of them expressed how they felt God intercede on their behalf when they were experiencing temptation from within. Some relied on Scriptures like, “God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with

the temptation, He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). While others depended upon support and strength from their “sponsor” (a colleague with many years of experience) to guide them through this natural but challenging process. All the participants who responded to this topic were seeking strength, peace, and deliverance from who they had become. For example, Charles, which is not his real name, expressed so emotionally how his job had become his identity. The job depended on him to be creative so that they could continue to be productive and competitive in their field of business. However, because of Covid, the company had to lay off Charles’ entire team. This unforeseen situation left him feeling remorseful because the company kept him on the payroll and found him a new position. He related how he needed God to strengthen and deliver him from feeling this way because even though it was not his fault, this guilty feeling could cause him to drink again.

When it came to the last topic of having “Gratitude”, many reacted in a very meek and unworthy manner. The majority of the participants were overwhelmed by their strength not to relapse into a deep abyss. They all credited it to God and His laborers (their sponsors, family, and friends as their support system) who had seen a change in the participants’ (behavior and attitude) which made it easier for their laborers to encourage them. Many of them felt because they had previously let down their families and God that forgiveness will take a lifetime. I learned by listening to their heart that what they all wanted was to be treated as responsible adults, be accepted, and be reconciled back to God, their loved ones, and their communities. However, this, as they realize, will be a slow process (to get back into the grace of family, significant others, and friends).

All the members know that they need a higher and stronger power to overcome their trials to become normal (within their frame of reference) and to be accepted back into their

communities. The only way for this goal in their lives to be realized, as mentioned above, is with God, and “sponsors” who intercede as prayer partners to help touch and walk in agreement with them (Matthew 18:19; Amos 3:3). In addition, going to the “AA” meetings plays a sufficient role in each participant’s life because of the support which is given when an unforeseen desire comes upon them, it can cause them to relapse back into their Achilles heel (their drinking). For example, as previously mentioned, “The Twelve-Steps Oath”, plays a significant part because it helps them to focus on a particular oath which they can meditate on. Oath number six says that “We are entirely ready to have God remove from us all of our character”. This refers to the old character which has caused harm to themselves, others, and broken relationships, but it also establishes hope to let go of what once was and to embrace what God has called a “new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). This allows them to strive for “Spiritual Growth” and not “Spiritual Perfection”, as a member stated.

My visit to “The Workshop” was very informative because it helped me to realize that we are all in a program; whether we want to admit it or not. The Workshop allows one to tell the truth and to share “the darkness or the shadow” of their soul. It reminds me of the church where we all come to God to cast all of our cares and burdens (1 Peter 5:7). I believe that if “the church” would come together and “confess their sins one to another, and pray one for another”(James 5:16), then we could not only be healed, but we will also see clearly how we are many members, but one body in Christ to work together for “The Kingdom” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). In addition, I believe that the church can learn how to care for and support its neighbors. The love and respect that these members had for each other, softened my heart and I was able to look upon each member with more empathy than ever before. For example, when one member broke down crying, several members ran to comfort him.

What the church can learn is how to be a part of each other's transformation by not being judgmental, but by sitting with a member, and spending time sharing their life experiences, both challenges and victories. The knowledge that can be gained from "The Workshop", can help people who are struggling with various addictions to be led to Christ. We are no different than they are because if you really think about it; we all came to Christ for redemption! In addition, I love how they all came together to make each one better, but also with the reverence for Christ. It makes me wonder if "The Workshop" really is the true church.