

CD702 Working with People
Dr. Martin Sanders and Dr. Michelle Park
A Reum Song
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12-Step Meeting Observation

I joined an Open Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) 12-Step Meeting called 101 Recovery Ln on Zoom on February 15, 2023. 101 Recovery Ln holds zoom meeting everyday at 12pm and I was surprised to see more than 90 people joined the meeting. Michael, “The Chair,” welcomed everyone by emphasizing “We are family here.” He began the meeting with a specific guideline regarding finding a sponsorship, what to expect in the 1-hour meeting and how it will be structured. He gently reminded that it was a “sacred place” and those who disrupt the meeting will be asked to leave. He kept encouraging people to find a sponsor by attending multiple AA meetings to listen to others they might want to connect with. Initially, I was confused with what the sponsorship meant. As I continued to observe, I noticed some people were sending messages to ask for sponsoring them. Each time someone sent a message, there were immediate responses from others. Through looking them interacting with one another on the chat, I began to learn that a sponsor is crucial for people to recover from addiction. A sponsor is someone who has experienced a full recovery and helps others work on the 12 steps by offering accountability. Therefore, it was understandable that the chairperson emphasized the announcement about the opportunities for getting connected to sponsors.

At 12:06pm, the chairperson asked a woman to read “today’s topic number one,” which was “the tenth step promises.” She began to read pages 84-85 from the *Big Book* which I had never heard of. I searched the book online and read some of it after the meeting. I learned that the book is regarded the most basic and essential book that provides AA program for recovery from alcoholism. I found it fascinating that the people read the book together during the AA

meetings. The content was about how the full recovery looks like. It was very hopeful and encouraging. After reading, she emphasized that the fact that they are willing to grow is what matters, not perfection. She reminded everyone that they are to embrace who they are: that they are AA, and they cannot change themselves.

The chairperson started to read a reflection on “taking action.” He said that the promises of full recovery are being fulfilled among them. He assured that the promised reality will come true if they work for them. He stressed how important it is to take action and work the 12 steps to be freed from the addiction. When he encouraged others to share their stories, Bill began to share first. At first, he thought the reflections were not making sense, but now he became grateful. He was certain that God could and would work if they work for their own recovery. He also said that it is not “I” but “we” that work for each other’s sobriety because no one can do it alone. Erica then shared that she was now 6 months sober. She was excited to be sober the first few months, but now she feels difficult to continue. She asked others to sponsor her. While she was talking, someone volunteered to sponsor her through the chat. When Erica was done sharing, the chairperson thanked her for being so vulnerable. After Erica, Adrian shared. She joined the meeting a year ago, but kept feeling worthless and hopeless, struggling with self-hatred. Yet, coming to the meeting always reminds her of hope. As she expressed her need for a sponsor, someone offered to be her sponsor instantly. The chairperson said that there are multiple Day Ones because relapses happen, emphasizing that the continuous participation is what matters. More people shared until around five minutes before the meeting ended. Daniel, the last person to share, is in recovery. When he first admitted he was alcoholic, he felt miserable. But he kept reading the *Big Book*, holding on to the promise that he would be sober.

I joined the AA meeting for the first time without any previous knowledge. Through listening to the various stories of fighting for freedom from alcoholism, I was surprised to hear that the first step for them is to accept their reality. Many of them began sharing by saying that they are an alcoholic. At first, I did not understand why they repeated saying that, but I gradually realized that admitting where they are itself is the beginning of their recovery. It was significant for them to first embrace that they are alcoholics. It seemed accepting that fact already gave them a taste of freedom. Some people mentioned that they cannot bring recovery on their own. They were seeking external power that transforms them. Some believed in God. Yet, even non-believers admitted that there is a higher being, bigger than themselves. As they considered their battle as a spiritual one, they were desperately seeking sponsors who can hold them accountable and support them. It was surprising how their language involves the same words we use in church. They wanted spiritual growth and to feel loved so that they do not feel ashamed. As much as they wanted love and acceptance, they showed their support to one another in a powerful way. In addition, Michael, the chairperson, truly welcomed everyone and made people feel accepted. He encouraged those who shared by acknowledging their bravery, vulnerability, honesty, and willingness to help others. It motivated others to share their stories, too.

I learned how they accept their reality, admit the need to change, rely on the power higher than themselves, recognize the difficulties others might feel, empathize with one another, and offer help and support. The meeting deeply resonated with me as I thought about the life shared in church. I was especially inspired by the gracious words and attitude of the chairperson. He was modeling and shaping the interactions among the participants. I could see how his posture set the tone and guided people to follow. It reminded me of the role of the leaders in the church. I will apply the attitude and mindset of the chairperson to how I serve others.