

Joshua Kwon

AA Meeting Experience as an observer

I attended open ended meeting near my neighborhood in Greenwich Village. The group was about 25 people from all walks of life it appears, this group was mostly Caucasian which surprised me a bit. I was surprised because I think subconsciously, I was expecting more Asians and Blacks. However, I think it reflected just the demographics of the area that AA meeting took place. Right from the start, the story shared by a gentleman, set a sincere and honesty atmosphere of people who wants to change. Put it differently, I sensed from various stories shared from different people in the meeting to genuine desire to change the alcoholic behaviors from their life. Many are seeking to find new hope, not hold on to secrets, and move on from self-pity to self-love. They want to be sober to be with the others they love in a manner that is simply acceptable is a common there I heard. They want to be “not selfish”, one expressed they want to be opposite of “not selfish.” People want to get away from feeling of resentment, anger, and deal with life in a sober way. One person said, “God, just help me be a better person.” Many expressed that they have fears and that fear leads to despair and that despair lead to drinking to get away from fears and worries of life.

I think first and foremost, think there’s some genuine desire to change their behavior towards alcohol. People, tell their story as is or as truthfully as they feel comfortable in telling. They go about their struggles by externally processing and sharing their stories. It appears that many have known each other for quite some time. They also celebrate birthdays by acknowledging person who’s birthday that week. Overall, the meeting encourages to share stories. It appears like a safe space to confess “whatever” they want to confess. What I mean is

that there is courage and willingness from the people to honestly share their struggles of not just the alcohols but to certain extent traumas and hurt stuff from the past. Though it wasn't explicitly explained, I imagine the programs encourages "connecting" with higher beings in the form of prayers, as one person expressed how relationship with God's been very helpful. I think AA go about helping people by creating a safe space first and foremost for people to confess without judging. The fact that people are there, because they have a same struggle creates this comraderies. I think there is element of community, that "we are in this together" drives the meeting as well as fuels it. There is hope because they are in it together, the fellowship of people who are struggling with this addiction seems to allow or foster an environment where people can externally process how their life and experiences relate to their alcohol issues. I think the meeting encourages the communal experience to increase hope and strength that people are in it together and that one is not alone in their struggles with alcohols. And perhaps, most importantly, seeking help, the meeting used the language "connecting" to higher power also seems to be also is a huge part of the process of being free from their reliance on alcohols. It seems to be that the meeting encourages the positives, for example, the group celebrates the time one has been sober, and the moderator often uses the word "celebrate" creates I thought a mood that was uplifting. I appreciate that the meeting establishes anonymity and group conscious to respect to keep what one shares within the group. The fact that. the meeting end with "serenity" prayer indicates spiritual elements on how they go about their meeting. Just like church meetings, this AA meeting ended with a prayer, of course the difference was that they didn't pray in the name of Jesus.

I think church can learn many things. The structure that creates safe environment and keeping it anonymous to talk about things are that difficult. Eliminating the fear that someone might find out my issues, whatever that might be. The honest confession is something that church can encourage its congregants to do more often with each other. We are to walk in lights to be done with dark, and I think confession is a way we practice walking in the lights. I think having a sponsor for those that are serious about AA meeting and accountability is also something that church can adopt. And I think we do this in many churches in the form of accountability in which we pray and check in one another. I appreciated that the meeting started and ended in time. I think some church meetings run longer than necessary, which in turn, in a busy city like New York, can be communicated as not respecting one's time. Overall, I think churches do encourage and foster meetings like this where we confess to one another in honesty to lift up prayer for one another. I think church can learn to create more real safe anonymous place where members can be vulnerable to confess sin issues and do sponsor type of accountability.