

Jasmine Young | CD702 | 12-Step Program Paper (AA) | March 3, 2023

I joined the Brewster's Earlier Birds virtual meeting at 6:00am on Friday, March 3, 2023.

The following is a summary of the meeting and my observations about what the attendees are seeking.

- An introduction and announcements were read aloud. I learned that the introduction and the remainder of the service were all read by alcoholics, rather than a neutral (non-alcoholic) host.
- Then a series of prayers were read aloud. Beginning with the serenity prayer. It was followed by the purpose of AA "all that's required for membership is a willingness to stop drinking". A series of statements about the conditions of membership followed.
- A prayer was read aloud. It was a full, Christian prayer, to God, in the name of Jesus. My favorite part "we want to be full partners with you in this business of living".
- The third step prayer was an offering to God asking for the relief of the "bondage of self".
- "I am willing that you use all of me, good and bad". "Grant me strength as I go out from here to do your bidding".
- The nine-step promises were read aloud. It was a series of affirmations about the experiences and feelings about a more positive attitude that will emerge. It was also a spiritual statement, as God is the mobilizer of these promises.
- Un-awakening is a reading which focuses on the day's attentions, asking God to direct our attentions and remove our self-seeking motives. It asks for the clarity from wrong motives, bad decisions, and for God's direction. It is affirmative of the right answers coming in due time, and the "plane of inspiration". It is a "give us our daily bread" type of prayer.
- Acceptance was read aloud, "it is the answer to all my problems today". Accepting that the situation is exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment, even accepting one's alcoholism in order to heal.

- The St. Francis Prayer was read asking for the spirit of forgiveness, harmony, truth, faith, hope, light, joy, comfort, understanding, and love.
- The AA thought for the day and daily reflections were read from a daily reading manual.
- This is not a meeting about re-living the past, but moving forward to the future.

As it was the first Friday of the month, it was also a Step meeting. Attendees were encouraged read from the Step (the third Step as it's the third month of the year). Step 3 is about making the decision to turn ourselves over to the will of God. The key is willingness. It is the way to a *faith* that works (faith of some kind, in AA or in anything else). It alludes to God (or a 'higher power, if you will') as means of letting Him in. It's clear to me that attendees are seeking to sustain a change in their lives that they have committed before God and before one another. They are seeking, sanity, serenity, and freedom. What's more, they "own" this meeting, this sacred space belongs to them, and they give no ground for the negative and painful feelings which surely surface in their everyday lives.

After the readings, attendees shared their experiences. Some spoke about words that stood out to them during the reading. They were grateful for the service and the opportunity to re-wire their day. The meeting was described as a "powerhouse meeting" by one member who felt it to be the best meeting they've attended. Another meeting member spoke about living in the present, sharing openly rather than keeping things bottled inside (as it would provoke him to drink). For others the meeting allowed them to express their frustrations with their week, their circumstances, or even their struggles with maintaining their sobriety, anxiety and control, and other very human traits to which we are all predisposed.

Prayer was the turning point when one member turned to God, in her self-disgust and asked "*what would You be like if you were fucking human?!*" ---- and that's how she got saved, as God answered her prayer. Another member spoke of turning all things over to God and leaving those

things in His hands, even beyond alcohol. Again, another, remarked that they learned more about God through AA than they ever had during their years as the son of a Reverend.

How are they going about it? What I noticed most is that there is a spirit of freedom in sharing, confessing, and affirmation in the meeting. It is joyous. The Spirit of God was palpable as the members spoke, freely and openly about their past experiences, their daily struggles, and love for one another's testimonies. Each of the attendees, including the host, is a self-described alcoholic. They have an openness and community which builds one another through their sharing. They also spoke about other internal vices, unmet emotional needs, lost love, anger and other unfavorable emotions. The host spoke about removing her own ego to stay connected with a past lover so that they might one day come to her when they are ready to seek freedom for themselves. Members were encouraged to exchange numbers, and keep in contact outside of "service". Some of the members mentioned they have therapists, yet this space is also necessary for their healing.

I left the meeting in tears, having felt to immensely moved by God to love these people who I did not know, and in praise of Him finding them where they are to meet their needs. At 6am on Friday morning, service was more than AA, it was a worship experience in spirit, and in truth. If I were to adapt what I learned in my ministry context, I would create groups explicitly for confession, where brothers and sisters in Christ can be as open, vulnerable, and non-judgmental as these sinners who are saved by grace and preserved by the Spirit of God. For me, this experience was such a clear example of Christ's bride, broken and beautiful. The church could learn a great deal about the type of apostolic communion and fellowship our NT heroes knew by listening and observing these AA sessions of God's seeking people.

As for the members of this group, I, too, thank them for their service.