

Jungbum Seo

CD702: Working with People

Dr. Martin Sanders & Michelle Park

03/02/2023

AA/ 12-Step Meeting Paper

I attended an open 12-step meeting as an observer on March 1st from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm through Zoom online meeting provided by Grateful Group. The meeting was for a step 10 meeting.

The meeting starts with reading the AA preamble, the twelve traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, and Thankful heart. After that, a speaker shared his story of how he struggled and how his life changed through the AA program. After the speaker, there was open sharing time for everyone freely speak regarding the speaker, their own story, or share the date count of the sobriety with three minutes time limit. Finally, the meeting finished with reading acceptance together. The meeting was well organized and kept on time without any disturbance.

The speaker told us it took four years to finish 12 steps, and he has been clean and sober for nine years. He emphasized that we cannot do it alone to overcome alcoholism. His biggest struggle and failing the program before was that he thought he knew everything and could do it alone. However, it was not working, and when he finally admits that he cannot do it alone with a humble mind, his life starts to change. Surrendering was an essential step. He had two sponsors in the past nine years, and he was very grateful for them and encouraged other people to have a sponsor in the process. He shared the comments from one of his sponsors for the first four years, urging him to stay current. I believe the sponsor was an anchor to help the

speaker to move forward and never go back and understand when he said that to have a sponsor was a blessing. Another emphasis he made was not to anger or blame other people. He said that instead of pointing fingers at other people, we need to change the direction of the finger to ourselves to admit we are the problem and humbly accept the reality that we need help. Many people agreed with this point and thanked him for sharing later in open sharing time, so I realized it is essential to humbly accept that we have a problem and need help to overcome the alcoholic problem.

I attended an actual AA meeting for the first time in my life. I knew no one had an alcohol problem around me before and only had a glimpse of the meeting, mostly from movies or dramas that gave me a stereotype of a depressed mood of the meeting with a bunch of losers, honestly. However, I was slightly surprised that the spirit of the meeting was very bright, energetic, cheerful, and sincere. I was impressed that when they announced themselves as an alcoholic, it was not as shameful to admit, but they admitted that they have a disease to cure and are and will do their best to cure it. I recognized that treating alcoholism as a disease is a critical aspect of dealing with ourselves and essential work in figuring out the right approach to fixing alcoholism.

One of the members shared a compelling statement in the meeting. After a life-or-death situation, he became humble and did the AA steps, but when he did inventory, he thought he was not forgivable. However, through the meeting today, his eyes were open, and he was able to forgive himself. He said the AA meeting is the most spiritual program he attended, and he can love himself more than ever today. Not only did he share the spiritual breakthrough, but a few other members also shared that the AA program helped them grow spiritually. When they say

that we cannot do it alone means not only support from people but also help from a higher power.

The most common aspect of alcoholism in the Church I experienced was a sin. Even some pastors declared drinking alcohol itself a sin, and Christians never drink alcohol for any reason. I believe that most Christians disagree with that kind of practice regarding alcohol; we still can drink wine for communion anyway. However, for Christians, it is still a very controversial issue to drink alcohol, especially in the church context or activity. For these reasons, maybe Church is not a comfortable place for people with alcohol problems to come and get help or vice versa.

However, when observing the AA meeting, I could not come up with any other organization better than Church to help these people with alcohol problems. They need people who can be with them and help them personally and spiritually. Churches can help them provide a community that can support them personally and spiritually by praying and introducing Jesus Christ and the gospel, which can change our lives and help us grow spiritually together. Even many Christians may not qualify for sponsorship if they don't have the experience, but they can still be friends to support them in any aspect of life. Churches and Christians should change the view that focusing alcoholism is a sin to alcoholism as a disease and focus on the people with alcoholism who are the lost sheep that Jesus is seeking. Supporting and helping people with alcoholism is not optional to the Church but duties we must fulfill.

We must remember what Jesus said in Mark 2:17. On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (NIV Mark 2:17)