

Dale Richardson

CD 702

Dr. Sanders and Prof. Park

3/04/2023

Learning Experience 5: AA Meeting

"Three frogs are sitting on a log, and one decided to jump. How many frogs remain on the log? Three! Why? Because deciding to do something is like doing nothing. Unless you get up and do it" (Saadi, from A.A.). This line was one of the closing lines to my second meeting, but the opening line to my window into Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Alcoholics Anonymous (sometimes referred to as A.A.) meeting was so good that I attended two to ensure the first one was not a fluke. You can write movie scripts from the stories of the attendees. A.A. is a fellowship of individuals who wants to solve their drinking issues. They have an open membership, and anyone can join. Additionally, joining an A.A. meeting does not cost anything, but they do collect donations. The host states, "each aa chapter must be able to self-fund to stay in operation." Additionally, anyone, regardless of age, race, education level, or economic background, is welcome to attend. With the above in mind, I will present the stories of three individuals in this report. Then do my best to answer three questions: (1) What life change are they seeking? (2) How are they going about it? (3) What can the Church learn from how they do things?

I: Jenny (White. Female. Possibly 50 or 60 years old).

Some of the biggest takeaways that the client stated were: I was an impossible case. I was

spending my life drinking & drugging. One day, I started hallucinating and eventually felt suicidal. I had the perfect trifecta of hospitals, rehab, and jail. I called everyone at my job and told them about a conspiracy to kill me. Needless to say, I lost my job. Then my daughters called the cops for me. My four daughters forced me to go away to find help. I said I could not leave you alone in this house. They said, Mom! You are a drunkard. It's like we have been living alone for years —that's when reality hit. For context, I grew up in a traditional Italian family in Rockland county. I was good at school and was usually top of my class. However, as a child, I would suck the liquor off my father's ice cubes after he finished his drinks. Her brother terrorized her, and she grew up fearful. She loved playing the piano and was a performing concert pianist, but she was too afraid to continue. However, she switched careers and found success as a consultant (not sure what kind), making \$250 an hour in N.Y.C. Fast forward, now I was in rehab without a job or family doing a job for \$10 an hour. I was utterly defeated until A.A.

(1) The primary life change Jenny sought was reconciling with her daughters and hoping they would feel safe with her again. (2) Jenny went as far as a rehab center in Los Angeles and spent all her reserve funds to get sober. (3) From this case, perhaps the Church can learn how to assist more with family reconciliations.

II: Chaim (Jewish. Male. Possibly in late 30s or early 40s).

This client seemed a bit in denial still. However, the story was quite compelling. Here is a quick summary of the subject's statements: This is subjective! Who wants to give themselves over to a being they can not even see or hear? Who would want to do a moral inventory of themselves? Well, only someone who was absolutely desperate. I discovered A.A. by accident when I was in prison for a crime I can not remember even to this day - I was so blacked out. So, in prison, someone came and said to me, "If you attend A.A., you automatically get parole (although he later found out that is not true)." So

I went with my book to read while you guys figured things out. After I started hearing the stories of others, they sounded just like mine. When it was my time to speak, I said, I would like to admit that I'm an alcoholic, but I don't think my life is unmanageable. A guy next to me was in prison for a double murder. He turned to me and said, "Don't make me make you my third." That changed me. I hated God. However, once I said the prayer, I immediately felt better. Then the rest of my time in prison was way more spiritual.

(1) Although still seemingly in a bit of a denial state, Chaim was seeking to defeat his monster and reclaim his life. (2) He has gone about this by starting A.A. in prison and keeping up with it after he got out. (3) One lesson the Church may be able to learn from his story is the importance of prison ministry. Chaim only went to A.A. because he thought it would mean getting out on probation automatically. Perhaps Church can work to "Bring Penance Back to the Penitentiary," As stated by John Celichowski¹.

III: First timer (White. Female. Possibly late 20s or early 30s).

This first-timer was practically in tears while addressing the others in the fellowship. She stated: I just know that I need change. I know what I'm doing is not good for me, my six-year-old daughter, or my life. So, I just got in an Uber. I didn't even know where I was going, but I'm here now. I don't want my life to end up like this. I'm sorry, but I just need a change.

(1) This first-timer seemed desperate to receive any type of change. After hearing the stories of where she could end up, she demanded even quicker change. (2) This subject has taken the first step in seeking help - showing up. I hope everything goes well. (3) I was pretty sad when I heard the first place she turned to was A.A. instead of a Church. Perhaps, Christians can build a Christ-Centric AA project.

¹ <https://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2456&context=tcl>

As the author of *It's OK That You're Not OK* writes, "We all need a place where we can tell the truth about how hard this is. We all need a place to share what's going on without feeling corrected or talked out of anything. While some friends and family can do this well, I've found that the community of fellow grievors understands this best" (215). As long as the God they are referring to is Jesus, my time at these meetings we're truly incredible. As I mentioned to a pastor friend, Even though I quit drinking when I got saved, I can definitely feel their pain cause a lot of their stories to run parallel to mine, just in a different way. We are all struggling with something we must continuously turn over to God. In conclusion, I suggest trust. As one of the hosts of the meeting said, "T.R.U.S.T. means, Try really using step three" (Bobby).