

Steps for Spiritual Growth Book of James

In a letter from Bill W to his wife Lois, Bill writes, “you see Bob has been in the Oxford Group and sort of backslid. They didn’t have anyone who really understood alcoholics and I was used to help him a lot, I think.” Bill goes on to say, “for the next three months I lived with these two wonderful people and I shall always believe they gave me more than I ever brought them. Each morning there was a devotional after a long silence in which we waited inspiration and guidance Annie would read from the Bible, James was our favorite he said reading from her chair in the corner she would softly conclude faith without works is dead. This was a favorite quotation of Annie’s as much as the book of James was a favorite of early AA so much that the James Club was a favorite of some for the fellowship.” (Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, pg# 71)

Helping Others

It hardly requires citation or documentation to state that A.A.’s cardinal objective is to help others.

Dr. Bob said that “the Twelve Steps when simmered down...resolve themselves into the words love and service”. (Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, pg# 77)

In a conversation between Bill W. and Dr. Bob as they looked for another alcoholic to work on, Bill W. asks Dr. Bob where they could find any alcoholics. Bob replied they always have a batch down at the Akron City Hospital and called the hospital. He talked Mrs. Hall, the admission nurse who was a friend of his and explained that he and a man from New York had “a cure for alcoholism” needed a prospect to try it out on. (Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, pg# 81)

Prior to his journey to Akron, the broker (Bill W) had worked hard with many alcoholics on the theory that only an alcoholic could help an alcoholic, but he had succeeded only in keeping sober himself. The broker had gone to Akron on a business venture which had collapsed, leaving him greatly in fear that he might start drinking again. He suddenly realized that in order to save himself he must carry his message to another alcoholic. That alcoholic turned out to be the Akron physician (Dr. Bob). This physician had repeatedly tried spiritual means to resolve his alcoholic dilemma but had failed. But when the broker gave him Dr. Silkworth’s description of alcoholism and its hopelessness, the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady with a willingness he had never before been able to muster. He sobered, never to drink again up to the moment of his death in 1950. This seemed to prove that one alcoholic could affect another as no nonalcoholic could. It also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery. Hence the two men set to work almost frantically upon alcoholics arriving in the ward of the Akron City Hospital. Their very first case, a desperate one, recovered immediately and became A.A. number three. He never had another drink. This work at Akron continued through the summer of 1935. There were many failures, but there was an occasional heartening success. (Big Book, Forward of the Second Edition, pg# xvi-vxi)

This principle of service runs through the Big Book, Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, AA Comes to Age and countless other AA literature. Of course the principle of service or serving others comes from Biblical principles that were established by God and see throughout the Bible and particular in the life of Jesus.

Every alcoholic who has helped one of his suffering brothers or sisters in need will instantly relate to these verses and hence to the importance of James to the early AAs.

James, the brother of Jesus writes,

James 2:14-26 (NIV)

^(2:14) What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ⁽¹⁵⁾ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ⁽¹⁶⁾ If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ⁽¹⁷⁾ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ⁽¹⁸⁾ But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. ⁽¹⁹⁾ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. ⁽²⁰⁾ You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ⁽²¹⁾ Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ⁽²²⁾ You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ⁽²³⁾ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ⁽²⁴⁾ You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. ⁽²⁵⁾ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ⁽²⁶⁾ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

1. If you were 100 miles from home with no money, no credit cards, no friends, no transportation, and no place to stay, what would you do to survive and make it home?
2. What is the difference between someone who talks about a problem and someone who does something about the problem?
3. What is the relationship between faith and deeds? (2:14)
4. What is one way to tell if a person has a real, living faith?
5. What illustration did James use to explain how real faith affects a person's deeds? (2:15-17)
6. How did James describe faith that has no accompanying deeds? (2:17)
7. How is being a Christian supposed to change the way we live?
8. What is wrong with having faith without deeds? (2:18-26)
9. What can a Christian do to help the people around him or her?
10. What do the demons believe about God? How does it affect them? (2:19)
11. What did Abraham do to show his faith? (2:21-23)
12. What made Abraham righteous? (2:23)
13. How is a person justified before God? (2:24)
14. What did Rahab do? (2:25)
15. Which is easier for you—talking about your faith with others, or demonstrating love toward them?
16. How did Rahab show faith? (2:25)
17. How are faith and deeds like the body and the spirit? (2:26)
18. How can you show greater faith in God by what you do this week?