



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

A.A. General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

Summer 2015

Dear A. A. Friends,

Let's open our meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the A.A. Preamble: "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."*

A FORMER INMATE SHARES

"My name is Mark. I was released last June after serving a two-year sentence for an alcohol-related crime. I have two years of sobriety and regularly attend meetings in my area. I found your Corrections Correspondence form at my meeting and I welcome the opportunity to correspond with fellow alcoholics that are incarcerated. During my own two-year sentence I remained sober and used my time to establish a good foundation. I began my recovery while incarcerated and continued it upon my release. I understand the value of writing and I believe that I could help others who are in similar situations as I was and welcome the opportunity to help fellow alcoholics." — **Mark S., Northeast Region**

THE BIG BOOK — ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

"My name is Jeff; my introduction to the Big Book was in prison at 57 years old. As a newcomer in prison I took a lot of ribbing, 'Hey Pops, why'd you wait so long to come to prison?' 'I had better things to do,' became my standard reply. But you and I know the real answer is the downward spiral of alcoholism, which finally got me to a real bottom. Being a gutter drunk wasn't enough, I had to experience prison before calling out 'uncle, you win alcoholism, I give up.' Now that I have my prison home, hopefully, I'll be able to find a few recovery-oriented inmates for some Big Book study and discussion." — **Jeff E., Southeast Region**

— AND OTHER A.A. LITERATURE

"I just read the book *Came to Believe*. It really has a wide variety of viewpoints, and has helped me a lot here in prison as I try and develop a concept of a 'Higher Power' of my own understanding." — **Robert L., Northeast Region**

"Today I went to court and I accepted that I have to do more time in jail. I pray every single day to my Higher Power to give me the strength to get through the difficult time I'm experiencing. When I got back from court I read the *Daily Reflections*, which led me to page 164 in the A.A. Big Book. As I read it, the message to me from God was to ask what I can do for the man who's still sick. As I kept reading I was directed to have a good relationship with God and great events will come to pass for me. I am ready to admit my

faults and clear away the wreckage of my past. I am grateful I opened the A.A. book today for the very first time and I will continue reading it." — **Daisey L., Pacific Region**

"It's Easter Sunday and I spent pretty much all day reading all the stories in *A.A. in Prison*. I just wish it was longer. I heard at a meeting once that if you can walk through the 3 'D's' sober, you have a pretty good chance. I was told I was ill, and I had divorce papers served to me in this prison cell. I asked God to help me. I'm seeking more on a daily basis since my defense must come from a Higher Power. There's a reason why I'm in prison, I just don't know it yet. More will be revealed. I hope one day I'm in a position to give back and help others." — **David T., Pacific Region**

THE POWER OF SHARING

"I must say that my group, the Freedom Seekers, is a real A.A. group. According to our sponsor, Bob W., we are listed with G.S.O. My sobriety does not depend on a meeting, my sobriety depends on wonderful people like you. So it would be a plus in my life to share with another alcoholic. Now, I know, that there's a shortage of volunteers, and I have to be patient. Do you think I can carry the message of recovery from inside prison? Is it possible that an alcoholic out there can be inspired by someone in here? These questions I must ask. Thank you for helping me help someone else. Because as you know, we can't keep it unless we give it away." — **Don P., Southeast Region**

"Thank you for linking me with a C.C.S. correspondent. We have exchanged letters and he is a wonderful man. I will (God willing) celebrate three years on 5/15/15. By God's grace I have been sober on the streets and in here. I love A.A. and the life I have today. Even in jail I am free and so, so grateful. From a manipulator and scam artist, I have *real* freedom. My friend and correspondent has enhanced that so much." — **John R., Southeast Region**

"The outside A.A. correspondent has written me and I wrote him back. Thank you. It's nice to know there are people like me out there and that I'm not alone. I am at a faith base camp now, I'm in school and I go to A.A. meetings on Sunday mornings. It works because I'm working it. I thank my Higher Power every day for bringing A.A. into my life and with Allah and my A.A. family I will be okay, one day at a time." — **Willie P., Southeast Region**

"My name is Edward; I am 51 years old, currently serving a 33-year sentence. I am going to meetings on Step Four with my sponsor. I've gone to meetings off and on for years, sober here, and sober there. I went to meetings late, left early, and constantly relapsed. I would sit in the back and when the meeting was over I would leave right away. I was afraid to get phone numbers, much less ask someone to sponsor me, but I did, as my desperation grew. One thing I did was never stop going to meetings. Through the years I was in prison three times for DUIs, my first at the age of 19. Those of us in the prison system are so grateful to the men and women who come into the prisons to share. I am reaching out to the outside world of A.A. to receive their experience, strength and hope, and most of all their guidance. My sobriety date is September 11, 2011.

I was a hairdresser for 33 years, now I'm a cook in the prison. When I'm released I intend to return to Tucson, where I choose to live the rest of my days, sober and at peace." — **Eddie N., Southwest Region**

"My name is James, I am fifty years of age and currently incarcerated. I have a few years left to serve on an eight-year sentence and would enjoy corresponding with a fellow alcoholic on the outside. I have been sober since October 30, 2013, when I was incarcerated. We have a weekly A.A. meeting here every Wednesday night; two outside members come to the prison and we meet for an hour. It's called the Strivers Group. The volunteers are great guys and we have some great meetings. I almost forget that I'm imprisoned. I've had my spiritual awakening, God has taken away that desire to drink again and the guys from the outside have explained the importance of working the Steps. I've only been here for a few months, but they've helped me a lot. Right now, I'm at the point of making the Step Eight list. It seems like such a hard thing just to start it. But I know I'll receive blessings of peace once I finally do." — **James S., Southeast Region**

"I have been drinking since the age of twelve. From that moment, my life went into a downward spiral. I had six and a half years sober at one point. After I relapsed I was off the wagon for 15 years. In that time I have done a prison sentence, had multiple arrests, had three wonderful daughters, and ruined the relationship with their mother. Now I am 40 years old and I am on my second prison term. I decided to get sober again in prison last June 6. This time around I am actually working the Steps and building a closer relationship with my Higher Power. Thank you A.A. for being my family and always being there for me." — **Christopher E., Northeast Region**

A SIMPLE PROGRAM...

"I don't get arrested every time I drink, but every time I got arrested I was drinking. That is the story of my life. They say that alcoholism is a progressive disease. I know this is true, but I never really had bad consequences until I got on probation as a result of an incident. I kept drinking, and bad consequences didn't stop me, even though every time I said I was done with drinking forever. I have hurt and let down everyone who cares about me, and that's what hurts the worst. Now I want to do it right and really work the program: 90 in 90, sponsor, home group, Step work, everything." — **David D., Northeast Region**

THE GIFT OF HOPE

"I awoke with the telltale sign that this was not some bad dream — I was in handcuffs! How many times had these restraints been placed on my wrists? How many times had I found myself in the back of a police car on my way to jail for my criminal behavior? How long would it be this time, months or years? These were the first things that entered my befogged mind. No thought of how my actions would affect my family. I soon found that criminal activity was a way to feel like I was important. In jails and prison I was able to develop a personality that made isolation an acceptable choice. If I hated myself what better place to spread my 'dis-ease' and make others suffer as well. My life lacked structure and I learned to shut off the outside world for many years. I got lost in the 'system' by my own free choice. My life was one of revolving doors. In and out, arrest and release, those became my gauge on my status in society. I was always either 'just getting out' or 'on my way back,' this is the way it was for 28 years. This leads us to where I was, while handcuffed to a hospital bed. The simple question posed to me was what happened to you? As I look back this is the most important answer I can ever make. I can see my life for what it is, what it became and what I want it to become. Today I have a chance at a new way of life. Where there was disappointment and regrets I can find joy and excitement. I still have a way to go, both in my

recovery, and my prison sentence. I am fortunate today to see that the Fellowship is working in all areas of my life. My program is my own today, to build and do with as I see fit. And for me, it's that gift of hope that keeps my vision of what can be, alive and strong. By living in the here and now I am able to see a future that doesn't look anything like the past." — **Steve C., Pacific Region**

"I am a 29-year-old male due to be released, May 2016. I had a good life. I was always the party guy, who wanted everyone to know him, always had to be the life of the party. I've let alcohol take over my life. The more I was confronted about my drinking problem the madder I would become. I would black out and mentally and physically abuse individuals. When I was sober, I would never act in this manner, but as time went on my drinking got heavier. Although my drinking was getting worse, I still always functioned as a good father. I love my kids and I did everything with them. I was charged again and sentenced to four years. I've felt the need to tell my story because I am finally at peace with how my alcoholism had control over my life. This disease will grab you and never let you go until you have lost everything. I feel blessed to have gone to prison before it was too late. Hopefully, now I can reach out to help change someone's life before it's too late for them." — **Triston T., East Central Region**

DAY-BY-DAY

"My drinking was as bad as it is for many of us alcoholics. I drank for no reason or for all reasons. I just wanted to stay numb, out of the reach of reality. The hangovers filled my head with remorse and fear of not being clear of what happened to me every time I drank. I just couldn't stop drinking. Many times I heard of A.A. weekly meetings for recovery, but I always thought that it wasn't for me. Finally, one night, October 10, 2009, I had enough and asked Father God to help me cure my illness of alcoholism, and in such despair was my cry, that he did! I no longer had the desire to taste the elusive grip of alcohol. In no time I found myself attending the A.A. meetings at the prison and trying to abide my daily actions by the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. I grew a bigger concept of who my Higher Power is and learned to rely on him. I can humbly acclaim that not by my strength, but by the Grace of my Higher Power, I have been made whole and endowed with the power to deal with my alcoholism. The truth of the matter is that I'm always going to be an alcoholic, but an alcoholic who knows that I have a choice, and I choose not to drink on a daily basis; an alcoholic that knows that I am not alone, and more importantly that has allowed his Higher Power to take control over his life. So when adversity arises, so does my Higher Power, to protect me not only in my alcoholism, but in every aspect of my life. And so, day-by-day I can say, 'I am Luis C., a recovering alcoholic, taking sobriety one day at a time.'" — **Luis C., Pacific Region**

CORRECTIONS CORRESPONDENCE SERVICE (CCS)

If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months, and are interested in corresponding with an outside A.A. member with whom you can share your experience as it relates to your problems with alcohol, please write to A.A.'s General Service Office to request a correspondence form. This is a random match with men writing to men and women writing to women.

PRERELEASE CONTACT

If you write to G.S.O. within three to six months of your release date and give us your destination (city and state) and approximate release date, we can try to arrange for someone to write to you just prior to your release. This would give you a chance to have an A.A. contact in your home community to help with your transition from A.A. on the "inside" to A.A. on the "outside."

We look forward to hearing from you.