

a group prayer experience we had attended, I commented, "I didn't get much out of it." She became very agitated and said how sick she was of people saying that. "It's not what you get out of it, it's what you bring into it," she stated emphatically. (Here was a person outside of AA who truly understood the importance of ego deflation at depth.) Was I ever shocked! I was expecting some gentle spiritual nurturing, and I felt as if I had just been smacked. I guess I needed that smack to wake me up and help me remember that my experience of worship in my faith community had changed when I started bringing something to it, and how my connection to AA had grown when I brought more to that. Here was an opportunity to go to another level in my sobriety.

At that time, I was finding meetings somewhat burdensome: It seemed as if the same people told the same stories over and over again. Thinking that I was safely sober, I questioned the importance of allotting precious blocks of time to meetings each week. Instead, I could be out living my new, wonderfully sober life. I see now that I could have been headed down the road to relapse. I suddenly thought about how much I owed the Fellowship of AA. It was always there for me when I needed it. Perhaps on the days when I felt complacent about going to

a meeting because I thought I was spiritually fit, I was supposed to help another suffering alcoholic by being available at a meeting. It could be that my spiritual advisor was right; it was more important that I bring something to AA rather than simply take from it.

That was a turning point in my sobriety. Instead of always going to a meeting to feel good, there were more and more times when I went to a meeting to do good. Right about that time, a newly sober woman asked me to be her sponsor. I was wondering why no one had asked me yet! I have had the privilege of watching her grow through the past six years. She has even made me a grandsponsor. What joy! In addition to sponsoring her and a number of other women, I have been able to share my experience, strength, and hope with hundreds, maybe even thousands, of recovering alcoholics inside and outside meetings. This wonderful weaving of AA into every area of my life is a far cry from the way I started my sobriety. I also know that it is bringing me closer to aligning my will with my Higher Power's will for me. Thanks to AA, I am living a healthier, integrated life, by "practicing these principles in all my affairs."

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