

Is Alcoholics Anonymous Godly?

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We must live in one of the most addictive ages that has ever been! This is certainly not the only period of time plagued by this, but the easy availability of substances that have addictive properties must be at an all-time high. Some substances that promote addiction, such as alcohol, caffeine and nicotine, are legally obtainable in virtually every market in America. Others, like cocaine, heroin, opium, speed and marijuana, while not legally obtainable, are almost ridiculously easy to purchase.

People use these substances because they want their effects. Some elevate the person's feelings, lifting them out of depression or putting them into a better frame of mind. Others want to be "lowered" or brought down from feelings of high excitement, panic or insecurity so that events do not seem to be out of control, making life seemingly more manageable.

Regardless of why they are used, they have the sinister quality of making the user dependent on them. Not only do they create dependence, they also create a need for a larger amount than previously needed to produce the desired effect. Gradually, if not controlled when the amount is small, the person is pulled into a dependence that is both chemically and psychologically so powerful he cannot get along without the drug. His whole life is circumscribed by his addiction. He is a slave to the drug and knows it.

The addict usually hates himself for allowing this to happen. Struggling hard to resist the drug's alluring pull, he more often than not fails to free himself from its vice-like grip. What began as a seemingly simple escape from one kind of pain ends in the prison of a potentially life-threatening calamity.

Included in the damage from the substance abuse are usually numerous family, social and business relationships. The abuser usually wants desperately to repair these ties, along with his own self-esteem. Where can he turn?

Many seek anything from publicly funded detoxification centers to the expensive institutions where, in virtual seclusion, the rich and famous are sometimes helped to break the enslaving grip of a drug.

Large numbers turn to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). It is the oldest and largest, and if claims are to be believed, the most successful organization devoted to helping people break the slavery to addiction.

AA claims as high as a 60 percent success rate. However, this figure is disputed by two external studies reported by Martin and Deidre Bobgan (*Prophets of Psychoheresy II*, 1990, pp. 251-252):

In spite of the fact that it inspires nearly universal acclaim and enthusiasm among alcoholism treatment personnel in the United States, Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) wholly lacks experimental support for its efficacy. . . .

Only two studies have employed random assignment and adequate controls to compare the efficacy of A.A. versus no intervention or alternative interventions. Brandsma *et al.*

(1980) found **NO DIFFERENCES** at 12-month follow-up between A.A. and no treatment, and at 3-month follow-up those assigned to A.A. were found to be significantly **MORE** likely to be binge drinking, relative to controls or those assigned to other interventions (based on unverified self-reports). Ditman and Crawford (1966) assigned court mandated "alcohol addicts" to A.A., clinic treatment, or no treatment (probation only). Based on records of rearrest, 31% of A.A. clients and 32% of clinic-treated clients were judged successful, as compared with 44% success in the untreated group (Ditman, Crawford, Forgy, Moskowitz, & MacAndrew, 1967). [Emphasis theirs.]

Alcohol is the number one drug of choice of most Americans, and Alcoholics Anonymous was first organized to help people fight their addiction to it. Many other similar organizations, using the same basic program, have spun off from it, but are devoted to helping people overcome different addictions.

The Twelve Steps

The basic program involves following twelve steps, and several of these are important to the purpose of this article. These steps are:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

A superficial reading of these steps at first looks good because they seem to be in agreement with teachings of the Bible and Christianity. Is it not good to believe in God and make confession, restitution and prayer? But also notice how broad, even downright vague, the terminology is. From the biblical perspective (God's, that is), are we guilty of "shortcomings" or sin?

The quadruple mention of God, another of "a Power greater than ourselves," the use of the term "spiritual awakening," plus other Christian terminology or implication, certainly leads one to believe that AA is a religious organization. However, they deny this in their own publication, *44 Questions and Answers about the AA Program of Recovery from Alcoholism*, Alcoholics Anonymous World

Services, Inc.: "AA is not a religious society, since it requires no definite religious belief as a condition of membership." However, just one paragraph after this they state, "The A.A. program of recovery from alcoholism is undeniably based on acceptance of certain spiritual values." Sounds like doublespeak to me!

AA **is** religious in nature. As shown by their founding principles, and using their "Twelve Steps" program, the acceptance of recovery from alcoholism is undeniably based on acceptance of certain spiritual values, free to be interpreted by the individual member as he or she thinks best. What a liberal platform!

Additionally, experience with AA members has shown the fact that those recovering from alcoholism also report a deepening of their spiritual perception. Nearly every AA member comes to believe in and depend upon a higher Power, and it is true that without this faith practically no full recovery from alcoholism has been possible.

The Basic Premise

Let's examine the central concept of the AA Twelve Steps program. Basically, the premise is that recovery is due to the appeal to and intervention of a higher Power, a God, *as you understand Him* .

While it is true that we are creatures of free moral agency, the God of the Bible has nowhere given man permission to determine what His nature is. That is a "right" mankind has grabbed for itself, but the result is rank idolatry! And it is the major cause of why this world is in the titanic, catastrophic mess it is in! Beginning with Adam and Eve, mankind has consistently hidden himself from the true God (Genesis 3:8) while at the same time devising gods of his own imagination (Romans 1:21-25).

The assumption of this world is that the great Creator God stands at their beck and call. They feel that all they have to do is cry out to Him at some time of need, and He will jump to answer them—as though all He has to do is stand around waiting for them to cry out! Please forgive my sarcasm, but who is running the show here? Does God have a purpose **HE** is working out through a plan? Is He in charge of His creation or is mankind?

The Bible is the book through which God has revealed Himself, His nature and His purpose. It is present in the home of a large portion of the western world, and in the United States and Canada, in virtually every home.

That book says in Revelation 12:9 that Satan "deceives the whole world." Paul, in II Corinthians 4:4, refers to Satan as "the god of this age [*world*, KJV]." II Corinthians 11:4 says some have preached "another Jesus" and "a different gospel." Where does all this leave one with little or no contact with the true God who is free to choose a god "**as he understands him**"?

Paul adds in I Corinthians 8:5-6, "For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is only one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live."

Is the God of heaven and earth, the Creator, working through an organization that permits people to choose a god as they see him? How much chance does one have to choose the true God given Satan's deception? Absolutely none!

Chosen By God, Not AA

John 6:44 says, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." The Father initiates the relationship, not the individual who feels he needs help now that he is in deep psychological, physical, social and economic trouble.

In Romans 9-11 Paul goes to great lengths to show that our being a part of God's church is by election—we are chosen of God. "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (Romans 9:16). How then are people called by God? Through an organization like AA? No! If one believes the Bible, it is through God's church. The church is the only organization on earth God has given His name to.

In Exodus 20:5, within the Ten Commandments, God says, "You shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me."

He adds in Exodus 34:14, "For you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." Given the zeal He has to protect the holiness of His name, is it possible God would be part of an organization that allows people to form their own understanding of Him? What confusion! "God is not the author of confusion" (I Corinthians 14:33)!

Jesus says in John 14:26, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, [which] the Father will send in My name, [It] will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." In addition He says later, "However, when [It], the Spirit of truth, has come, [It] will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

Does it not seem logical that if God was part of AA, that the people would be led into the doctrines of the Bible? They deny they are a religious organization, but their denial is not true. The whole recovery program hinges upon faith in the participation of a higher Power, **as you understand him**.

An individual's, an organization's, a church's or a nation's claim that God is with them means nothing unless *their fruit shows God truly is with them*.

The Samaritan woman, speaking to Jesus at the well, claimed Jacob as her father (implying contact with the true God), but He later said that she did not even know what she worshiped (John 4:22). In Jeremiah 23:21 God reports that prophets went out claiming to be His, but He did not send them. Jesus prophesies, "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:5).

The Jews claimed to be God's people (Abraham's children), but in John 8:44 Jesus says they were of their father the devil! Today, the United States still prints "In God We Trust" on our money. Do we really believe that is true? To use the name of God or Jesus Christ in no way guarantees their endorsement, as the above and many other scriptures show.

A Part of This World

The fact is, AA is an organization of this world and is of dubious value even in terms of its recovery rate. Dr. Stanton Peale, who is a senior health researcher at Mathematica Policy Research, and author of *Diseasing of America: Addiction Treatment Out of Control*, is quoted in *Prophets of Psychoheresy*

II: "Several studies have shown that those who quit drinking via AA actually have higher relapse rates than those who quit on their own" (p. 252).

What at first appears to be AA's greatest strength may also contain the seeds of becoming one of its greatest weaknesses. The common practice of the organization is to hold group meetings during which much encouragement is given to the addicted to continue in their quest to overcome. This is good, but there is a downside as well. Confession of one's "wrongs" (step 5) to the group, or at least to another person, is encouraged. Additionally, there is the constant dwelling upon the common problem.

Confession is good, but it must never be mistaken as repentance. The Bible records a number of figures who clearly confessed, but no repentance is seen. Pharaoh (Exodus 9:27-28), Achan (Joshua 7:20), Saul (I Samuel 15:24-25) and even Judas (Matthew 27:4) confessed their guilt. But there is no evidence of repentance.

Because sin is against God, the Bible does not encourage confession of sins to other people, but only to God. Paul writes, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5).

While the principle of confessing sin to one another is not wrong (James 5:16), AA's conception of it is misleading. To AA it is a means of relieving guilt. Though there may be a cathartic effect, that is a far cry from the forgiveness of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ!

AA is this world's counterfeit of God's method of helping people overcome sin. Instead of AA, the organization assisting God's children to overcome should be the church of God, whose Head is Jesus Christ. It rightfully bears God's name as belonging to Him. It teaches the true message, worships the true God, leads people to Him, teaches a recognition of their sins and responsibilities, is the pillar and ground of truth and the family impregnated by the Spirit of God which guides His people into all truth.

Sin is overcome by means of the relationship between God and His children. We overcome through our recognition of our obligation to Him as Creator and Savior and by the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Love for Him enables us to be a whole burnt offering, entirely devoted to glorifying Him with all our heart, soul and mind, and loving our brethren as ourselves.

This is not intended in any way to denigrate the sincere efforts of many in behalf of the addicted. Undoubtedly, AA does some measure of good by helping the unconverted battle a terrible sin. However, it should be understood that it is also at least an instrument of spiritual confusion. To some who write on spiritual subjects, AA is spiritually part of the New Age movement, leading the unsuspecting directly to Satan the Devil! Judging from its own statements, method of recovery and spiritual fruit, God is clearly not in it. His organization for this type of service is the church of God.