

AA and the Church (Crave, pt.2)

1. As we enter this new ministry called Celebrate Recovery, it would do us good to have a look at the grandfather of all 12 step programs – Alcoholics Anonymous.
 - a. The more we look at it, the more we see the wisdom of God in establishing the church as a “one another” fellowship.
 - b. See if you can find some of the parallels.

2. There was an attitude in the early 1900s that was wide spread in America. It had changed from the attitude found all over the US in the 1800s (apocalypse and perfection – Oneida, Mormons, Restoration).
 - a. A new attitude of self help – with God’s help.
 - b. [SLIDE 1] The Oxford Group (called a “first century Christian movement”) rose to prominence.
 - i. All people are sinners
 - ii. All sinners can change
 - iii. All change begins with confession
 - iv. You can be in direct contact with God
 - v. Miracles are again possible
 - vi. The change must change others
 - c. Renamed “Moral Re-Armament” after 1938.

3. Some men who were influenced by the Oxford Group felt that it was overly optimistic. They had tried to change themselves but had been left without a miracle. One of these men was Bill Wilson.

4. [SLIDE 2] Bill Wilson had lost a successful career on Wall Street due to his frequent drunkenness. He read some of the materials of the Oxford Group but it wasn’t until he was in the hospital and experienced a spiritual vision of sorts that he really believed that there was a God. He knew he had to access the power of God or he would be forever helpless (this was the opposite of the superman trend in therapy and culture).

5. On a business trip to Akron, Ohio, he felt an urge to drink again. He sought out anyone who had beaten alcoholism to see if they

could help him. A former member of the Oxford Group, Dr. Bob Smith, helped him. Bill Wilson's last drink was on June 10, 1935 is considered the birthdate of AA.

- a. [SLIDE 3] The two men decided to help others. After two years, they had helped 40 men. Two years later, 100 were free of alcohol.
 - b. They wrote a book called "Alcoholics Anonymous" and laid out their program. Five years later, in 1946, they wrote the rules on how to set up and run meetings. The "Twelve Traditions" are still followed to this day.
6. [SLIDE 4] The purpose of twelve step fellowship is to teach and support skills related to recovery. Meetings provide a refuge and help you overcome your resistance to asking for help. They also provide you with fellowship and accountability.
7. AA's program has been copied and modified for a large number of other addict groups and those they affect. [SLIDE 5]
- a. Al-Anon (support for families)
 - b. Alateen (support for teens with addicts in their family)
 - c. Debtors Anonymous
 - d. Gamblers Anonymous
 - e. Marijuana Anonymous
 - f. Narcotics Anonymous
 - g. Overeaters Anonymous
 - h. Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA)
8. The programs are similar enough that if you find yourself in an area without a meeting for your particular addiction, you can "crossover" and attend a different group's meeting.
9. [SLIDE 6] AA Preamble: "AA 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."
10. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop drinking. No dues or fees are collected. No endorsements or

alliances are made with religions, politics, or social groups. It is truly a multi-racial, diverse group with a common priesthood (if you will).

11. The Twelve Steps [SLIDE 7]

- a. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
- b. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- c. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
- d. [SLIDE 8] A searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- e. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- f. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects or character.
- g. [SLIDE 9] Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- h. Made a list of persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- i. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- j. [SLIDE 10] Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- k. 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.
- l. [SLIDE 11] 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.

12. [SLIDE 12] You will hear a lot in AA about “working your program.” That means:

- a. Accepting guidance and practicing the steps of recovery.
- b. Replacing the behaviors and thinking of addiction with the behaviors and thinking of recovery.

c. Actively participating in the fellowship

- 13.**[SLIDE 13] What does “recovery” mean? Transformation. Sometime in the past, either by relying on the quick fix of a chemically induced buzz or by being overwhelmed by a sudden set of very painful circumstances, you began the habit of seeking artificial solutions to life’s challenges. Recovery means rediscovering your own natural resources, spiritual strength, and the strength that comes from community.
- 14.**Remember that addictions supply either a trance high or satiation. It shortcuts the hard spiritual work required to grow up and become adult – a fully formed human being who is ready to serve others. [SLIDE 14]
- a. It is adolescence to live in pain avoidance.
 - b. AA requires facing pain and working through it – and so does Christ.
 - c. AA requires one to work on being spiritual (slogan of the day at www.turningleafpress.com). Those who won’t do that have to find another group.
- 15.**How effective is AA? At first glance, not very. AA itself estimates that 9 out of 10 who walk into a first meeting will not finish the program... at first. Some will come back 20 or 30 times before they work through the program. Some estimate that 20% are sober by the end of their lives and that a much larger percentage experiences long periods of sobriety or are motivated to enter an alternative program that helps them.
- 16.**[SLIDE 15] Atheist groups are also founding AA type programs but without any reference to a higher power. (Save OurSelves, Rational Recovery, SMART – self management and recovery training)
- 17.**Christian and Jewish groups have also formed where God plays more of a direct role and the meeting is replaced with the fellowship of the believing community. These groups include Christian Recovery International, the National Association for

Christian Recovery, and the ministry we are bringing here:
Celebrate Recovery.

18. [SLIDE 15] God is the source of all healing and only God can make permanent changes in our lives, for God supplies the Holy Spirit; that greater power that we need to do the hard work of characterological transformation.
19. The power that raised Christ from the dead is available to the baptized believer who is in contact with a fellowship, who is active in service, and who remains connected with God. Thus, the church has something to offer that nothing else has... IF it will live out its faith; living what it says it believes.