

Where Do We Go from Here?

Where We've Come From

The most telling symptom of the illness of our time is the sexual misconnection.

While the AIDS virus was still unknown and quietly incubating, and while we were all dying of the fast-spreading epidemic of sexual obsession powered by our spiritual illness, a loving God was leading us to the Twelve Step program, which began working for us where nothing else had. The Steps were uncovered to us in that Valley of the Shadow of Death, and we painfully took them up out of the darkness to light and freedom. SA was born from the light of heaven penetrating the darkness of our hell and touching us to life. Today, SA stands at the very vortex of the spiritual cross-currents of our turbulent world.

Where We Are Today

If we were to take an instantaneous snapshot of SA worldwide, this is the picture we might see:

Thousands of people having been touched by this light—some to recovery, some to ambivalence, some to rebellion and greater loss. At a distance, the light from God is a consuming fire. Up close, in surrender and unity, that same light becomes the light of love and fellowship one with another and with the Source of our life.

Groups and areas where sobriety and recovery are steadily progressing. (Note that we did not say increasing in *numbers*, as though that were the hallmark of progress.) Groups and areas where the talk in meetings is increasingly of recovery, instead of drunk talk.

Groups and areas taking a stand on principle against forces of lust, ego, or temporizing voices of confusion. Members and groups willing to risk anger and defections and therefore putting principles above personalities, and as a result growing stronger in recovery instead of weaker. (Note again, the criterion is not numbers. "Principles before personalities" also means *principles before numbers*. Growth from the inside out. If growth is from the *outside*, it never seems to filter *in*.)

Groups that are so closely knit in recovery and program that slipping is the exception rather than the rule.

Groups where it is not unusual for members to pray together for guidance and help and where wonders are being worked.

Judging from overall numbers and externals, SA would seem to be hale and hearty and doing fine.

Or, on the negative side (shall we be "searching and fearless?"):

Situations where rapid growth has so diluted sobriety, experience, and SA principles that newcomers have little if any contact with solid recovery and where meetings and members wander off track. Situations where there was "lengthening of the chords" without "strengthening of the stakes." Seduced by numbers.

Situations where slipping is the rule rather than the exception, and where chronic slippers have become respected old timers and role models.

Situations where certain of us, unwilling to give way to rotating leadership, have turned into "bleeding deacons," or where long-time trusted servants are still chipping around with lust or misconnection and yet are role models.

Situations where a spirit of fear, lust, and confusion, has reigned unchecked for years.

Situations where an infectious and isolating spirit of rage and rebellion have wrought havoc with SA principles.

Situations where SA has ongoing "committed relationships" with personalities, professionalism, or trendy movements offering all sorts of "answers."

Situations where SA has lowered its principles to accommodate alien viewpoints in the name of being "ecumenical" and "open-minded."

Situations where, of the many, often hundreds, of people who have come through the door, very few have stayed and less are sober and in true recovery.

Situations where dominance of and reliance upon member personalities and ego-force have resulted in a trusting to externals. Members who, instead of being *powerless* over lust, live and talk as though they were *powerful* over lust. To paraphrase a line from Bobby Burns' poem *A Cotter's Saturday Night*, situations where we have

"Program's ev'ry grace, except the heart."

Sadly, this is, perhaps, the greatest tragedy of all.

Where is my group today? Where is yours? Where is its heart? Let's take our own group or area inventory and see how we stack up.

So, Where Are We Today?

When I try to look at where SA is today, I am forced to one conclusion: *SA as a whole, as a fellowship, has yet to take the First Step: SA is powerless over lust—its life is unmanageable.*

Some of us came into this thing thinking we had a ready-made red-hot program that could "save the world." Now we see that SA in itself has no power over lust at all! Neither Program, organization, literature, leaders, meetings, nor all of them put together is the effective power in loosing us from lust. If they had this power, everyone attending meetings or reading literature would be sober and into recovery. *SA is powerless over lust.* I admit it. Does my group admit it? Does yours? Coming to such a realization of SA's powerlessness would be working the First Step.

And let's not forget the second half of Step One: SA's life is unmanageable. If you don't believe it, take a good look at some of the situations we've gotten ourselves into over the years, at group, area, and national levels. Need we say more about SA's unmanageability? How can SA ever begin to think about the Traditions—unity, or God expressing himself in group conscience, for example—if we aren't even working the Steps?

Where Do We Go from Here?

Let's start by surrendering to the truth of Step One. As a fellowship! If we ever come to Step One realization and bottom-out *as a fellowship*, there might be hope for future recovery—as a fellowship. Yes, SA needs recovery too! How could we ever have thought otherwise? Just as the problem in our individual illness is really spiritual, so the real problem in SA today—SA's illness—is spiritual.

If and when SA can work an honest Step One, then and only then are we in a position to receive help and go forward. We will see we have no recourse but to the Higher Power who alone can restore us to sanity (Step Two). Yes, there's insanity in SA today—along with the sanity. There always has been! Just as there's insanity in each of our sexaholic lives. (Or don't we believe that?) We sometimes thought the organization had the power. Now we must confess it does not. Only God has the power to restore us as a fellowship. If we start working the Steps—*as a fellowship!*

So where do we go from here? We start working Steps One, Two, and Three in group, intergroup, and national affairs. We'll get nowhere without starting here. Then how about doing a Step Four and Five? Think about it! And talk about it. There *is* a way. And then how about Six, Seven, Eight, Nine, and Ten? You mean we have and do wrongs and are answerable to each other at fellowship level and need to confess and amend those wrongs—at fellowship level?! And then how about doing a Step Eleven?—*as a fellowship!* If we work these Steps, we are promised a *spiritual* (not numerical) awakening. For SA! If we fail to work these Steps . . .

We have confessed how we as individuals need the personal indwelling Presence of God (Steps Three and Eleven). (Do we even have that yet?) Are not our history and condition telling us today that what SA needs is that same personal indwelling Presence? That SA needs a spiritual awakening?

Yes, perhaps the most telling symptom of the illness of our time is the sexual misconnection. And this is why SA's sobriety imperative is so crucial today, more than ever. SA does stand at the cross-currents coursing through our anguish-driven world. However . . . what is SA's spiritual condition today? What "message" do we carry? What power do we have? What is the *spiritual*—not numerical or organizational—direction in which SA is headed?

If we don't have a spiritual awakening *before* an organizational "awakening," we may organize ourselves right out of the promised awakening. We'll systematize the life right out of SA! We'll perpetuate (organize) the illness! I'll go further and say that even our sobriety imperative is worthless without a spiritual awakening in the fellowship. That's why it's giving some of us so much trouble.

Only a spiritual awakening from the One who reached into the darkness of our hell and touched us as individuals to life can awaken SA to life. But since He has prevailed in our origins, we know that we can be more than conquerors, through Him who loved us. In this Strength, SA can continue to be *God's trusted servant* doing *His* will in a lost and needy world.

The question is—for my group and for yours—Where *will* we go from here? Today, I'm looking, praying, hoping, and working toward the promised awakening. I hope many will join with me toward this new beginning.

Roy K. 9 Oct 90

[Your thoughts and feedback on this article are sought and encouraged. However, Roy will be unable to respond personally to every one. —Ed.]