

A Power Greater Than Myself

A Program Greater Than My Own

By Rick R.

Never, that I can recall, have I attended a meeting where someone hasn't referred to *his or her higher power*, and as I see it, most people that stay around for any length of time come to some sort of terms with, or understanding of, a power greater than themselves that *works for them*. Once that hurdle is cleared, they seem to settle into a more comfortable way of life. There are also those that come to us with a strong religious affiliation, and they sometimes share that the AA program helps them *to enhance their faith*. Others come here that are *atheist or agnostic*, and the program works for them as well as it does for anyone else. Then there are those who, for whatever reason, have trouble clearing those hurdles and sometimes spend years *struggling with this issue of, God as we understand him*.

I believe that as long as AA exists, we will witness these kinds of quandaries in new members who are conditioned by the environments from which they came, and I don't claim to have a surefire answer to what makes us different, other than what I have learned about myself, and how I have come to see things as I attempt to resolve my own mental blocks. I know that I was biased when I first entered the program probably due to my failed attempt at religion as a child. This had little to do with religion but more to do with the fact that I had not mentally evolved enough to understand it at the age of six. Fortunately for me I recognized, early in my sobriety, that I could take the steps of the program with the minimum understanding of God, or a higher power, after all, that's what it tells me in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (12&12). It says that even an atheist got through the hoop with room to spare.

I was at a meeting recently when a member was trying to articulate how he had come to terms with his faith in a higher power and as he was poking fun at himself trying to fit it all together and make sense of it so everyone could understand, he finally threw his hands up in the air and said, with a smile, "Well, that's how it works for me". We all joined him in laughter because we have seen it so many times before. As I was listening to him, *a thought came to me* as the result of what he shared, and as we were leaving the meeting, I was following closely behind him, I offered *that thought to him*. I said, "Maybe if, instead of calling it A Power Greater Than Myself, we could just refer to it as A Program Greater Than My Own". He laughed and said, "That's what I was trying to say."

It's clear to me now, that it wasn't as important to identify what or who God is, or what my concept of a power greater than myself was at the time. I found it more important at the time to proceed through the rest of the program and do the things that are suggested. The main thing that I had to do was to accept outside input, especially when it is based on sound, well-established principles. Many successful people in the program have come to understand the concept of a higher power in that way. Sometimes it's hard to grasp it all at once. Don't let that stop you. I would encourage anyone who is having trouble with this issue to consider the "Program Greater Than My Own" idea. Time and experience will help you along the road to understanding. After all, even the militant atheist cleared the hoop with room to spare.