

Helping and Loving Others

March 19, 2009

From one of early A.A.'s pamphlets (1940's): *Spiritual Milestones*, AA of Akron, we read, "And all we need to do in the St. James passage (*James 1:27, Gene's emphasis*) is to substitute the word "Alcoholic" for "Fatherless and Widows" and we have Step Twelve. As a matter of fact, before we gave up alcohol we were very definitely fatherless and widows. (*Spiritual Milestones*, AA of Akron, pp. 12-13).

****Spiritual Milestones* was designed to help those who find a stumbling block in the spiritual side of the Program. This pamphlet breaks down and explains finding a spiritual life into five categories: Eliminate sin from our lives; Develop humility; Constantly pray to God for guidance Practice charity; Meditate frequently on our newly found blessings, giving honest thanks for them. Early King School members (Dr. Bob's Home Group) examine what philosophers, psychologists and educators have to say about religion and spirituality. (www.akronaa.org)

James 1:27 says,

(²⁷) Religion that God our Father accepts [and is pleased with] as a pure and faultless [and genuine religion in the sight of God] is this: to look after [and care for and help the] orphans [the fatherless] and widows in their distress [and in their suffering] and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world [by refusing to be made dirty and corrupt by the influences of people who do not know God].

- a) What is real genuine faith in the sight of God?
- b) In what tangible ways can we demonstrate this principle in our lives?
- c) What does it mean to polluted or corrupted by the world?
- d) How do we keep ourselves from being corrupted, made dirty, and polluted by the influences of those around us?

James 1:27 speaks of unselfishness and helpfulness to others which are cardinal A.A. principles—particularly the principles embodied in Step Twelve.

Psalm 68:4-5 says,

Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol him who rides on the clouds-- his name is the LORD-- and rejoice before him. (⁵) A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

- a) How does this verse describe God?
- b) What does this mean to you?

Chapter Two of the Book of James may have made two direct and major contributions to the language of the Big Book and also to A.A.'s philosophy. Those two contributions were "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (James 2:8) and "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). The Bible that Dr. Bob and Anne read and read to Bill Wilson was the King James Version of the Bible. In addition, the Bible that Rev. Samuel Shoemaker (Bill Wilson's spiritual mentor and whom Bill W. said was a Co-founder of AA) preached from was the King James.

James 2:8 (KJV) says,

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.

James 2:26 (KJV) says,

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

First, let's examine "love your neighbor as yourself."

This commandment to "Love thy neighbor" is used nine (9) times in the Bible [Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:43; Matthew 19:19; Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8]. So, there is no assurance that the quote is from James rather than from another Bible verse. The Big Book says:

You are going to meet these new friends in your own community. Near you, alcoholics are dying helplessly like people in a sinking ship. If you live in a large place, there are hundreds. High and low, rich and poor, these are future fellows of Alcoholics Anonymous. Among them you will make lifelong friends. You will be bound to them with new and wonderful ties, for you will escape disaster together and you will commence shoulder to shoulder your common journey. Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life. You will learn the full meaning of "Love thy neighbor as thyself." (pg# 152-153)

Let's examine a couple of the passages that tell us to love our neighbor as ourself.

Read Leviticus 19:9-18. It says,

^(19:9) "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God. ⁽¹¹⁾ "Do not steal. "Do not lie. "Do not deceive one another. ⁽¹²⁾ "Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD. ⁽¹³⁾ "Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. "Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight. ⁽¹⁴⁾ "Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD. ⁽¹⁵⁾ "Do not pervert

justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. ⁽¹⁶⁾ "Do not go about spreading slander among your people. "Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD. ⁽¹⁷⁾ "Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt. ⁽¹⁸⁾ "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

- a) What are some of the things you find interesting in this passage?

Read Matthew 5:43-48. It says,

^(5:43) You have heard people say, "Love your neighbors and hate your enemies." ⁽⁴⁴⁾ But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who mistreats you. ⁽⁴⁵⁾ Then you will be acting like your Father in heaven. He makes the sun rise on both good and bad people. And he sends rain for the ones who do right and for the ones who do wrong. ⁽⁴⁶⁾ If you love only those people who love you, will God reward you for that? Even tax collectors love their friends. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ If you greet only your friends, what's so great about that? Don't even unbelievers do that? ⁽⁴⁸⁾ But you must always act like your Father in heaven.

- a) How does Jesus tell us to treat our enemies and those who mistreat us? (vs44)
- b) How do you show love to your enemies?
- c) What good is it to pray for those who mistreat you?
- d) When we love our enemies and pray for those that mistreat us, what is the result? (vs45)
- e) How does God treat everyone? (vs45)
- f) What is God's goal for our lives? (vs48)

Next week, we will look at a couple more passages.