

CAPTASA 2010

**Is the Left Brain Right Brain Connection in Recovery the spirituality of the 12-Steps?**

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**Say What?**

■ **Left Brain vs. Right Brain**

- Definition
- This theory of the structure and functions of the mind suggests that the two different sides of the brain control two different "modes" of thinking. It also suggests that each of us prefers one mode over the other.

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**Left Brain vs. Right Brain**

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|---------------------|----------------------|
| ■ <b>Left Brain</b> | ■ <b>Right Brain</b> |
| ■ Logical           | ■ Random             |
| ■ Sequential        | ■ Intuitive          |
| ■ Rational          | ■ Holistic           |
| ■ Analytical        | ■ Synthesizing       |
| ■ Objective         | ■ Subjective         |
| ■ Looks at parts    | ■ Looks at wholes    |

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**With Addiction/Alcoholism being a disease of brain chemistry:**

■ We can ask the question – How does a 12-Step recovery program like AA – a spiritual program and not a religious program – affect the brain – one that is afflicted with this disease as well as one that may be affected by it?

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**How do you think of AA? (or do you?)**

■ Is it a religion?  
■ Is it a cult?  
■ Or could it be a simple spiritual program of recovery?

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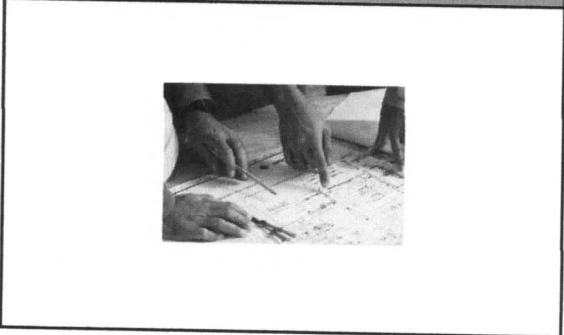
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**Or...can it be a blueprint for a new way of life for anyone?**



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### Each Man's Vision

From a Bill W letter in 1954

- *"Beyond a Higher Power, as each of us may vision Him, **A.A. must never**, as a society, **enter into fields of dogma or theology. We can never become a religion in that sense**, lest we kill our usefulness by getting bogged down in theological contention."*

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### AA could be initials for:

- Afflicted
- Affected

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### What the heck is it\*? \*(addiction)

- I like this definition: *"I've a disease the very nature of which rendered me incapable of recognizing the severity of the symptoms of the disease, the progression of the disease, or of accepting any **ordinary** offers of help."*

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### Ordinary offers of help?

"But then came an **extra-ordinary** offer of help and I accepted the **gift** of God's **grace**. And every day I have a sober day is a miracle of God's grace." (Fr. Bernie F)

- A gift isn't a gift until it is accepted.
- **Grace** – the free and unmerited favor of God – unconditional love

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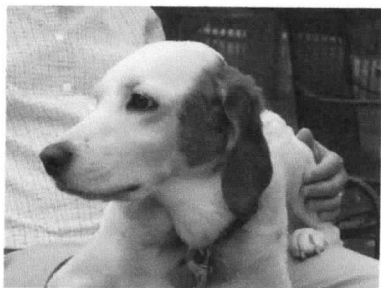
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### Unconditional Love? – Get a dog



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### AA – Religion - Spirituality

- Goodness – that's a big bite to chew
- And...they are not mutually exclusive of one another
- BUT...what if I'm NOT an alcoholic or an addict or...? You may wonder how the 12-steps can help you if you are an "ordinary" person.

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**"How it works" Chapter 5 in book  
"Alcoholics Anonymous" page 58**

- "If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it- then you are ready to take certain steps."

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**The Twelve Steps of AA**

- 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
- From Daily Reflections: "...I learned that Step One is the only Step that can be taken 100%. And that the only way to take it 100% is to take 100% of the Step.

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**More on Step One**

- Life is unmanageable by me.
- There is a God (Higher Power) and I am not it.
- \*And if I'm NOT an alcoholic or an addict or...can be I powerless over other stuff like "people, places, and things?" YOU BET!!!!

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**12 Steps continued**

- 2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves (=higher power?) could restore us to sanity.
- 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God (that higher power) **as we understood Him (it)**.

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**But...what if I don't believe in a "God (or god)"?**

- The book "**Alcoholics Anonymous**" devotes Chapter 4 to this. The chapter is titled: "We Agnostics"
- So...if you are not sure or if you flat out don't believe...read the chapter because I'll not argue with you...
- As my friend Calvin says: "*I don't just believe there is a God...I know there is. I have a new life*" So...you can choose...to believe or not believe

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**But...what if I don't believe in a "God (or god)"?**

▪ "Argue not concerning God."  
--Walt Whitman

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**Albert Camus...**

- "I would rather live my life as if there is a God and die to find out there isn't, than live my life as if there isn't and die to find out there is."

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**And...**

- *Whether or not we believe in God, Most of us recognize that we don't live entirely independently. The phrase "a power greater than ourselves," from Step Two, is a reminder to me that I don't run the universe. Whatever I believe about God's existence, I have to accept that I myself am not God - if I'm going to recover.*

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**And...**

- *I can't control my addiction on my own. Willpower stopped working for me some time ago; I owe this newfound willingness to recover to someone or something that isn't my intellect or will.*

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**The Agnostic, Dyslexic, Insomniac**

- He lay awake all night wondering if there really is a Dog.

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**Third Step**

- It's about **"turning it over"**. How do you do it? ***"Why just work the next 9 Steps (4-12) because once you take the 3<sup>rd</sup> Step, the rest of your life is none of your business."***

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**But now I hear I have to pray!**

- "Prayer does not change God, but changes him who prays." Kierkegaard

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### But why?

- I think it is part of the surrender to the power that is greater than I. And it is about building a relationship with that power.
- And how do I build a relationship? – I communicate.

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### My definition of prayer

- The act of communicating with a power greater than myself with communication involving speaking and listening.

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### Third Step Prayer - paraphrased

- "God\*, I offer myself to You – to build with me and to do with me as you will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of your power, your love, and your way of life. May I do your will always!"
- *\*Use any term other than "God" for your higher power if you so choose.*

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**First three steps summarized**

- I can't
- He (God i.e. my higher power as I envision it) can
- So I think I'll let him (God)

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**And another way to look at the first three (3) steps:**

- 1. Calamity (or chaos)
- 2. Connection
- 3. Conviction

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And then we go on working the next 9 steps  
**Yes, we work the steps for the steps to work for us**

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**7<sup>th</sup> Step Prayer**

- "My Creator\*, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that You now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen"
- *\*or however you choose to envision a power greater than you*

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**Step 11 = Improving our conscious contact with....**

- 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.

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**Alcoholics Anonymous, Page 85**

- "We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition."

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**Step 12 = there is that word again!**

- 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.

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**Principles? What principles?**

- Unity + Anonymity + Recovery + Acceptance + Surrender + Faith + Open-mindedness + Honesty + Willingness + Moral Inventory + Amends + Humility + Persistence + Spiritual Growth + Service

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**Then "many of us exclaimed"**

▪ **R U S M**

- (no not really – or yes really!)

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**What we were told is:**

■ "What an order! I cannot go through with it. Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim *spiritual* progress rather than *spiritual* perfection."

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**A Summary of the Steps**

■ **Step 1** – membership requirement – some say the only one that needs be done perfectly.  
■ **Steps 2,3,11** – spiritual basis  
■ **Steps 4,5,6,7,10** – personal inventory  
■ **Steps 8,9** – restitution  
■ **Step 12** – helping others – passing it on

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**Dr James Cone says:**

■ "Religion is a search for meaning when you don't have it in this world."

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**I've heard it said that...**

- Religion is: *"What you do to keep from going to hell."*
- Spirituality is: *"What you do/have when you've been to hell and want to keep from going back."*

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**Dr Burns B and spirituality**

**Spirituality = Humility + Responsibility**

- With humility = an act of submission
- With responsibility = accountable

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**Heard at an AA meeting:**

A young person (in the program of AA) asked, *"Sir, tell me about the Spiritual part of the program."* The response was, *"Son, you have it all wrong. There is no **spiritual part**. It's all spiritual."*

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**Fr Bernie F has a definition of spirituality**

- *"My relationship with my HP as my HP reveals the HP to me."*
- *"Spirituality is a relationship. It is not a belief system."*

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**Page 28 of "Alcoholics Anonymous"**

- *"We are all children of a living creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try."*
- H = Honesty
- O = Open mindedness
- W = Willingness

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**Fr Bernie F says:**

- *"One of the wonderful things about the Spiritual Awakening I get through the Steps (see Step 12) is each of us has the right to our own conception of God and therefore our own religion. Our program is not a religion, **but we are free to follow a religion if we so choose.**"*

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**Religion**

- My definition – *"The worship of the God of our understanding."*

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**Fr Bernie says (and I echo):**

- *"My religion means more to me today than it ever did. You see today I have spirituality as a foundation for my religion."*

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**FB also says and I echo:**

- *"All that I am and all that I have is by the Grace of God and AA."*
- And I say – *"I have a much greater understanding (if one can understand this) of grace since I got sober."*

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**Understand Grace? Anne Lamott writes:**

- "I do not at all understand the mystery of grace - only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us."

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**Why AA?**



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**"The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring through the lives of others." page 82**



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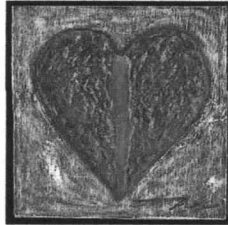
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Page 82 also says: "Hearts are broken."  
Our goal is: Recovery

Recovery: by  
Mike Vye



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Why AA meetings?

- "It's important to remember that addiction is a disease of isolation that will stay with you throughout your lifetime. So, no matter how far along you are in recovery, staying connected and feeling a part of a 12-Step support group is *crucial* to your continued recovery." *Dr Penny Ziegler*

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And that's the truth....



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**So...I ask...what is it? Religion, cult or simple spiritual program of..**

- SIMPLE\* you say?!?!
- \* *Please understand that simple and easy are not necessarily the same thing.*

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**We are taught by our sponsors:**

- 1. If I work the Steps (1-12), I will have a spiritual awakening.
- 2. If I have a spiritual awakening, I will overcome my disease.
- 3. AA is so much more than "*just not drinking*" – it is a way of life.

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**My sponsor also taught me:**

- 4. If I establish a relationship with the God of my understanding (spirituality), my religion will mean so much more to me.
- 5. My sponsor showed me that we don't have to go to church, but that we are privileged to go to church if we so choose.

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**It is not...my church**



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**My sponsor also taught me:**

- 6. That my religion was the way I could say "thank you" to the God of my understanding for my blessings.
- 7. If I give my problem to God, work the Steps, and live in the fellowship, I can have a reasonably comfortable life. And if I want the problem back, God would give it to me.

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**Page 60 in the book "Alcoholics Anonymous"**

"Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- A) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- B) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- C) That God could and would if He were sought."

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**You only have to observe in "the rooms"**

- TO SEE THAT AA WORKS IF YOU WORK IT.
- The rooms are full of miracles – just ask one of those extraordinary "how it worked".

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**You tell me, OK?**

- Can the 12-Steps work for you too? Does this connect with your right brain or your left brain or ... both.

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**Questions??**

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