

Safety in AA Forum

Notes: "As We Understand God": Respecting Religious & Non-Religious Diversity

Bonnie, Moderator (reads script)

Lisa (timer)

Discussion:

Grew up in a religious home. Discovered that AA is not church. The Lord's prayer can make people uncomfortable. How to help members feel included without Jesus.

Came in at 16 yrs old and had lots of experience getting advice. As an atheist with a lot of time now, asked to share a lot. Lots of conflicting conference-approved literature. It has been challenging when people cross-talk about their own religious structure after they share. Has been run out of meetings and other fellowships because they identify as an atheist.

How to approach the subject of using the Lord's Prayer without being offensive. How to convince people to use something different.

A lot of meetings are very religious in her area. I am supposed to love all alcoholics. There are alcoholics who will not work with her because they are both queer and an atheist. How to be their authentic self and carry the message they do have or tailor their message to the audience. How to effectively carry the message to everyone.

Alcoholic and trauma survivor: trying to engage about safety with sponsor, buddy group, safety and equity issues with discussions at districts. AA not connecting with people who have done the work in previous generations. Frustration contrasted with hope. Recent feelings about reaching out to other fellowships such as NA, other organizations that advocate for equity, safety and human rights that are overlooked. So many are affected (paraphrase). We are a bit reactionary because we are holding up a Christian and Patriarchal system.

Frustration with the Big Book. Don't mind different things being said at the ends of meetings. The problem is when exclusion happens. People saying things like Atheists are killing the message. Hearing the perspective from an agnostic or atheist is helpful.

Solutions:

Alcoholic and trauma survivor: Afraid and draining. Seeing things happening to people close to them. It keeps escalating and are compartmentalizing and working within the framework of AA and excluding Alanon and NA, Buddhists, etc. Instead of being just an AA Safety Forum, we are not considering other solutions in other organizations. Upholding status quo based in Christian Patriarchy. Reach out to other organizations.

I am 31 years sober. Grew up culturally Jewish. Agnostic and Atheist. Early in sobriety, no Secular meetings and was told that the solution was spiritual. Other things in AA

appealed such as the democracy. In last five years discovered Secular meetings. Involved in Issues at the General Service level. Press releases coming out at the GSO level are very interesting and hopeful in the language. Don't want to give up on the changes happening in AA.

Speaking up is part of the solution when involved in a business meeting. Was involved in starting a new meeting for women and spoke up against the Lord's Prayer being a part of the format for the end of the meeting because it would not be inclusive. Speak up anyway and someone will hear and understand why we need to be inclusive.

Links are helpful and meetings for spiritual divergency. Tired of getting punched in the face. p. 103 of the 4th edition. *A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity.* Endeavor not to be stupid. Super energizing and a nice capstone for the day to have this discussion.

Be accountable to inclusion. Say something to make sure that AA is for everyone. Alcoholism is a killer and to make sure safety and tolerance important and to have conversations with people about it.

People have mentioned secular meetings. Where can you find them?

Answer: The meeting guide app allows you to find Secular online. The meeting guide will also be updated to show in person secular meetings in an area also.

Not as much love and tolerance in some secular meetings as one would think there might be. Don't put others down that do have religious feelings expressed.

The Language of the Heart is a good reference for talking about Secular meetings. As an atheist, I encourage making sure secular meetings are represented in area service.

Bring your authentic self to the meetings. It could help others at the meetings.

Be yourself. There is a tough decision to make. You can't just do one thing, like only going to primarily secular meetings. It can be a struggle. Sponsor suggested meeting them at a church. Entering other spaces. Be more expressive of secular.

Moderator thanks everyone for their time.

Close with the responsibility statement