

The Book of James, Study #1 - Patience

(The Co-Founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. Biographical sketches - Their last major talks. NY: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1972, 1975, pp. 9-10). In his last major address to AAs in 1948, Dr. Bob said, "When we started in on Bill D. [A.A. Number Three], we had no Twelve Steps. But we were convinced that the answer to our problems was in the Good Book (Bible). To some of us older ones, the parts that we found absolutely essential were the Sermon on the Mount, the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and the Book of James".

[Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, pg# 71] In a letter from Bill W to his wife Lois, Bill writes, "you see Bob has been in the Oxford Group and sort of backslid. They didn't have anyone who really understood alcoholics and I was used to help him a lot, I think." Bill goes on to say, "for the next three months I lived with these two wonderful people and I shall always believe they gave me more than I ever brought them. Each morning there was a devotional after a long silence in which we waited inspiration and guidance Annie would read from the Bible, James was our favorite he said reading from her chair in the corner she would softly conclude faith without works is dead. This was a favorite quotation of Annie's as much as the book of James was a favorite of early AA so much that the James Club was a favorite of some for the fellowship."

[A Manual for Alcoholics Anonymous - A pamphlet published by AA Group No. 1, Akron, Ohio, Dr. Bob's Home Group in 1940 - written at the request of Dr. Bob and distributed by him] There is the Bible that you haven't opened for years. Get acquainted with it. Read it with an open mind. You will find things that will amaze you. You will be convinced that certain passages were written with you in mind. Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew V, VI, and VII). Read St. Paul's inspired essay on love (I Corinthians XIII). Read the Book of James. Read the Twenty-third and Ninety-first Psalms. These readings are brief but so important. Read "Alcoholics Anonymous" and then read it again. You may find that it contains your own story. It will become your second Bible.

Author of The Book of James: James was a brother to Jesus. He wrote to the Christians in the twelve tribes of Israel. It is considered by many to be the earliest book written in the New Testament.

This is the first lesson on our study through the Book of James. As we work through our study on the Book of James, keep in mind that the early AA's read from the King James Version of the Bible.

As you have read, James was a favored Biblical source in early A.A., and patience was one of the most frequently mentioned spiritual principles in the Big Book (pp. 67, 70, 82, 83, 108, 111 (2x), 118, 137-138, 163). In the 12x12, patience is referred to on page 78 and 141.

PATIENCE

Chapter 1 is not the only chapter in the Book of James which mentions patience. Nor is it the only portion of the Bible that stresses patience. In the Book of James (King James Version), we find the word “patience” or some form of the word used in James 1:3,4 and 5:7,10. The word for “patience” used in the New International Version is the word “perseverance”. It is used in some form in James 1:3, 4, 12; 5:11.

1. When you are going through difficult times, other people are usually involved.

In the Big Book (pg#. 66-67 – Chapter 5 – How It Works) we read, “We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick. Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too. We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended us we said to ourselves, ‘This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. *Thy will be done.*’”

Read James 1:2-4. I have given you the verses from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible that the early AA’s read from.

James 1:2-4 (KJV) ^(1:2) My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ⁽³⁾ Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁽⁴⁾ But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

- a) How is our faith tested? How does having our faith tested develop patience/perseverance (v3)?
- b) How do you rejoice (v2 - considerate pure joy) when you are going through difficult times?
- c) What does patience/perseverance do for us (v4)?
- d) How does patience/perseverance help us mature in our faith (v4)?

2. Difficult times will often cause us to want to give up. We must not. Giving up is one of those defects of character that has impacted our lives in the past.

In the Big Book (pg# 70 – Chapter 5 – How It Works) we read, “If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can. In this book you read again and again that *faith did for us what we could not do for ourselves.*”

Read James 1:12. I have given you the verses from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible that the early AA’s read from.

James 1:12 (KJV) Blessed *is* the man that endureth [does not give up; perseveres; is patient while going through] temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

a) What does God say about those who endure or preserve while going through hard times (v12)?

b) What do you think the “crown of life” is (v12)?

3. It is easy to grumble and criticize others when times are difficult.

In the Big Book (pg# 83 – Chapter 6 – Into Action) we read, “There is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring, but the chances are that our own actions are partly responsible. So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love. The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.”

Read James 5:7-11. I have given you the verses from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible that the early AA’s read from.

James 5:7-11 (KJV) ^(5:7) Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. ⁽⁸⁾ Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. ⁽⁹⁾ Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. ⁽¹¹⁾ Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

a) While we are exercising patience, what other quality should we be exercising (v8)? What does standing firm mean?

b) How can we be examples of patience (v10)?

c) What is Job's story of patience (v11)?

We've noted that James was a favored Biblical source in early A.A., and patience was one of the most frequently mentioned spiritual principles in the Big Book. Here are several other quotes about patience.

- (Big Book - pg# 111 – Chapter 8 - To Wives) The first principle of success is that you should never be angry. Even though your husband becomes unbearable and you have to leave him temporarily, you should, if you can, go without rancor. Patience and good temper are most necessary.
- (Big Book - pg# 118 – Chapter 8 -To Wives) Your husband knows he owes you more than sobriety. He wants to make good. Yet you must not expect too much. His ways of thinking and doing are the habits of years. Patience, tolerance, understanding and love are the watchwords. Show him these things in yourself and they will be reflected back to you from him. Live and let live is the rule. If you both show a willingness to remedy your own defects, there will be little need to criticize each other.
- (Big Book - pg# 162-163 – Chapter 11 - A Vision For You) Thus we grow. And so can you, though you be but one man with this book in your hand. We believe and hope it contains all you will need to begin. We know what you are thinking. You are saying to yourself: "I'm jittery and alone. I couldn't do that." But you can. You forget that you

have just now tapped a source of power much greater than yourself. To duplicate, with such backing, what we have accomplished is only a matter of willingness, patience and labor.

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A few of the references to Patience in the Big Book

- 67:4 pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant
- 70:28 have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will
- 82:21 is the patience mothers and wives have had with
- 83:9 that our creator show us the way of patience,
- 108:23 that no amount of patience will make any difference.
- 111:4 you should, if you can, go without rancor. patience
- 111:26 come to appreciate your reasonableness and patience.
- 118:13 habits of years. patience, tolerance, understanding
- 138:1 has there been a lack of patience and tolerance. and
- 163:8 only a matter of willingness, patience and labor.