

Here's How

Published in Fellowship by the Chicago Area Service Assembly

VOLUME LVII ISSUE NO 4

JULY–AUGUST 2005

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION

*to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him,
praying only for knowledge of His will for us
and the power to carry that out*

ONE OF THE biggest questions in the AA program (after, How do I stop drinking?) is, How, and to whom or what, do we pray? And what exactly is meditation and how is it done? The answer to newcomers and old pros alike is that there are almost as many methods as there are AA members. There are, however, many suggestions contained in our AA literature. For example, prayer is the act of raising the heart and mind to God; this is one of the first things we learn in the program, and, as ever, it is “God as we understand Him.” Meditation is often described as listening to God, but that explanation does not suggest how to meditate. The description in step eleven in *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* is a good starting point: Imagine lying on a sunlit beach and saying the prayer of St. Francis. This is something almost anyone can understand. The hitch is that it takes work and effort on our part. But if anything is a truism in AA it is that without work we cannot fully achieve the benefits of recovery. Maintaining “a conscious contact with God” is something we must try to achieve. This issue of *Here's How* contains descriptions from several members of the program of their personal experiences with meditation and prayer and their methods of practicing these elusive tasks. Take what you like and leave the rest, but, remember, in meditation debate has no place. What works for one may not work for others – but if we are willing to try and keep trying, we will always receive the promises of the program.

WHEN I first came into the program, the idea of prayer and meditation was overwhelming to me. I wasn't sure if I believed in God, and, so, how could I possibly ask God for help? It took some time, an open mind, and blind faith in what the people around me were saying about how prayer and meditation work, but I finally came to believe that these were going to be two very important tools in my life.

I was able to pray long before I could even contemplate meditation. My prayers have gotten simpler as the years have gone on, and now every day I pray that God remove my desire to drink and that I be given the strength to do God's will. Prayer is also helpful when I need to let things go. My sponsor reminds me to pray about something when I don't know the answer or when I find myself unable to let go. It works – not always on my timeline or with the answer I think I want – but it does work.

There are times in my life when I find myself unable or unwilling to pray. These times used to devastate me. I thought there was something wrong with me or that I wasn't working the program hard enough, but *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* addresses this very situation. It tells me not to get down on myself but to walk through it and get back to praying as soon as I can. It helps me to remember that this, too, shall pass.

The *Twelve and Twelve* was also helpful to me in learning about meditation. I tried many different paths to meditation, but it always felt forced. In my life, meditation is simply quieting my mind. If I practice this, I find it easier to be calm and quiet throughout my day, whatever that may bring. This is still something that I need to work on, but I do make progress when I practice.

My understanding of step eleven has grown throughout my time in the program as has my understanding of all the steps. My level of conscious contact with my higher power has gotten deeper and deeper through the years. I truly believe that this will continue as long as I keep doing what I need to do to stay sober in Alcoholics Anonymous. It's been a great journey so far, and I look forward to the experiences God has in store for me!

RIGHT NOW, my allergies are so bad that I can barely see. I have been struggling with the idea of writing this since Bob announced at the Amethyst meeting Sunday that *Here's How* would like people to submit essays on prayer and meditation for an upcoming issue.

Being an impetuous, enthusiastic-type alcoholic, I told Bob I would love to write something. Of course, when I got home I started thinking: What if no one likes it, what if my letter is criticized? Oh, I never should have volunteered for this.

Well, since my eyes are swollen up and I can barely see straight with these allergies, I thought: What better time to write about prayer and meditation? When you can't see straight and need help, prayer and meditation work best. At least for me.

I came into the program alcoholically depressed and suicidal. I immediately recognized the people in AA exuded a goodness that you could almost touch, it was so tangible. I also took to heart the axiom: Use the group as your higher power. And I did at the beginning.

However, six months or so into the program, I was home worrying (of course) and went to *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. The page fell open to the eleventh step's promise – that by

continued on page 3

Chicago Area Service Office

200 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 501
Chicago, IL 60601

TELEPHONE: 312-346-1475

ALSO

800-371-1475

FACSIMILE: 312-346-5477

WEBSITE: <http://www.chicagoaa.org>

e-mail: Caso@ChicagoAA.org

Here's How Newsletter

Here's How is published six times a year by the Chicago Area Service Assembly (CASA) of AA in the interest of greater unity of the 75,000+ members and 3,200+ groups in the Chicago/Suburban Area.

Address all communications to:
Here's How

200 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 501
Chicago, IL 60601

OR

e-mail: HeresHow@ChicagoAA.org

- Opinions expressed herein are individual and do not necessarily reflect the thinking of AA or CASA as a whole.
- The mailing list of *Here's How* subscribers is not made available for sale to any outside entity.
- The suggested contribution to *Here's How* is only \$5.00 annually. A contribution form can be found on the back of this issue.

Alcoholics Anonymous and AA
are registered trademarks of
AA World Services, Inc

Calendar

Illinois State Conference: September 2-4, 2005, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago.

National Hispanic Conference: September 2-4, 2005, Chicago.

All Chicago Open: Saturday, September 17, 2005, UIC Pavilion (Racine & Harrison). Doors open at 6 pm.

Illinois State Corrections Conference: September 30 – October 1-2, 2005, Bolingbrook Holiday Inn, Bolingbrook.

Midwest Bridging the Gap Workshop, October 15, 2005.

CASO Bookstore Hours:

M – F 8 AM to 5:30 PM

Closed Weekends

Numbers of Telephone Volunteers at CASO by Shift for April & May 2005

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9A-1P	39	35	34	34	35	18	10
1P-5P	28	41	38	35	44	14	5
5P-9P	10	9	16	7	9	3	7
Totals	77	85	88	76	88	35	22
Grand Total	471						
Total Hours volunteered:	April 900		May 924.75		Total 1824.75		

CASO Corner

June 9, 2005

by Bruce Parry, CASO Manager

We have a new Group & Fellowship Services Coordinator! I want to bid Celeste goodbye and wish her the best in her new endeavors, and say hello to Geoff C.

We are really sad to lose Celeste. She started in October 2003 as the Group Services Coordinator and Assistant Office Manager. She faced a daunting task. There had been no Group Services Coordinator for about three years prior to her arrival. The computer database was inaccurate and unreliable. Either data had not been entered or it had been entered riddled with mistakes. Relationships between the Central Office and the Districts and Groups had been left in limbo for so long it is hard to say a relationship existed. I had only been Office Manager for four months; two other staff members had been on board an even shorter time.

Celeste met these challenges with skill and determination. Her job had two major parts. She was responsible for keeping track of all 3,400 meetings we have in the Chicago area each week and she was responsible for tracking everyone who is connected with those meetings or any of the 20 Districts and 17 Committees, and who are on the Area staff. It is a daunting job. In her spare time, she was a main backup in the Bookstore and number two in charge of the Office. She helped design and develop a new database through an outside contractor. She ensured that data was entered accurately and, until the new database was done, made sure the old database was as reliable as possible. She worked through

reams of paper. She began visiting Districts and attending Assemblies, meeting District Chairs and developing a network. She worked closely with her staff member and they became a team. When she lost her staff member due to budget cuts, not quite a year later, she took on the full burden of the job herself. As everyone who worked with her recognized, she knew what was going on, was always cheerful with those needing her help, and was totally competent and responsible. Under Celeste, the Central Office became confident that we could stand by the accuracy of our Directories and other rosters of members and meetings.

Celeste will be sorely missed; she leaves a big gap at CASO.

Geoff C. is the man to fill the gap. That's Geoff, as in Jeff; it's just an alternate spelling. The job is changing a bit. Geoff will be Group and Fellowship Services Coordinator. This is to emphasize his role in also working with Area Committees. He brings much AA experience to the job; he has been a GSR and was District Chair when we hired him. He has been sober since September 1997. Geoff recently received his Bachelor's degree from Loyola. He brings years of experience in retail, which will help in the Bookstore, and in working with Volunteers, the key to CASO office success.

Change is part of life. We wish Celeste the very best as she goes into real estate with her new husband, and we welcome Geoff. By the grace of God, he will help CASO continue to grow in carrying out our fellowship's primary purpose.

practicing this step I could attain emotional balance. Aha! I thought, this is for me. But wanting to be really clear about this, I first had a chat with God as I didn't understand Him. I admitted how terrible flawed I was and that I didn't know anything about Him, that I really wanted to start a relationship with Him, but that He would have to teach me about who He was, as I really didn't have a clue.

Shortly after that, a book entitled *The Practice of the Presence of God* came into my hands. In short, it advocates that you simply act like God is present right next to you, and with that practice you begin to have a relationship with Him. I did this. I poured my heart out to God about what was working in my life, what wasn't. I just talked to Him like a bosom buddy.

A very big catalyst for me was when my home group made a retreat at the Jesuit Retreat House in Barrington. The AA facilitator was nothing short of a gift from God. He told me about how God craved our love and that we were the ones who pushed Him away, saying things like, I am not perfect enough ... etc., etc. I really related to God craving love and being denied. I had craved love all my life and felt I just got indifference or the cold shoulder. After hearing this, I decided that I would give God that love He was craving. So I developed a very deep emotional tie to the practice I had started.

It's been many years since that time, and my prayer and meditation, which consists of talking to God and then listening, as God speaks to me through books, music, and thoughts, has improved steadily. It is just an ever-growing relationship.

I do put effort into it by reading a lot of books about prayer and meditation. When I hear how other people do it, that helps me in my practice. As a woman in one of my first meetings said, "If I wanted to be a geologist, I would get a lot of books on geology and read them." I've applied this piece of wisdom to my program and it has worked for me.

I also put effort into going to eleventh step meetings because they feed my heart and soul. One helpful aid was a book called *Came to Believe*. It was a tremendous eye-opener for me and really got me

started on my belief in a God who cares about me personally.

My prayer and meditation is practical and casual in that it is an active practice I do all the time and it's very real. What I found is that if you ask God to come into your life, He does.

Here are just a few of my favorite sayings that I've heard over the years in meetings:

Don't make your God too small.

GOD: Good Orderly Direction
My God travels.

God gives us gifts in ugly packages. I cannot thank AA enough for giving me a God I can understand, love, and commune with. We are so blessed with the steps, and it was sheer genius (as well as divine guidance) that Bill W. had the courage to include prayer and meditation in the twelve steps.

I believe God is a spirit and is both He and She, but I have used the "He" for simplicity's sake.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this, and, of course, God bless.

Pat H.

I LIKE TO PRAY and meditate in the shower. I am by nature a little jumpy. I can't sit still very well. I remember in outpatient here in Chicago, at Little Company of Mary on the South Side, we were asked to sit in our classroom chairs, with their little writing desks attached. Some of us were big and most of us not very comfortable. We were asked to close our eyes, relax, and put our thoughts out of our heads. I closed my eyes, but the room was too bright. I squirmed. Someone laughed. I tried putting my head on the desk. I tried leaning back, way back, way way back. Nothing worked. Besides, I didn't understand the point. What was the connection between staying sober and meditating? I needed to stop drinking, not get in touch with the unseen and the unknown. The counselor told us that meditation could act as a substitute for using, but I wondered what was supposed to take away the nervousness, the jumpiness that prevented me from meditating. Besides a drink, that is.

So I discovered shower meditation.

The falling water calms me somehow. The impact of the water on my body relaxes my muscles, and the sound of the water replaces the usual noises and conversations in my head. I move my body in and out of the stream of water like a dancer (well, not exactly like a dancer; I don't know anything about dancing, but maybe these movements are kind of like a dancer's movements) and say the serenity prayer. I say it out loud. People have criticized my singing (god knows why), but so far no one has criticized my praying. Then I concentrate on soaping and rinsing, shampooing and rinsing while I meditate. I do what they suggested to do in outpatient. I close my eyes and try to empty my mind of thoughts. I listen to my higher power. I try to be present for my higher power. I dry off, and the day drifts into my consciousness and I'm ready. Or not.

Others use music; I know someone who puts on Gregorian chants and meditates. I've gotten over the idea that prayer and meditation are a form of punishment. I used to think that prayer was a way of apologizing to God for screwing up. Now I see it as part of what the Big Book calls ego deflation. It reflects my belief that there is a higher power and I'm not it. I don't know much about this higher power, but apparently my higher power likes to be talked to. He doesn't say much, but I know I want to be listening if he ever decides to speak.

Jay W.

WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED in, or rather stumbled through, the doors of AA, I hadn't been praying much and I was definitely not meditating. Being super busy (when I couldn't be drinking) gave me solace from my racing thoughts and feelings of discomfort and discontent. I prayed when I wanted the guy or the job or when someone was dying, and that was pretty much it. My prayers were entirely selfish. I rarely prayed for others. My mother had taught me to pray as soon as I was able to memorize more than my address and phone number. I was raised in a faith where certain prayers are staples, if you will. She taught

me those and in a lovely tradition would sit on my bed at night and listen while I recited my prayers, and then we would ask God to bless our loved ones. As I got older, I was too cool to recite the prayers but she would still come in, wish me a good night, and asked that I say her favorite prayer that I made up when I was little, “God bless me and God bless you have a good night and I will too.” Once I went off to college and was on my own, prayer became even less a part of my life. I vaguely remember, though, saying some kind of prayer of desperation just before getting to AA. That was probably one of the most important prayers of my life.

When I got a sponsor in Alcoholics Anonymous, she and some other members I befriended suggested praying in the morning and at night, on my knees. This did not seem like a tall order to me so I did the best I could. It was suggested that I ask God to help me stay sober that day and thank him at night for helping me stay sober, assuming I still was. I have been doing that every day for the last five years. I know prayer has contributed greatly to my sobriety and to being able to walk through life on life's terms, and as my sponsor says, place nice with the rest of God's kids.

As I continued working the steps with my sponsor, my concept of God evolved. I finally started to take advantage of the “God as I understand” part of the 3rd and 11th steps. When I was new I used the prayers from my childhood, though as I stayed sober I began using the serenity prayer and the third and seventh step prayers more. I also began to simply talk to God rather than being very formal, which had kept God at a distance rather than getting me closer to him. I was taught that I get to pray in whatever way helps me to be more connected to my Higher Power. It was suggested that I not pray for selfish things, as it says in the eleventh-step discussion in the Big Book. I pray for help and for relief from my defects knowing it will, of course, make me feel better, but more importantly it helps me to treat others better. In addition to bookending my day with prayer, I try to pray throughout the day as well (not always as much as I

should but I'm working on it).

Meditation . . . Well, I tried to meditate before getting sober but I just couldn't sit still, as I mentioned earlier. I would sometimes sit quietly and read inspirational books and drink coffee in the common area of my college dorm before others were up but that was the closest I got. (And I am assuming it just doesn't work as well if you then obsess about yourself all day and practice blackout drinking at night.) Now, after I pray on my knees in the morning, I grab my favorite pillow, blanket and fleece and sit on the far edge of my sofa. I sit and read pages 86–88 in the Big Book and in my head go through my day, asking God to divorce my thinking from self-pity and dishonest or self-seeking motives. I also read the *Daily Reflections*. Then I just sit and stare out the window or close my eyes, and that's it. Sometimes my mind is already churning, sometimes I am still sleepy, and other times my mind is just sort of still. My sponsor once said that even if my mind is racing in those 20 or 30 minutes perhaps that may help it not to occur so much later on in the day, which I believe to be true. Those 20 to 30 minutes have become one of the favorite parts of my day. During that time, I generally feel really grateful and blessed. I know by just taking that time and making that effort to connect with God each morning, and getting quiet and taking a brief inventory at night, I am much better equipped to move through my day peacefully, treat others well, and do God's will rather than mine.

To Here's How

How you doing? We're all okay out on the South Side. I do love our newsletters; reading the one that was asking for people who got sober in their twenties, I thought, Well, I am one of them. I am still working on procrastination, daily – as you can tell. Ha ha. Well, God willing, I will have twenty years on June 7, 2005, and to treat myself I am going to Akron for the seventieth AA birthday bash. I went two years ago and loved it. What a ride.

But I am also writing to share my journey on this beautiful God-given program. I was sharing a short version of my program to a couple of new girls, who want what we have. Remember, this worked for me! It is not for everyone else. My first five to six years of sober living were quite different from those of the women I was hanging around with. But this is what I was telling these new girls. You are not to have a new relationship with anyone for the first year. I actually met my AA boyfriend five weeks before I went to AA. He had eight years. He saw me drinking one night and told me either go to AA or we're done. I was at a meeting the next morning, my first meeting. Me being a waitress for twelve years; you get to know some people. I sat right next to an older man I knew who was about sixty-eight years old, with about ten years sober. He said to me, I didn't know you were one of us! I didn't tell anyone it was my first meeting. I had dropped by there a year earlier; it wasn't my time then. It was my time now. After the meeting I asked him to be my sponsor, and he said yes.

I went to a meeting every day for the first year. I couldn't get enough of AA. That man's name is Tom Dolan, and the only reason I can say his last name is because now he is in AA heaven. He helped me so much my first couple of years of sobriety. I also got a woman sponsor, and she is still my sponsor and a great one for me.

Someone bet me that I couldn't quit smoking my first year. And guess what I did. With all the obstacles I put in my path, I've remained sober because I wanted what the old timers had. And today I have it. As Bill W. said, keep it simple, don't think, don't drink, go to more meetings, and let go and let God.

Tom D. always told me, “This is Sober School; when you come in, wish for things.” I finally finished high school, was a flight attendant – for a day, but at least I did it. I am not finished yet. What's great about this program is you are never finished; you don't graduate. All I have to do, though, is suit up and show up. Bring a new attitude into an old situation, go to meetings, get a sponsor, ask the Lord for help in the morning not to drink and

thank him at night. Above all pray to your Higher Power.

To drink is to die: page 66 of the Big Book. That reminder has saved my soul more times than I can count. Today in AA I want for nothing. I like what I see in the mirror and years ago I did not. I came in at twenty-eight, and today I still have AA. I go to two meetings a week and work with new people. I chair a meeting and help with a women's retreat. And against all odds I remain sober. That just shows you I want to stay sober more than I want to drink.

Thank God and put the plug in the jug.

Eileen F.

Gratitude Gift Idea!

Just a little food for thought. We all seem to remember our anniversary date – the day we took our last drink and have managed to remain sober since, by the grace of our higher powers and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. What if, on our personal sobriety date, we contribute \$1.00 for every year we have been sober to the Chicago Area Service Office? A gift like this will help to assure that the next sufferer who reaches out for help will have the same opportunity that we had: to find hope and a measure of serenity, to live a productive life and continue the chain started so long ago by our cofounders, Bill W. and Bob S. If only one-third of us made such a donation, the shortfall in CASO funds as described in the last issue of *Here's How* would be

eliminated. I know that I personally would often have spent more in a day in my active drinking than my annual contribution would be (\$12.00 at this juncture). As I said at the beginning: Just a little food for thought.

Erling P.

LITERATURE COMMITTEE MATERIAL REVIEW

Book Title: Untitled: Set of eleven workbooks on the twelve steps (steps six and seven are combined)

Authors: Published by Hazelden.

Only four of the workbooks list authors: step one is by William Springborn; step 5 is by Edward C. Sellner; and steps ten and eleven are Mel B.

Reason for review: Customer requested sale in bookstore

In reviewing these workbooks, we asked ourselves several questions: Is the primary message of this material how to stay sober and recover from alcoholism? Is it contrary to the core principles of AA as we understand them? For example, Does this material contradict the core message of AA – that spirituality is the solution? Does it teach spiritual principles? If we think that principles are violated, is the material helpful even if it does contradict the principles?

These workbooks address chemical dependency and addictions in general, not alcoholism, and use the terms *alcoholism* and *chemical dependency* interchangeably. For example, in the preface of the workbook titled *Step One*, the author states, "Alcohol and drugs are chemicals that alter our moods. For that reason, I

use the words alcoholism and chemical dependency to mean the same thing. The same is true of alcoholic and chemically dependent." The first sentence of the first workbook states: "Step one of Alcoholics Anonymous stresses those who are chemically dependent must acknowledge that dependency." That same workbook refers to physical powerlessness over drugs and alcohol as being the "X-factor" and "a disease we share."

This idea diverges from the discussion of a physical allergy specifically to alcohol that is discussed in the Big Book and is a controversial medical issue. The step one workbook also gets the mental obsession backwards, leading to the impression that unmanageability is present only when drinking, ignoring the obsession and state of mind before drinking referred to in the Big Book and *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. Nor does the workbook talk about the progression or fatal nature of alcoholism. The step four workbook brings in outside issues, advising people to seek professional help if they are abusive since, it says, a twelve-step program will not cure that tendency.

These workbooks do not mention spirituality in an overall sense, only in specific portions of steps two, three, and eleven. For example, there is no mention in the workbook on step five of admitting our wrongs to God. Instead, it says to leave the results of our fifth step to God and calls this a spiritual reconciliation similar to that of many religions. No mention in the step ten workbook of maintaining our spiritual condition and looking for God's will, as mentioned in the Big Book; no mention in the step ten

LIFE: UNMANAGEABLE



or eleven workbooks of doing our daily inventory with God's help.

Finally, these workbooks give the false impression, by misusing quotes from the Big Book, that the Big Book is in agreement with the ideas in these workbooks. There is a disclaimer that the opinions in these workbooks are only those of the authors, but, in spite of the disclaimer, the workbooks still give the impression that statements made in them are ideas that originate in AA.

Reviewer's recommendation: I do not recommend selling any of these workbooks in the CASO bookstore. Stocking them would give the impression that we think they are in conformity with AA principles, steps, and traditions, when they are not.

Committee's recommendation: We recommend that we do not sell any of these workbooks in the CASO bookstore, which would mean removing the Step Four workbook currently sold there.

Minority opinion: None (motion passed unanimously.)

Prayer – The Most Powerful Form of Energy & it's Free!

At crucial times in my life, I was told to pray (ask God for guidance) and meditate (listen). With this being in my earlier, stubborn years, I faked it by kneeling, with folded hands, eyes closed, etc. Having been given "formal" prayers that were first read, memorized, and recited, I even learned to "speed pray" in Latin. It was all a sham.

I'm sure most of us can at least recall being taught to say our night prayers and asking for blessings on our meals. Recently I was reminded that we ought to pray before, during, and after meals. I apply this to my spiritual gratitude list every day. (Yes, Jim M., I still remove my hat.)

With prayer being talking to God and Meditation being listening to Him, I'll share with you one of my gems from Dan's learning-to-pray tool kit. "Thinking of Prayer Is Prayer Itself!" I was taught as an R.C. (Recovering

Catholic/Roman Catholic) that a short, sudden emotional utterance (an "ejaculation") could also be a short "quickie" prayer. In the inner city, many schools had a fire station nearby and when we heard the fire engines, we were reminded to say three prayers in which we were to ask for blessings on the Chicago Fire Department and the unfortunates where the firemen were going – and for a safe return. Drivers out there: Don't forget to yield the right-of-way and say a "quickie."

In my recovery via shelters, I was sent from treatment to a Mission Impossible/Mission of No Return to learn that only God forgives and forgets. It was finally safe for me to enter a church or synagogue. During my Bible-thumping courses there, I asked my H.P. to give me a formula for praying. Not too much later my request (prayer) was answered by way of a VCR. The acronym ACTS: A= Adore, C=Confess, T=Thanksgiving and S=Supplicate was given to me. The S meaning to humbly ask. That was all I needed for a kickstart.

I've been blessed with many great sources of prayer and meditation in my journey. I recently found that it's okay to

ALL CHICAGO OPEN

September 17, 2005

**Doors Open: 6:00 PM
Concession & Literature: 6:00-7:30PM
Meeting: 8:00PM**

**UIC Pavilion
Racine & Harrison
Non Smoking Facility**

Annual Celebration Of The First AA Meeting In Chicago

- Special seating for old timers 20+ years
- Simultaneous Spanish interpretation with an FM pocket radio and earphones
- Interpretacionsimultaneaal espanolporradios portatilesFM con audifonos
- Meeting will be signed for the hearing impaired for those wearing hearing aids with a "T" switch an audio loop will amplify sound

Directions: From the NORTH, take the Kennedy to the Eisenhower, exiting immediately on Morgan St. south to Harrison, then west to Racine. From the SOUTH, take the Dan Ryan to Taylor St. west to Racine, then north to Harrison. From the WEST, exit the Eisenhower south on Racine. From the EAST, exit the Eisenhower south to Harrison then east to Racine.



paraphrase the prayers for each step in the Big Book, "so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation." The last sentence in "The Doctor's Opinion" saves the best for last (P. xxxii) — "I earnestly advise every alcoholic to read this book through and through, and though perhaps he came to scoff, he may remain to pray." Amen.

Back in my formative years I can remember how we prayed every evening and then one day we stopped. The feeling of a spiritual death — of my family still reminds me that "A family that prays together. . . ." For years I believed in a punishing God and blamed Him for my misery. I have learned that I must lay down the "weapons" of self in order to pick up the tools of the AA Program (*Daily Reflections*, May 24th).

There's a classic story in the Big Book, pages 550—552, on resentments. I call it the "Bleep Prayer." Unfortunately, it's in the back of the Big Book and many seem to miss that part. Again I get to use a "quickie" saying: "Bless them; change me!" It helps serve me temporarily in the spiritual principal of not letting the sun

go down on my bleeps/bleepism.

"Line to Higher Power Is Never Busy-Let It Ring" and "He wants to be my Partner, So Let Him" are two of the many posters at 330 South Wells that have been crucial to my spiritual recovery. By the time this goes to press, "Nooners" should have moved to 407 South Dearborn, 12th Floor. Someone recently told me that he writes a paragraph a day to his HP. What a great idea.

My meditational growth has been based on being blessed with a quiet place, listening to spiritual music, preferably without lyrics. I'm still too easily distracted so I try to relax and listen to God. My final gift to share with you is "A Prayer To Be a Better Listener."

"We do not really listen to each other, God, at least not all of the time. Instead of true dialogue, we carry on two parallel monologues. I talk. My companion talks. But what we are really concentrating on is how to sound good, how to make our points strongly, how to outshine the person with whom we are talking. Teach us that we should listen to everyone who speaks with us. Remind us, that, some-

how, you are trying to reach us through our partner in conversation. Your truth, your love, your goodness are seeking us out in the truth, love, and goodness being communicated. When our words are harsh, hostile, or angry, we convey the very opposite of those qualities. Teach us to be still, that we may truly hear our brothers and sisters — and in them, You. Amen."

Gratefully, Downtown Dan

Telephone calls for April & May 2005

Help for themselves 96
 Help for others 323
 Meeting information 2301
 Fellowship information 79
 Literature 785
 Miscellaneous 1554
 Total 5138

**Website Statistics for
 www.ChicagoAA.org:**

Number of visitors:
 March 2005: 18,223 (587/day),
 6342 unique, 2044 repeaters
 April 2005: 17,737 (591/day),
 6151 unique, 1901 repeaters

32nd
ILLINOIS STATE CONFERENCE
 LABOR DAY WEEKEND LABOR DAY WEEKEND LABOR DAY WEEKEND

SEPTEMBER 2-4, 2005

FRIDAY
 SPECIAL WORKSHOP
\$8.00
Steps, Service & Spirituality
with Tom I. and Sandy B.
 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Friday Night Speaker
Lauren M., Chicago

SATURDAY NIGHT SPEAKER

EARL H.
 California

GSO Speaker
Irene K., New Jersey


 Alateen Speaker
Brittany A.

Alanon and Alateen meetings
 available throughout
 the weekend.

ENTERTAINMENT

Comedy & Dancing
 and
 other surprises

Hosted by the Chicago area at the Palmer House Hilton
 For details, registrations forms are available at www.chicagoaa.org

Special Friday Kick-off Event -- Only \$8

 Print, Clip and mail

**PLEASE BEGIN/RENEW MY SUBSCRIPTION.
I AM ENCLOSING A SELF-SUPPORT CONTRIBUTION**

Name

Address

City

State Zip Country

If address changes please indicate your old address

Name

Address

City

State Zip Country

PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- I am a new reader. Please mail me *Here's How*
- I am a new on-line reader. Do not mail me *Here's How*, I will read it on-line
- \$5.00 suggested annual contribution enclosed.
- Please remove my name from your mailing list.
- I can't contribute now, but please keep me on the mailing list.

Please mail to:

Here's How

200 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 501
Chicago, IL 60601